

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Bricklayers Hall

Other names/site number: Bricklayers Union Hall

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 530 South Union Street

City or town: Montgomery State: AL County: Montgomery

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

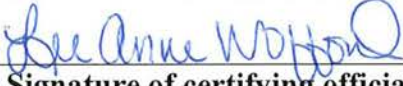
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national X statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B ___ C ___ D

<u></u>	<u>June 8, 2020</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date
<u>Alabama Historical Commission</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the priority ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official	_____ Date
_____ Title	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Lisa Deline

Signature of the Keeper

7/23/2020

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- SOCIAL: meeting hall
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE: organizational

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
- EDUCATION: Other

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bricklayers Hall is a two-story, flat-roofed, brick office building and union hall. Built in 1954 by the local African American bricklayers' union, it faces east towards South Union Street and stands within the Centennial Hill neighborhood, a historically black neighborhood in Montgomery, the capital of Alabama. Constructed of textured brick, the building has metal, casement windows. The asymmetrical front elevation features a flat-roofed awning that extends over the three doors; a neon sign near the cornice reads "BRICKLAYER'S HALL." The meeting hall and offices on the second floor retain their original floor plan as well as many of the original interior finishes and fixtures, including structural block walls, tile floors, wood doors, light and bathroom fixtures, and a platform and dais in the meeting hall. The two first-floor office suites likewise retain their historic floor plan and most of their historic interior finishes. The two noncontributing buildings are small outbuildings at the rear of the property.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Bricklayers Hall is located at 530 South Union Street in the city of Montgomery in central Alabama. The building stands in an urban setting on the west side of South Union Street between High Street to the north and Grove Street to the south. Interstate 85, which was completed through Montgomery in 1969, is located approximately two blocks to the south of the

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Bricklayers Hall.¹ Alabama State University and the Alabama State Capitol grounds are each located about one-half mile from the building.

Although most of the streets in the surrounding area are laid out in a grid and oriented north-south and east-west, the 500 block of South Union Street runs at a southwest/northeast diagonal. The block contains a mix of residential, commercial, religious, and educational buildings, most of which were constructed in the early twentieth century (Photos #2-3). Buildings generally have setbacks of 20-40 feet from the roadway, and concrete sidewalks are located along both sides of the street. On the west side of the street, mature trees grow between the sidewalk and the roadway.

Site

The Bricklayers Hall stands on a 0.35-acre lot that has a frontage of 72 feet along South Union Street and extends back 200-230 feet. The Bricklayers Hall is set back approximately 25 feet from the sidewalk. The area in front of the building is primarily grassy and includes a cluster of rose bushes in the northeast corner. The land gently slopes down towards the rear of the property, which abuts a vacant lot. In the area behind the building, chain-link fences mark the property lines. Mature trees line the northern and southern property boundaries. (Photos #1-4)

A brick, herringbone walkway leads from the sidewalk along South Union Street to the brick stoop at the main entrance to the building (Photo #1). Brick, stretcher bond walkways and brick planters containing small shrubs extend along the front elevation to the north and south of the stoop. The appearance of the brick suggests that these walkways were added after the herringbone walkway. The walkway to the south is a ramp that leads to a concrete parking pad in the southeast corner of the property. The north walkway connects the entrance to a concrete driveway that lies between the building and the northern property line (Photo #3). The shrubbery in the four- to five-foot space between the driveway and the building was planted after the building was constructed. The Bricklayers Hall driveway abuts a similar driveway for the property immediately to the north.²

The concrete driveway terminates at a graveled parking area that occupies the center third of the property (Photo #4). The western (rear) third of the lot is grassy and contains two buildings in the property's northwest corner: a frame outbuilding (Photo #7) and a barbecue pit/concession stand (Photo #4) (see page 9). There are two trees in the interior of the lot: one near the southwest corner of the parking area and one near the barbecue pit/concession stand.

¹ Howard Overton Robinson, "Centennial Hill: The Building of a Prosperous Black Community, Montgomery, Alabama, 1865-1900" (Thesis (MA), Alabama State University, 1995), p. 119, n7.

² Both driveways are depicted on a property map that was drawn in 1900, but it is likely that the driveway was re-surfaced during or after the National Register period of significance.

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Bricklayers Hall, 1954 (contributing building)

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Exterior

The Bricklayers Hall is a two-story, six-bay building constructed of structural hollow clay tile with a brick veneer. The brick is laid in a stretcher bond, and a single course of soldier bricks wraps around the entire building. Due to the topography, the soldier brick course is near grade at the front elevation and several feet above grade at the rear elevation. The veneer is composed of textured bricks, except on the rear (west) elevation and below the soldier brick course on the south elevation. The corners feature brick quoins formed by five courses of projecting brick (Photos #1, 3, 6). The building rests on a concrete slab foundation and has a flat, composite roof with metal-capped, brick parapets on the front and side elevations. Projecting rowlock bricks adorn the cornice. On the front (east) elevation, a centered, metal sign with neon letters spelling "BRICKLAYER'S HALL" is attached to the building just below the cornice (Photos #1-3).

The six doors (three on the front elevation and three on the side elevations) open onto covered stoops; a single-bulb light fixture is mounted above each door. The door openings have flat arches and raised, concrete sills, and each opening holds a single door and a non-historic metal security grate. Three of the original flat, wood doors with three stepped windows remain in place. Most of the original, metal windows are present as well. Although the historic windows vary in configuration, all include three- or four-light casement windows with horizontal muntins. The window openings have metal lintels, flat arches, and rowlock sills. Metal security bars protect the first-story windows.

On the front elevation (Photos #1, 3), a flat-roofed, metal awning shelters the at-grade stoop in front of the entrance. The stoop is composed of square, polished, brick pavers edged with textured brick. Situated to the south of center, the entrance consists of three doors, one for each unit within the building. The group of three doors is surrounded by a continuous flat arch and columns of stretcher bricks. The center and north door openings, leading to units 530B and 530C, respectively, retain their historic doors (Photos #1, 11); the metal, paneled door to unit 530A is non-historic.

The six windows on the front elevation have a fixed sash flanked by four-light, casement windows. There are two windows on each story to the north of the entrance, and one window on each story to the south of the entrance. In the windows to the north of the entrance, the fixed sash comprises an undivided lower half and a two- or four-light upper half. In the windows to the south of the entrance, the fixed sash has four lights.

The north elevation (Photo #3) of the Bricklayers Hall faces the driveway and includes the side entrance to unit 530C, which occupies the northern part of the first floor. The entrance is located east of center and is sheltered by an aluminum, shed-roofed awning. The textured brick stoop at the entrance has a poured concrete landing and a concrete step that leads down towards the front of the building. The entrance retains its original wood door with three stepped lights. Seven of the nine windows on the north elevation are double, four-light, casement windows. The remaining two windows include a double, three-light, casement window and a single, three-light, casement window, both of which are located to the west of the door.

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On the south elevation (Photo #6), an entrance near the center leads to a first-floor office suite (530A), and an entrance in the westernmost bay provides access to the second floor (530B). Each entrance has an awning and stoop that are similar to the ones on the north elevation, and both doors are non-historic. The window immediately to the east of the door to 530A is a historic, double, four-light, casement window. Two smaller window openings are located to the west of the door. One holds a three-light, metal, casement window, while the other is mostly covered by an exterior metal duct that connects to HVAC equipment that stands on a concrete platform. Two of the first-story window openings contain non-historic, one-over-one, vinyl windows. On the second story, two double, four-light, metal, casement windows are located on each side of two double, three-light, metal, casement windows with frosted glass.

The northern half of the rear (west) elevation (Photo #5) is set back approximately three feet from the southern half. The northern half has two evenly spaced windows on each story. Three of these windows are original, double, four-light, metal, casement windows; the northernmost first-story window opening holds a non-historic, one-over-one, vinyl window. In the southern half, a double, four-light, casement window is situated in the southern bay on the second story. Two smaller openings in the northern bay, one on each story, serve as entrance points for air ducts; the lower half of the second-floor opening contains glass blocks that are visible from the interior. The HVAC equipment associated with the ducts stands on a concrete slab next to the building and is enclosed by pierced brick walls.

First Floor – Interior Finishes

The two first-floor office suites in the Bricklayers Hall have similar interior finishes (Photos #8-13). The historic walls are plaster with vinyl baseboards, and the ceilings are textured plaster. No trim is present on the windows or exterior door openings. The interior door openings feature narrow, flat, trim with a square-edged outer bead. Many of the original, two-panel, wood doors and several of the metal doorknobs are present, especially in 530C, the larger of the two suites. The bathrooms feature historic tile on the lower half of the walls, but the fixtures have been replaced. Throughout both office suites, non-historic flooring has been laid over the original asbestos tile, which is visible in a closet in 530A.

First Floor – Unit 530A

The floor plan of Unit 530A includes a reception room (Photo #8), a central conference room (Photo #9), and a back office (Photo #10). A non-historic, flat, single door in the reception room's west wall leads to a short hallway that opens into the conference room. In the southeast corner of the conference room is a small room that leads to the side entrance. A recessed door to its west leads to a bathroom that is situated in the southwest corner of the room. A west-facing, under-stairs closet occupies the northeast corner of the conference room. The back office includes a closet along the north wall.

All but two of the interior door openings in 530A have their historic trim and doors (Photo #10). In the reception room, the doorway to the conference room is surrounded by non-historic, molded wood trim with bulls-eye blocks; the opening holds a non-historic, flat, wood door (Photo #9). Non-historic, molded trim is also present on both sides of the opening between the

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conference room and the small room in its southeast corner; this opening holds a non-historic, louvered, wood door. The reception room and rear office both have non-historic, engineered, wood flooring, while the other rooms have non-historic VCT floors.

First Floor – Unit 530C

In Unit 530C, a reception room, three offices, two storage rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom are arranged around a central room. The front door opens into the reception room (Photo #11), which occupies the southeast corner of Unit 530C and is one of the two rooms at the front of the building. In the late twentieth century, when the building housed a medical office, a single-pane reception window was inserted in the wall between the reception room and the adjacent office (Photo #12). The opening is surrounded by flat, square-edged, wood trim; wood ledges with rounded corners are located below the window on both sides of the wall.

Doors in the west wall of the center room lead to the two back offices (Photo #13). Both door openings are original, but the partition wall between the two offices is fiberboard with vertical battens, suggesting that the original partition wall was removed and later replaced with the existing. In the northwest office, flat wainscoting extends the length of the south wall and projects several inches from the wall; above it is a wood shelf supported by metal brackets.

To the south of the center room are two storage rooms. The wall of the west storage room is set back from that of the larger storage room to its east. The west room contains built-in, wood shelving, while the east room houses HVAC equipment. A bathroom and a kitchen are located to the north of the center room. The side entrance to Unit 530C opens into the kitchen. A non-historic counter and cabinets line the kitchen's west wall.

All of the interior door openings in Unit 530C have their original trim. The existing doors are historic and most retain their original hardware (Photo #13). The door to the east storage room, which houses mechanical equipment, has been modified by the insertion of a vent in its lower panel. No doors are present in the openings in the east wall of the center room. The floors are non-historic, engineered wood in every room but the bathroom, where there is vinyl flooring.

Second Floor – Unit 530B

The second floor of the Bricklayers Hall (Photos #14-17) contains a central foyer with a meeting hall to its north and offices and bathrooms to its south. The interior walls on the second floor are structural hollow clay tile (12" x 4 3/4") with varying finishes. Standard-sized bricks surround all window openings, as well as the doorway between the meeting hall and the foyer. The ceilings, door trim, and interior doors are similar to those on the first floor. Most of the light switch plates and two-bulb sockets are original, but some lights are missing their original glass reflectors. Historic asbestos tile flooring is present throughout the second floor, and original gas heaters remain in several rooms.

Two sets of stairs lead from the exterior to the central foyer (Photos #14-15). Straight-run stairs from the front elevation begin at a small landing just inside the exterior door. The back stairs begin at a similar landing just inside the door at the western end of the south elevation, then

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make a quarter-turn to the east to reach the foyer. Both stairs are closed and are constructed of concrete; rubber treads with metal edges are present on the front stairs. Round, wood railings rest on metal brackets on both sides of the front stairs, but there are no railings on the back stairs. Below the second floor, the walls of the staircases are stuccoed.

The foyer walls and the staircase walls above the first floor are glazed structural tile. Standard-sized bricks form quoins on the corners where the two staircases enter the foyer (Photos #14-15). Square, painted ducts hang from metal brackets on the plaster ceiling, and a historic water fountain and two historic vending machines stand along the foyer's south wall.

Double doors in the north wall of the foyer provide access to the meeting hall that occupies the northern half of the second floor. The meeting hall (Photos #16-17) has unglazed, structural tile walls, and original, electric, light fixtures hang from the ceiling. At the western end of the meeting hall is a full-width, raised platform that extends approximately five feet from the room's western wall. A dais with a wood, built-in lectern is centered in the raised platform. The platform and dais, like the rest of the meeting hall, have asbestos tile flooring. A brick chase is located along the north wall. At the southeast corner of the meeting hall, a short corridor with unglazed, structural tile walls leads south to the office in the southeast corner of the second floor.

A closet, two offices, and two bathrooms are arrayed around the southern half of the foyer (Photo #15). The closet is located on the foyer's west wall, immediately to the south of the back stairs. The foyer's east wall is set back from the edge of the front stairs and contains the door to the southeast corner office. This office, like the adjacent corridor and meeting hall, has unglazed, structural tile walls. Unlike the two-panel wood doors found throughout the second floor, the door leading from this office to the corridor and the meeting hall is a flat, wood door.

Three doors are located along the foyer's south wall. The door at the eastern end leads to the women's restroom, while the two closely spaced doors at the western end lead to the men's restroom and to the office in the southwest corner. These three rooms have painted, structural tile walls. The bathrooms retain their original plumbing fixtures.

Outbuilding, circa 1920 (non-contributing building)

A wood-frame outbuilding (Photo #7) stands in the northwest corner of the property, less than a foot from the property lines, and faces east. The building has a corrugated metal, shed roof and rests on rubble stone and brick piers. The exterior walls are clad in a variety of horizontal wood siding; several areas with missing siding are patched with corrugated metal. A four-panel wood door that was likely salvaged is located at the northern end of the east elevation. A window opening at the south end of the east elevation is covered with a metal grate and corrugated metal. There are no openings on the other elevations.

The extensive patching of the exterior cladding compromises the outbuilding's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, and it lacks clear association with the people, organizations, and events that make the property significant. Architectural evidence suggests that it was constructed before the Bricklayers Hall, but there is currently no documentation indicating that

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the Montgomery Improvement Association or Charles Conley used the building during the period of significance.

Barbecue Pit/Concession Stand, circa 1980 (non-contributing building)

A one-story barbecue pit and concession stand (Photo #4) is located a few feet east of the wood-frame shed, near the northern property line. The building has a concrete slab foundation, and its low-pitched, front-gable roof is covered with V-crimp metal. The exterior walls are composed of wood-framed screens set atop half-height concrete block walls. Similar screens are located in the gables.

A metal screen door is centered in the south elevation. The east elevation is configured for food service and includes a wood ledge that extends the length of the elevation and is supported by metal brackets. Awning windows that open towards the inside of the building occupy the lower half of the two southernmost bays of the elevation. Metal grates cover the lower half of the two northernmost bays.

An interior brick chimney at the north end of the building serves a brick-walled grill that extends approximately half the length of the interior. A ledge supported by metal brackets runs nearly the full length of the east wall.

Evaluation of Integrity

The Bricklayers Hall retains all seven aspects of integrity. It has a documented association with the Montgomery Improvement Association and with attorney Charles S. Conley during the periods when they achieved historical significance. The building remains in its original location and the lot size is unchanged since Bricklayers Union No. 3 purchased the property in 1945. The property possesses integrity of setting since most of the surrounding buildings were erected during or before the period of significance. Minor changes to the landscaping, such as the addition of brick planters, walkways, and a concrete parking pad, do not substantially detract from the property's overall integrity of setting. The two non-contributing buildings are located near the rear of the property and are smaller than the Bricklayers Hall.

The Bricklayers Hall possesses integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. On the exterior, the historic fenestration, awnings, signs, and building materials remain intact and visible. The most notable change to the exterior is the replacement of a few windows and doors. However, most of the historic windows are present, and the most highly visible (east and north) elevations retain all of their historic windows and most of their historic doors. On the interior, the floor plan remains virtually unaltered, and changes to the interior finishes are limited to new flooring on the first floor, a few replacement doors and trim, and the insertion of an interior window. The floor plan and finishes on the second floor are exceptionally well-preserved. The workmanship of the structural tile walls is an important element of the building's historic character because of its connection with the Bricklayers Union. The property's integrity of association, location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship contribute to its integrity of feeling.

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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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

LAW

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1956-1965

Significant Dates

1956

1960

1961

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Charles S. Conley, Jr.

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Bricklayers Hall is significant under Criterion A at the national, state, and local levels in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, Politics/Government, and Social History for its association with the Montgomery Improvement Association. The period of significance for Criterion A begins in February 1956, when the Montgomery Improvement Association set up headquarters in the recently completed Bricklayers Hall, and ends in 1960, when the organization moved out of the building. The MIA achieved national significance during the 381-day Montgomery Bus Boycott that began in early December 1955 and played an important role in the development of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the mid-20th century. After the boycott ended in December 1956, the MIA used its resources and experience to fight racial segregation and discrimination at the state and local levels.

The Bricklayers Hall is significant under Criterion B in the area of Law for its association with African American civil rights lawyer Charles S. Conley, Jr. The period of significance for Criterion B is 1961 to 1965, the years that Conley had his office in the Bricklayers Hall. During this period, Conley worked on several cases that led to federal court orders directing state and local authorities to end discriminatory practices in public libraries, jury selection, and interstate buses. He was co-counsel in the U.S. Supreme Court case *New York Times v. Sullivan*, which protected journalists from libel when they reported on public officials' treatment of African Americans who protested segregation. These legal victories advanced the cause of African American civil rights in Montgomery and throughout Alabama.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Politics/Government, Social History, and Ethnic Heritage: Black (national, state, and local significance)

From February 1956 until 1960, the Bricklayers Hall in Montgomery, Alabama housed the headquarters of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). The MIA formed on December 5, 1955, four days after activist Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to move from her seat in a racially segregated bus. Led by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the organization achieved national significance for its role in managing and sustaining the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956). For 381 days starting in December 1955, African Americans in Montgomery refused to ride the municipal buses to protest racial segregation and mistreatment on the buses. The boycott had far-reaching effects on the development of the Civil Rights Movement. The federal lawsuit that grew out of the boycott went to U.S. Supreme Court as *Gayle v. Browder*. The Supreme Court struck down Montgomery's bus segregation laws, setting a precedent that African Americans used to challenge segregation in public transportation throughout the South. The way that the MIA organized, operated, and sustained the bus boycott

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in Montgomery served as a model for other communities protesting racial injustice. The boycott also launched Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. onto a national stage, beginning his rise to a position of leadership in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.³

After the boycott ended in December 1956, the Montgomery Improvement Association continued to have state and local significance for its contributions to the fight against racial discrimination in Montgomery and throughout Alabama. The organization provided training in non-violent protests, made financial contributions to support legal challenges to segregation, and encouraged African Americans to register to vote.

Historical Background: Bricklayers Union No. 3 and Bricklayers Hall

Bricklayers Union No. 3 of Montgomery, Alabama built the Bricklayers Hall in 1954 on a lot that it purchased in 1945 from white businessman E.H. Tillery. The local union was part of the International Union of Bricklayers, Masons, and Plasterers, which formed in 1865 as the National Union of Bricklayers. African American bricklayers in Montgomery organized before 1901, when the *Montgomery Advertiser* reported on its participation in the city's annual Labor Day parade. The local union likely formed in the 1890s, around the same time that the national union was making greater efforts to recognize and support African American members. In the mid-1920s, Bricklayers Union No. 3 had approximately thirty-five members, more than half of whom were African American.⁴ City directories from the 1930s and 1940s do not list a meeting hall for Bricklayers Union No. 3.

When the Bricklayers Union acquired the property on South Union Street, the lot included a dwelling that the former owner and his heirs had rented to African American tenants for more than a decade. Initially, the union continued to lease the house to the existing tenant, Johnnie M. Hunter.⁵ In April 1949, the union's Board of Trustees approached the City government for permission to demolish the existing dwelling and build a two-story brick building that would have offices on the first floor and a meeting hall on the second floor. The City approved the request in early July, but the effort to build a meeting hall then stalled.⁶ City directories indicate that by 1951, the house on the property was serving as both a dwelling and meeting hall for the Bricklayers Union.⁷

³ Susan Salvatore, "Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study" (Washington, D.C.: National Historic Landmarks Program, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2004, revised 2009), p. 49.

⁴ "Celebrate Labor Day," *Montgomery Advertiser*, Sept. 3, 1901; National Urban League, *Negro Membership in American Labor Unions* (New York, NY: The Alexander Press, 1930), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006784912>, pp. 41-42.

⁵ Montgomery, Alabama City Directories, 1946 (p. 114), 1947 (p. 131), 1949 (p. 144), 1950 (p. 154). In 1949, Paul Isaac rented the house, but Hunter returned the following year.

⁶ Bricklayers Hall File, Planning and Land Use Division, City of Montgomery. By the time the City approved the request, the union had decided to put apartments on the first floor instead of offices, but later returned to the original plan of offices on the first floor.

⁷ Montgomery, Alabama City Directories, 1951 (p. 182) and 1953 (p. 163).

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The union revived its plans to build a meeting hall a few years later. In 1954, they demolished the dwelling on the property and likely completed the new building later that year. It was undoubtedly completed by March 1955, when a sweet shop unsuccessfully applied for an occupancy permit.⁸

The design of the Bricklayers Hall reflects the influence of the International Style. The style developed in the 1920s and 1930s and gained popularity in commercial architecture in the U.S. after World War II. The building's rectangular shape, asymmetrical façade, uniform exterior materials, flat roof, metal casement windows, and windowless wall surfaces are all characteristic of this style. The flat-roofed awning is reminiscent of the cantilevered projections found on buildings that more strictly adhered to the International Style. The brick quoins are not consistent with the International Style and may reflect the bricklayers' desire to showcase their craft. Both the interior and exterior feature the minimalist ornamentation that was popular in mid-20th-century modern architecture. The sign below the cornice reflects the popularity of neon signs in the mid-20th century.

Bricklayers Hall and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1956 (Criterion A, national, state, local significance in Politics/Government, Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History)

Beginnings of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama, became increasingly angry about the segregation policies on the city's buses. After paying their fares at the front door, black passengers had to exit the bus and re-enter at the back door. On all buses, the front ten seats were reserved for white passengers. Even when black passengers filled all of the seats behind these front ten, they were not allowed to occupy empty places in the section reserved for whites. If the front ten seats were full, drivers expected that African American passengers who were seated would give up their seats to white passengers who boarded the bus.⁹

White bus drivers also frequently mistreated African American passengers. As black passengers were making their way to the back door after paying their fares at the front of the bus, drivers would sometimes pull away before they had re-boarded, either leaving them at the bus stop or trapping them in the back door. Drivers forcibly removed African Americans from buses, arbitrarily refused to accept transfers or fares, demanded that they give up seats that they were entitled to occupy, and called police to arrest those who protested this unfair treatment. Since many African Americans relied on the buses to get to and from their jobs, this treatment was especially galling.¹⁰

⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1910, republished 1953-1954, Montgomery, Alabama, vol. 2, Sheet 127; Montgomery, Alabama City Directories, 1954 (p. 298), 1955 (p. 212), and 1956 (p. 238); Tenancy Applications, Bricklayers Hall File, Planning and Land Use Division, City of Montgomery.

⁹ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 14; Jo Ann Gibson Robinson and David J. Garrow, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), pp. 20, 25-27, 35-37, 43.

¹⁰ Branch, pp. 120, 127; Robinson and Garrow, pp. 15-17, 20-22, 32-39, 43.

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The Women's Political Council (WPC), led by Alabama State University professor Jo Ann Robinson, began formally protesting the seating policies and mistreatment on city buses in 1950. They met with the mayor, with city commissioners, and with bus company officials to discuss black passengers' grievances. Although their efforts resulted in some changes, such as more frequent stops in black neighborhoods and calls for more courteous treatment of African American passengers, these changes were typically short-lived. Frustrated with the lack of action by the city and bus company officials, the WPC began planning a boycott. A successful bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1953, coupled with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools in 1954, encouraged their belief that boycotting the buses might produce lasting change.¹¹

On Thursday, December 1, 1955, Montgomery police civil rights activist Rosa L. Parks for violating the city's bus segregation laws after peacefully refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. Working through the night of December 1st, Robinson and the WPC prepared flyers calling for African Americans to boycott the city's buses starting the following Monday. They distributed the flyers the following day, and Robinson enlisted the support of community leaders, including black ministers who spread the word during Sunday sermons. Others began planning transportation assistance for people who rode the bus long distances to work. On Monday, December 5th, nearly all the city's black residents refused to ride the buses.¹²

On the first day of the boycott, community leaders and ministers organized the MIA to represent the black community in negotiations with the city and the bus company and to support and sustain the boycott. The newly formed organization elected Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery to serve as president. The MIA also created a 35-member executive board that included ministers, community leaders, and civil rights activists. Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy of Montgomery's First Baptist Church had been an early supporter of the boycott and was elected vice-president of the MIA in mid-1956. Jo Ann Robinson and Irene West represented the WPC. Board member Rufus Lewis was a passionate advocate for voter registration, a partner in the funeral home that stood next to the Bricklayers Hall, and founder of the Citizens' Club, a social club that also promoted voting rights. E.D. Nixon, president of the state chapter of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was a board member as well. A former president of the state and local branches of the NAACP, Nixon had long championed the cause of civil rights for African Americans in Montgomery.¹³

In its first meeting with city commissioners after the boycott started, the MIA did not call for full integration of the city buses. Instead, they demanded a seating policy in which white passengers would fill the seats starting from the front of the bus and black passengers would fill the seats

¹¹ Robinson and Garrow, pp. 20, 22-27, 30-32, 39, 40-42; Salvatore, pp. 46-47.

¹² Robinson and Garrow, pp. 19-20, 43-47, 53-61; Branch, 128-129, 131-135.

¹³ Branch, pp. 121, 137; Robinson and Garrow, pp. 27-29, 64-65, 69-70; Gwendolyn M. Patton, Guide to the Rufus Lewis Papers, 1935-1937, H. Councill Trenholm State Community College Library, <https://www.trenholmstate.edu/future-students/student-resources/library/collections/rufus-lewis-collection/>

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starting from the back of the bus until all seats were filled. They also insisted that bus drivers treat black passengers courteously and that the bus company assign African American drivers to routes that primarily served black neighborhoods. City and bus company officials refused to grant any of the MIA's requests.¹⁴

The MIA and Bricklayers Hall, February-December 1956

For the headquarters of the MIA, its leaders looked for buildings owned and controlled by African American organizations that were well-established and not dependent on white support. The MIA's first, temporary headquarters were located in the Alabama Negro Baptist Center. On December 15th, King announced that the organization had found what it hoped would be a permanent home in the Citizens' Club. After hearing rumors that police intended to raid the Citizens' Club, the MIA moved again, briefly back to the Alabama Negro Baptist Center then to First Baptist Church in early February. Later that month, the MIA moved its headquarters to offices on the first floor of the Bricklayers Hall on South Union Street. King later wrote of the Bricklayers Hall, "Here the white community could not force us out, since most of the members and all of the officers of the union that owned the building were Negroes."¹⁵

Bricklayers Union No. 3 had several connections to the leaders of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Percy Doak, the union secretary, was a member of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, where MIA president Martin Luther King, Jr. was pastor. E.D. Nixon, who later claimed credit for securing the space in the Bricklayers Hall, was also involved in the African American labor movement through his own position with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, perhaps the most well-known African American labor union.¹⁶ The Bricklayers Hall stood in Montgomery's Centennial Hill neighborhood, an African American neighborhood that was home to many leaders in the city's black community, including Dr. King.¹⁷

The MIA occupied unit 530C, the larger of the two first-floor office suites in the Bricklayers Hall. Dr. King's office was located in the northeast corner of the office suite, and his personal secretary, Maude Ballou, had a private office in the building as well. Financial secretary Erna

¹⁴ Branch, pp. 146-149; Robinson and Garrow, pp. 79-81.

¹⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), n.p. (quotation); "Program for MIA Mass Meeting at First Baptist Church," in *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project [MLK Papers]*, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, Volume III, p. 85, n. 7, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol03Scans/84_15-Dec-1955_Program%20for%20MIA%20Mass%20Meeting.pdf; "Notes on MIA Executive Board Meeting, by Donald T. Ferron," in *MLK Papers*, Volume III, p. 121, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol03Scans/119_2-Feb-1956_Notes%20on%20MIA%20Exec%20Board%20Meeting.pdf.

¹⁶ Wally G. Vaughn and Richard W. Willis, *Reflections on Our Pastor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church*, p. 154; Branch, p. 163.

¹⁷ City of Montgomery Planning Commission, "Centennial Hill Neighborhood Plan" (2008), pp. 13-14.

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Dungee and general manager Hazel Gregory, both paid employees, worked at MIA headquarters in the Bricklayers Hall as well.¹⁸

From their offices in the Bricklayers Hall, Dr. King and the staff managed the organization's finances, received and wrote correspondence, coordinated meetings, and prepared reports. Among Maude Ballou's responsibilities was collecting gas receipts for carpools and reimbursing the black-owned gas stations that supplied gas for private cars that transported boycott participants to and from work. The staff used the center room to host "guests, ministers, [and] visitors," and provided desks that ministers could use when needed. Starting in June 1956, the organization printed the monthly *MIA Newsletter*, edited by Jo Ann Robinson, at the headquarters. During the boycott, the MIA used the union's second-floor meeting hall for meetings and for distributing shoes and other supplies to participants in the boycott.¹⁹

The MIA and the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Montgomery's city commissioners and bus company officials refused to accede to the MIA's demands, and the boycott continued. As weeks turned into months, the MIA supported and sustained the African American community by holding mass meetings at local churches and by organizing transportation. At these mass meetings, the MIA communicated information about the boycott, and stirring speeches by Dr. King, Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, and other ministers fortified the black community's commitment to staying off the buses. The MIA's Transportation Committee, led by Rufus Lewis, organized a carpool system that incorporated over 300 privately owned cars, 43 dispatch stations, and 42 pickup locations. As the boycott began to attract national press coverage, the MIA and local churches received donations of money and vehicles that allowed them to supplement the privately owned cars with paid drivers in station wagons owned by the MIA or a local church.²⁰

A small number of white moderates in Montgomery actively supported the boycott and others sympathized with the boycotters, but most whites in Montgomery were committed to maintaining segregation and racial inequality. Elected primarily by white voters who overwhelmingly supported segregation, city officials refused to change the seating policies on city buses. When the MIA also stood firm in their demands, local government officials and the police deployed legal and extralegal strategies in an attempt to undermine the boycott. In February, King and over twenty others were arrested under the state's anti-boycott laws, and in the fall, white government officials attempted to outlaw the car pools. City officials conspired to produce a fake news story that that African American leaders had dropped their demands and abandoned the boycott. Police officers harassed boycott participants and carpool drivers, arresting them for minor traffic violations.²¹

¹⁸ Robinson and Garrow, pp. 65-66.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 65-66, 74-75, 94; personal communication with Doris Crenshaw, September 2019.

²⁰ Robinson and Garrow, pp. 77-95; Branch, pp. 145-146, 150-151, 159; Salvatore, p. 48.

²¹ Robinson and Garrow, pp 101-112, 115-121, 123-125, 128-130, 149-161; Branch, pp. 155-157, 175, 183-184, 192-193.

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Some white citizens used violence in an attempt to intimidate boycotters and leaders of the MIA and frighten them into ending the boycott. The White Citizens Council pressured local government officials to hold the line on bus segregation and held rallies to galvanize support for segregation. Bombs were planted in the homes of boycott leaders King and Nixon, causing property damage but inflicting no serious injuries. The MIA's headquarters at Bricklayers Hall was not bombed.²²

As the boycott was going on, attorneys Fred Gray and Clifford Durr were appealing Parks' conviction for violating the bus segregation laws. For several years, Gray and Durr, along with E.D. Nixon, had been searching for a case that could serve as the legal basis to challenge Montgomery's city bus segregation laws in court. Because Parks had an impeccable reputation and the only charge against her was violating the segregation laws, her case presented a near-perfect opportunity. However, the legal challenge to Parks's arrest became mired in the state court system, which was dominated by white segregationist judges.²³

With the MIA and government officials seemingly at an impasse and Parks's appeal stalled, the MIA agreed to proceed with challenging bus segregation in federal court. On February 1, 1956, Gray filed a federal lawsuit calling for full integration of the city buses. In June, a majority of the three judges hearing the case in U.S. District Court ruled that Montgomery's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional, but state and city attorneys appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In November, in *Gayle v. Browder*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the district court's ruling. The boycott ended on December 21, 1956, and African Americans boarded racially integrated city buses.²⁴ The court's ruling had broader significance as well by setting a nationwide legal precedent that segregation in public transportation was illegal. In communities throughout the South, African Americans used the court's decision in *Gayle v. Browder* to challenge segregation in public transportation and public facilities.²⁵

The Montgomery Bus Boycott established a blueprint for the nonviolent mass protests that became a hallmark of the Civil Rights Movement. According to King biographer Adam Fairclough, "Before the boycott, fear of white violence had rendered mass direct action a nonstarter." However, the boycott demonstrated that "ostentatious nonviolence" would restrain violent responses from whites, and the success of nonviolent mass protest in Montgomery energized and emboldened African Americans throughout the South.²⁶ Even before the boycott ended, King and the MIA were working to disseminate the techniques of nonviolent protest. In early December 1956, the MIA sponsored its first Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change. During the weeklong institute, Dr. King advocated nonviolent resistance and discussed leadership, unity, and the role of the church. The nonviolent protest strategy taught at this and

²² Robinson and Garrow, pp. 108-112, 125-128, 130-133, 139-141; Branch, pp. 148-150, 164-165, 167,

²³ Branch, pp. 122-123, 127, 129-131, 135-136, 158-159.

²⁴ Robinson and Garrow, pp. 135-138, 162-163; Branch, pp. 158-159, 167, 188, 192-196.

²⁵ Salvatore, p. 49.

²⁶ Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 34-37 (quotations, p. 37).

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subsequent institutes became a hallmark of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and early 1960s.²⁷

Bricklayers Hall and the Montgomery Improvement Association, 1956-1960 (Criterion A, state and local significance in Ethnic Heritage: Black and Social History)

After the boycott ended in December 1956, internal divisions emerged within the MIA as it worked to define its purpose after the end of the boycott. Dr. King remained president of the organization, but he also spent a substantial amount of time away from Montgomery using his national recognition to promote the cause of civil rights.²⁸ King's leadership of the MIA and his extraordinary abilities to motivate and inspire African Americans in Montgomery to continue their protest against racial injustice captured the attention of the nation. His success in Montgomery set him along the path towards becoming a national leader in the fight for African American civil rights. In 1959, the MIA's Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where King was becoming increasingly involved with a new organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC).²⁹

In the late 1950s, the MIA committed itself to fighting for equal rights for African Americans in Montgomery and throughout Alabama. Rufus Lewis led a Committee on Registering and Voting that encouraged local African Americans to exercise their right to vote. The MIA also contributed money to repairing churches in Montgomery that whites bombed as a result of the pastor's and congregation's support for the Civil Rights Movement. The organization supported civil rights protests and legal challenges to segregation not only in Montgomery, but also in other communities such as Tuskegee in Macon County and Lomax in Chilton County. By providing training and support to fellow Alabamians who were protesting racial segregation and political inequality, the MIA continued to have statewide significance as a civil rights organization in the years after the boycott ended.³⁰

In 1960, Dr. King resigned as president of the MIA and moved to Atlanta to focus on the SCLC. Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy succeeded King as president of the MIA, which moved its offices out of the Bricklayers Hall in 1960 or 1961.³¹

Criterion B: Law (state and local significance)

Attorney Charles S. Conley, Jr. rented an office in the Bricklayers Hall from 1961 until 1965. During this period, Conley played an important role in the legal fight for African American civil rights in Montgomery and throughout the state of Alabama. Conley worked on cases that led to federal court orders mandating the end of segregation in interstate and intrastate bus systems in Alabama (*Lewis v. Greyhound*, 1961) and in public libraries in Montgomery (*Cobb v.*

²⁷ Branch, pp. 194-195.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 200-201, 206-207, 214-215, 225, 237.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 194-195, 229-230.

³⁰ *MIA Newsletter*, Volume 1, No. 9 (June 28, 1958); Charles G. Gomillion to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., July 18, 1957, in *MLK Papers*, pp. 233-237.

³¹ Branch, p. 270; Montgomery, Alabama City Directories, 1960 (p. 194) and 1961 (p. 259)

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Montgomery Library Board, 1962). His work on *Seals v. Wiman* resulted in a federal court directing the State of Alabama to establish a system to ensure that African Americans were included in juries. In 1964, Conley appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court as co-counsel in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254 (1964), in which the court defined the limits of public officials' ability to sue the press for libel. The decision protected the rights of journalists and civil rights activists to use the press to criticize public officials who defended racial segregation or mistreated protesters.

Charles S. Conley, Jr. and Bricklayers Hall, 1961-1965

Charles S. Conley, Jr. was born in Montgomery, Alabama in 1921. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Alabama State University, he attended the University of Michigan, where he earned a master's degree in education in 1947 and a master's degree in history the following year. In 1955, he graduated from New York University Law School. Conley then took a position as professor of law at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee.³²

In 1961, Conley moved to Montgomery, Alabama, and entered into private practice. He rented the smaller office suite (530A) in Bricklayers Hall on South Union Street, and practiced law from this office until 1965, when he relocated to a building on nearby Bainbridge Street.³³ During the period when he worked from Bricklayers Hall, Conley argued several civil rights cases. Four of these in particular advanced the cause of African American civil rights and established him as one of the leading civil rights attorneys in Alabama.

Lewis v. Greyhound

Conley was one of several lawyers for the plaintiffs in *Lewis v. Greyhound*, which resulted in a federal court order forbidding state and local officials from enforcing racial segregation in buses and bus terminals in Alabama. In the 1950s, federal regulations and court rulings had established that segregation in interstate transportation was unconstitutional. After the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation in public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) issued a rule in 1955 stating that segregation in interstate buses and in bus terminals used by interstate travelers was illegal. However, in much of the South, including Alabama, bus companies and state and local officials ignored the ICC rule. Their refusal to change policy was part of broader refusal by the white Southern political leadership to accept court-ordered integration, a strategy known as massive resistance. In the late 1950s, African Americans in various states and localities filed successful lawsuits challenging segregation in interstate transportation, but segregation remained widespread.³⁴

³² Obituary for Charles Conley, copy provided by Dr. Suresh Kaushik.

³³ Montgomery, Alabama City Directories, 1960 (p. 194), 1961 (p. 259), 1965, and 1967 (p. 277). The 1965 city directory lists Conley's office at 530 S. Union Street, and the 1967 directory lists his office at 315 South Bainbridge Street (p. 167). No copies of the 1966 city directory could be located, so it is possible that he moved out of the Bricklayers Hall in 1966.

³⁴ Salvatore, pp. 46, 50-51.

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Frustrated with the lack of change, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a Chicago-based civil rights organization that formed during World War II, organized Freedom Rides in May 1961. CORE sent groups of white and black passengers on interstate buses operated by Trailways and Greyhound, the two major bus companies. The Freedom Riders traveled through Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia without major incidents, but suffered violent attacks in the cities of Anniston and Birmingham in Alabama, forcing the group to halt the rides. African American student activists from Nashville, Tennessee organized a group to continue the rides starting in Birmingham, where the CORE Freedom Rides ended. On May 20, 1961, the Freedom Riders boarded a Greyhound bus in Birmingham, with police escort that the state provided at the insistence of U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. The next stop was Montgomery, Alabama.³⁵

As the bus carrying the Freedom Riders approached Montgomery, the police escort disappeared. When the Freedom Riders got off the bus at the Greyhound station in the city, a mob of whites assaulted them, leaving several riders unconscious and severely beaten. Although the police had knowledge of the proposed attack, they intentionally allowed it to continue for some time before intervening to stop the violence. U.S. Attorney General Kennedy dispatched hundreds of federal marshals to Montgomery to protect the Freedom Riders. Yet the next evening, a white mob attacked a meeting of civil rights supporters in Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy's First Baptist Church. Federal marshals were unable to stop the riot. Under pressure from the federal government, Alabama Governor John Patterson declared martial law and called in the National Guard to end the violence.³⁶

The U.S. Department of Justice negotiated an agreement with the states of Alabama and Mississippi to allow the Freedom Rides to continue on May 24, but the question of whether Montgomery and other cities in Alabama would continue to enforce racial segregation in interstate bus terminals remained unanswered. On May 25, lawyers Charles Conley, Fred Gray, and S.S. Seay, Jr. of Montgomery, along with Northern white lawyers Louis H. Pollack and Jack Greenberg, filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama on behalf of five Freedom Riders and two African Americans from Montgomery. The attorneys argued that segregation in interstate bus transportation violated the plaintiffs' 14th Amendment rights to equal protection of the law and due process. Drawing upon earlier court rulings, they also contended that segregation of buses and terminals represented a form of discrimination in interstate commerce and thus violated the commerce clause in Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution.³⁷

On November 1, 1961, Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered state and local officials to cease enforcing racial segregation in interstate and intrastate buses and in any facilities that served interstate passengers. The order applied not only to Montgomery, but to all cities in the Middle District of Alabama. Judge Johnson's order came the same day that the

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 63-65.

³⁶ Salvatore, p. 65; *Lewis v. the Greyhound Corporation*, 199 F. Supp. 210 (M.D. Ala. 1961), <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/199/210/2391499/>

³⁷ Salvatore, pp. 65-66; *Lewis v. the Greyhound Corporation*.

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ICC issued a clearer regulation banning segregation in interstate and intrastate buses. With a direct federal court order and federal regulations clearly and specifically declaring segregation in buses and bus terminals illegal, government officials and bus companies finally relented.³⁸

Seals v. Wiman

In the summer of 1961, Charles Conley agreed to defend Willie Seals, Jr., an African American man sentenced to death in 1958 for allegedly raping a white woman. During the jury trial in Mobile, Alabama, several African American witnesses testified that Seals was far from the scene of the crime, yet an all-white jury returned a guilty verdict based on confessions that were likely coerced. Seals's white defense lawyer failed to raise several issues that indicated Seals was not receiving a fair trial, including the all-white jury, the police's use of violence to elicit confessions, and newspaper publicity that prejudiced jurors to believe Seals was guilty. Local lawyers appealed the verdict, but after the Alabama Supreme Court denied his appeal for the second time in 1960, the Mobile Non-Partisan Voters League, a local African American community organization, turned to Conley for help.³⁹

The first obstacle that Conley faced was getting a stay of execution from a federal judge in time to prevent Seals's death, scheduled for the morning of July 7, 1961. Conley could not file an appeal to the federal courts until Seals had exhausted all avenues to appeal at the state level. The governor granted a clemency hearing in Montgomery, but it was held in the afternoon of July 6, leaving little time for Conley to attend the hearing, get to Birmingham and get a stay from the federal district court judge, and deliver it to the prison where Seals was being held. With assistance from white New York attorney Albert Kinoy, whom Conley had gotten to know through his work with the SCLC, he quickly assembled arguments for the federal judge and managed to get the stay of execution in time.⁴⁰

Conley saw in the Seals case an opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of Alabama's segregated judicial system. As the case moved through federal courts, he focused on two violations of Seals's constitutional rights under the 14th Amendment. First, he argued that the systematic exclusion of African Americans from the jury rolls denied Seals a fair trial. Second, Conley contested the longstanding rule that if a defendant's lawyer did not raise relevant violations of constitutional rights during the trial, the defendant waived the right to raise those objections on appeal. Not surprisingly given the segregated judicial system in mid-20th-century Alabama, Seals's white lawyer had not questioned the racial composition of the grand jury that indicted Seals, nor of the trial jury that convicted him. In the South, where most lawyers were white and unwilling to challenge the systemic racism in state and local courts, the effect of this rule was to deny black defendants their constitutional rights to a fair trial and due process of law.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Arthur Kinoy, *Rights on Trial: The Odyssey of a People's Lawyer* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 161-162, 164-165; *Seals v. State of Alabama*, 122 So. 2d 513 (1960); *Seals v. Wiman*, 304 F. 3d 53 (5th Cir. 1962).

⁴⁰ Kinoy, pp. 157-158, 163-167.

⁴¹ Kinoy, pp. 166-173; *Seals v. Wiman*, 304 F. 3d 53 (5th Cir. 1962).

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In 1962, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Seals's conviction. The three-judge court agreed with Conley's argument that Alabama's practice of excluding African Americans from juries denied Seals his constitutional right to a fair trial and ordered the state to develop a jury selection system that did not exclude African Americans. The judges also ruled that the failure to raise constitutional questions during the jury trial did not waive Seals's right to raise such issues on appeal. The court's ruling in *Seals v. Wiman* set an important precedent that lawyers would use to challenge the exclusion of African Americans from juries throughout the South.⁴²

After the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, Seals's case went back and forth between state and federal courts, as the state repeatedly re-tried and convicted him and federal courts overturned the convictions. Seals was finally released from prison in 1970.⁴³

Cobb v. Montgomery Library Board

In 1962, Conley represented Robert L. Cobb, one of several young people who challenged racial segregation in Montgomery's public libraries. Despite the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and a string of federal court rulings striking down segregation laws, Montgomery's political leaders stubbornly resisted African Americans' attempts to integrate public facilities. In 1959, for instance, the city government closed all municipal parks rather than integrate them. Three years later, when Cobb and five others walked into the local public library branch that served whites, the director of the library asked them to leave and threatened to call the police if they did not. The group left before the police arrived. About a month after the incident, Cobb filed a federal lawsuit claiming that the City of Montgomery had denied him access to the library because of his race in violation of several court rulings affirming that segregation of public facilities was illegal. Conley served as his lawyer, along with Rufus Lewis and Fred Gray.⁴⁴

Lawyers for the City of Montgomery preferred to settle the case out of court, but Conley and Cobb insisted on a trial in order to attract publicity and establish another judicial precedent against segregation. As both sides expected, Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. ruled in Cobb's favor and directed the City to integrate its libraries. In early August, on the evening before the libraries were to open on an integrated basis, city maintenance workers removed the furniture from both the white and black library branches in order to ensure that the two races would not share tables and chairs. The Ku Klux Klan and white segregationists harassed the young people who integrated the libraries and a white librarian who spoke out in favor of integration, but there were no outbreaks of violence. By September, city officials accepted the court order and quietly returned the furniture to the integrated libraries.⁴⁵

⁴² Kinoy, pp. 173-176; *Seals v. Wiman*, 304 F.3d 53 (5th Cir. 1962).

⁴³ "Held 12 Years as Raptist [sic], Man Freed," *Montgomery Advertiser*, June 23, 1970, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Patterson Toby Graham, *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Public Libraries, 1900-1965*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), pp. 75-77.

⁴⁵ Graham, pp. 77-81.

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Abernathy, et al. v. Sullivan and New York Times Co. v. Sullivan

In 1964, Conley appeared before the U.S. Supreme Court as one of three attorneys representing four Alabama ministers whose case was joined with a related case, *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*. The Supreme Court's ruling in this case was a landmark decision in judicial interpretation of freedom of the press and had broad implications for press coverage of the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁶

The case originated with a full-page advertisement that civil rights leaders Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph placed in the *New York Times* on March 29, 1960. In an effort to rally Northern support for the Civil Rights Movement, the advertisement called attention to the Montgomery police's harsh treatment of Alabama State University students who peacefully protested segregation in the snack bar of the state capitol. The advertisement included a list of people who endorsed the appeal, including four African American ministers from Alabama: Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, Rev. J.E. Lowery, Rev. Solomon Seay, Sr., and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. None of the ministers had knowledge of the advertisement or its content prior to its publication.⁴⁷

The city police commissioner, L.B. Sullivan, along with two other government officials, filed civil lawsuits against the *New York Times* and the four Alabama ministers. Sullivan and the other plaintiffs accused the newspaper and the ministers of libel based on the existence of several factual errors in the advertisement. The common interpretation of libel at the time allowed public officials to sue for damages if the press made any false statement about their conduct, even if it was a minor error. Following this interpretation, the state court decided in Sullivan's favor.⁴⁸

Acting separately, the *New York Times* and the four ministers appealed the ruling in the spring and fall of 1961. Charles Conley, Vernon Crawford, and Solomon S. Seay, Jr. represented the four ministers. In appealing the ministers' case, the three lawyers argued that the lawsuit, the verdict, and the excessively large monetary damages awarded to the government officials were intended as punishment for the ministers' role in encouraging African Americans to exercise their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly, free speech, and a fair trial. Lawyers for the *New York Times*, on the other hand, focused on challenging the prevailing legal interpretation of libel on the grounds that it violated the First Amendment protection of freedom of the press.⁴⁹

Conley's case, *Abernathy, et al. v. Sullivan*, was joined with *Sullivan v. New York Times* when the cases went to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964. The justices unanimously ruled in favor of the *New York Times* and the four ministers. Writing for the court, Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. focused on the constitutional questions relating to the First Amendment and freedom of the press. The court ruled that statements about public officials – even if there were minor errors – were not libel unless the press knew that the statements were false. This decision established

⁴⁶ Melvin I. Urofsky, "New York Times Co. v. Sullivan as a Civil Rights Case.," *Communication Law & Policy* 19, no. 2 (2014): 157–158.

⁴⁷ Urofsky, pp. 162-165, 169-170; Affidavit from Ralph D. Abernathy and Plaintiffs' Memorandum in Opposition to Defendants' Motions to Dismiss, *Abernathy v. Patterson*, 295 F.2d 452 (5th Cir. 1961).

⁴⁸ Urofsky, pp. 165-173.

⁴⁹ Urofsky, pp. 173-176, 178-180; Abernathy Affidavit, *Abernathy v. Patterson*.

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stronger protections of freedom of the press and enabled journalists to report on public officials without fear of lawsuits over minor errors.⁵⁰

A concurring opinion on the case by Justice Hugo Black addressed the arguments made by Conley, Crawford, and Seay in defense of the four ministers. Justice Black echoed their argument that the lower court verdicts and the damages awarded to Sullivan and others were not impartial decisions, but rather a misuse of the judicial system to punish the ministers for their participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Moreover, he acknowledged that because of the racial and political climate in Montgomery, it was more likely that Sullivan gained rather than lost prestige as a result of the advertisement's exaggerated statements about his treatment of the protesting students. In the context of civil rights, the Court's decision not only protected the media from libel suits in reporting on the Civil Rights Movement, but also affirmed the Alabama courts' partiality towards whites.⁵¹

Conley's Legal and Judicial Career after 1965

From 1965 to 1968, Conley practiced law from an office at 315 South Bainbridge Street, a few blocks from the Bricklayers Hall. The Bainbridge Street office became known among civil rights activists as Executive House. On the second floor, Conley kept an apartment for out-of-town attorneys such as William Kunstler and Arthur Kinoy, who litigated civil rights cases in the city. In 1968, Conley was appointed Judge of Recorder's Court in Tuskegee in Macon County, Alabama. Four years later, when he was elected Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Macon County, he became the first African American judge elected in Alabama. He served as District Court Judge in Macon County from 1976-1977 before returning to private practice.

Bricklayers Hall after 1965

After 1965, Bricklayers Union No. 3 continued to own the building and used the second floor as a meeting hall. Over the following decades, the union leased the first-floor offices to a variety of tenants, including a school trophy agency, a dentist, and a hair salon. Longtime union secretary Percy Doak died in 1967, and in the 1970s and 1980s, the union struggled financially, resulting in several tax liens on the property. Anoo Kaushik purchased the property in 2011. Currently, attorney Patrice McClammy and the Southern Youth Leadership Development Institute occupy the first-floor offices.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Suresh Kaushik, Representative Thad McClammy, and Doris Crenshaw generously shared their knowledge and research in support of this nomination.

⁵⁰ Urofsky, pp. 180-181; *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254 (1964), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/376/254/#tab-opinion-1944787>; "*New York Times Company v. Sullivan*," *Oyez*, www.oyez.org/cases/1963/39.

⁵¹ Urofsky, pp. 181-182; *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.35

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- 1. Latitude: 32.371196 Longitude: -86.300037
- 2. Latitude: Longitude:
- 3. Latitude: Longitude:
- 4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property corresponds to Lot 5 in the east half of Block 30 of the Goldthwaite Plat of the City of Montgomery, Alabama.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary follows the legal boundaries of the existing property, which encompasses all of the land associated with the building during the periods of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Evelyn D. Causey, PhD
organization: Causey Historical Consulting, LLC
street & number: P.O. Box 3385
city or town: Auburn state: AL zip code: 36831
e-mail: evelyn.d.causey@gmail.com
telephone: (334) 444-4490
date: May 17, 2020

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Bricklayers Hall
City or Vicinity: Montgomery
County: Montgomery State: AL
Photographer: Evelyn D. Causey
Date Photographed: September 10, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 17 East (front) elevation, looking NW.
- 2 of 17 Setting, looking SW along South Union Street.
- 3 of 17 East and north elevations, looking SW, showing driveway leading to rear parking lot.
- 4 of 17 Backyard and parking lot, looking E towards Bricklayers Hall, showing south elevation of concession stand.
- 5 of 17 West (rear) and south elevations, looking E.
- 6 of 17 South (side) elevation, looking NW.

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- 7 of 17 Outbuilding, looking NW.
- 8 of 17 Interior, Unit 530A, reception room, looking SE.
- 9 of 17 Interior, Unit 530A, looking W from reception room towards hallway, central conference room and back office.
- 10 of 17 Interior, Unit 530A, back office, looking NE towards closet and central conference room.
- 11 of 17 Interior, Unit 530C, reception room, looking E.
- 12 of 17 Interior, Unit 530C, front office, looking NE.
- 13 of 17 Interior, Unit 530C, center room, looking W towards back offices, showing doors to kitchen and bathroom (on right).
- 14 of 17 Interior, foyer of Unit 530B (second floor), looking NW towards back stairs and meeting hall.
- 15 of 17 Interior, foyer of Unit 530B (second floor), looking SE towards front office and bathroom.
- 16 of 17 Interior, meeting hall in Unit 530B (second floor), looking W.
- 17 of 17 Interior, meeting hall in Unit 530B (second floor), looking E.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Bricklayers Hall

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Location Map

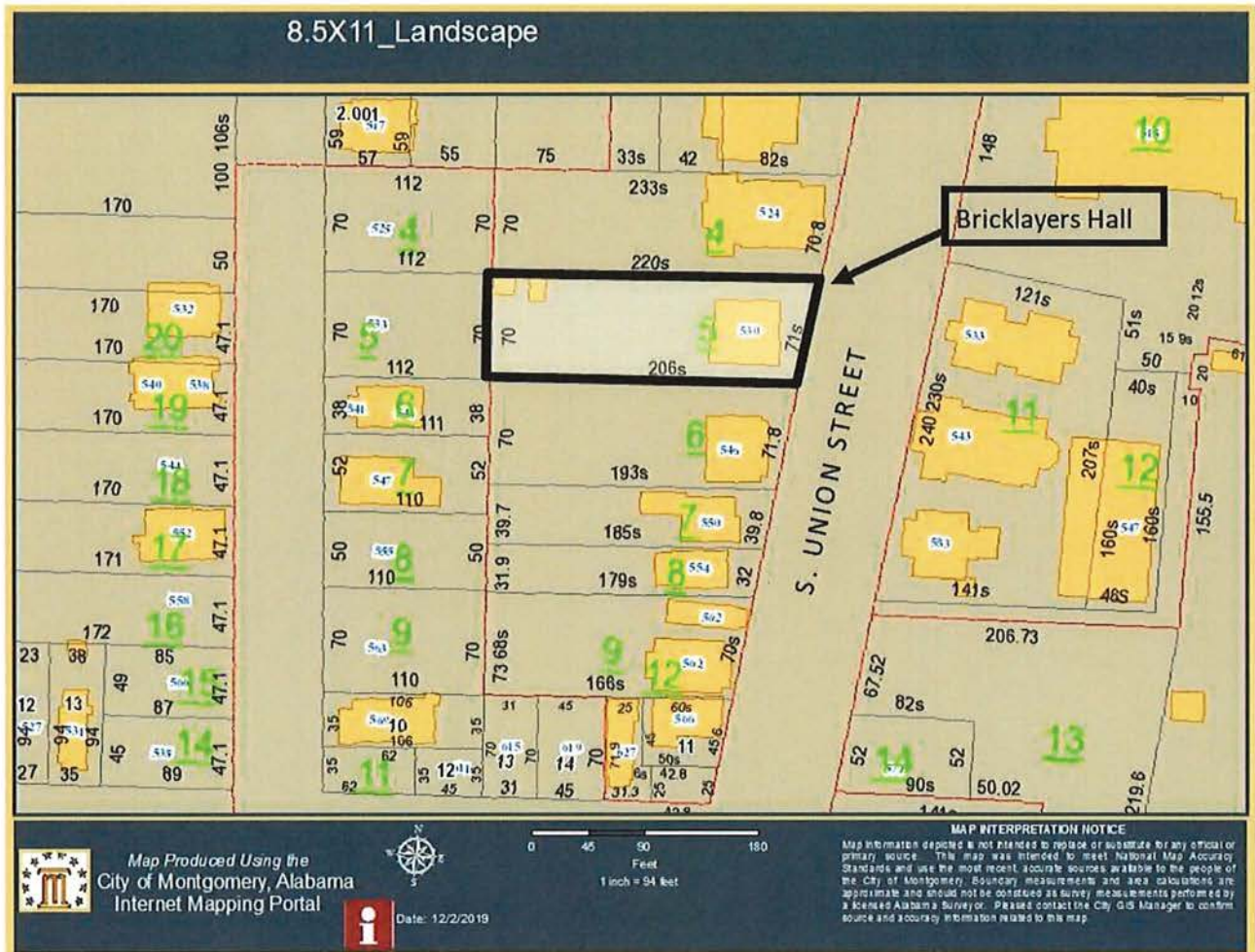


Latitude: 32.371196
Longitude: -86.300037
Datum: WGS84

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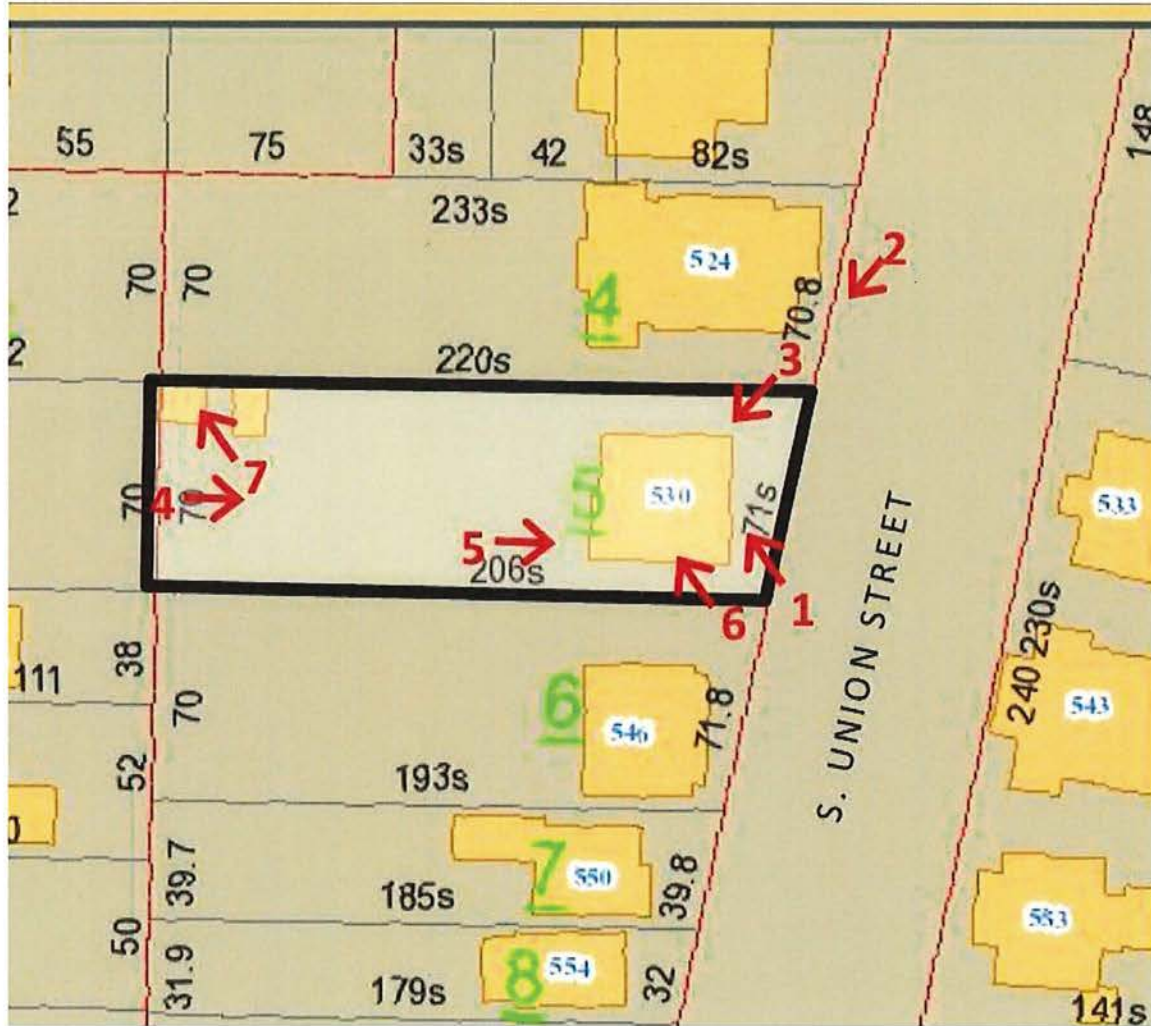
Boundary Map



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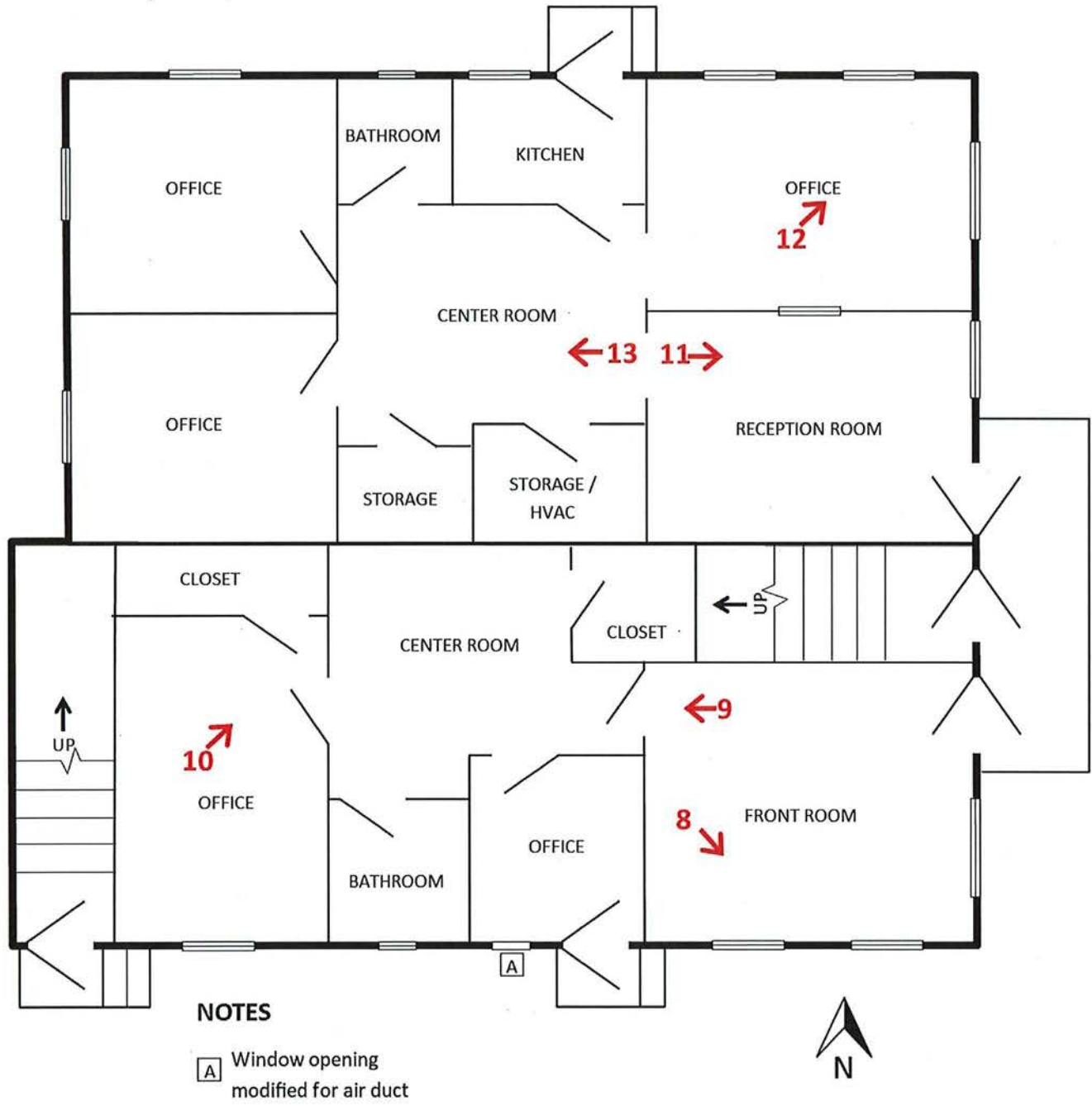
Photo Key – Exterior



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First Floor Plan and Photo Key (not to scale)



Bricklayers Hall
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Second Floor Plan and Photo Key (not to scale)



NOTES

A Window opening modified for air duct





BRIDGEMAN'S HALL

Southern Youth Leadership
Development Institute
Making Change Agents
for the Future















NO SMOKING



MEMORIAL
REV. MARTIN L. KING, JR.'S
LIVING ROOM

DR. KING AND WHY VISITING HIS LIVING ROOM...
...WAS A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOR...
...TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE PLACE WHERE HE...
...LIVED AND WORKED...
...FOR SO MANY YEARS...
...AND TO BE PART OF...
...THE HISTORICAL LEGACY HE LEFT BEHIND...
...IT WAS A GREAT HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE...
...TO BE ABLE TO VISIT HIS LIVING ROOM...
...AND TO BE PART OF THE HISTORICAL LEGACY...
...HE LEFT BEHIND...
...IT WAS A GREAT HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE...
...TO BE ABLE TO VISIT HIS LIVING ROOM...
...AND TO BE PART OF THE HISTORICAL LEGACY...
...HE LEFT BEHIND...
...IT WAS A GREAT HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE...
...TO BE ABLE TO VISIT HIS LIVING ROOM...
...AND TO BE PART OF THE HISTORICAL LEGACY...
...HE LEFT BEHIND...







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/8/2020 Date of Pending List: 7/2/2020 Date of 16th Day: 7/17/2020 Date of 45th Day: 7/23/2020 Date of Weekly List: 7/24/2020

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 7/23/2020 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Lisa Deline Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

468 South Perry Street
P.O. Box 300900
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900
334-242-3184 / Fax: 334-240-3477

Lisa D. Jones
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

June 8, 2020

Ms. Joy Beasley
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Accompanying the electronic submission of this letter, please find the nomination form and supporting documentation to be considered for listing the following Alabama resource in the National Register of Historic Places:

Bricklayers Hall
Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama

In accordance with the instructions for electronic submissions, two files are being submitted with this letter. One file (AL_Montgomery County_Bricklayers Hall_form.pdf) contains the signed nomination, photo log, and maps. The second file (AL_Montgomery County_Bricklayers Hall_photos.pdf) contains ten (10) of the seventeen (17) photos. The following photos are included in the PDF:

- Photo #1 (p. 1)
- Photo #3 (p. 2)
- Photos #5-6 (pp. 3-4)
- Photos #10-11 (pp. 5-6)
- Photos #13-16 (pp. 7-10)

The Alabama Historical Commission received letters of support for this nomination from Lee Sentell, Director of the Alabama Tourism Department, State Representative Thad McClammy, and U.S. Representative Terri Sewell. Copies of these letters will be provided when National Park Service staff returns to the office.

Your consideration of the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Anne Wofford
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LAW/edc/nj