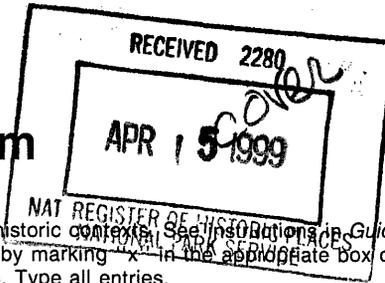


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form



This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historically Black Properties in Little Rock's Dunbar School Neighborhood

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Development in the Dunbar School Neighborhood, 1880-1960  
Prominent Members of Little Rock's Black Community, 1860-1960  
Public School Integration in Little Rock, 1957-58

**C. Geographical Data**

The Dunbar School Neighborhood is located in the central section of Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas. For purposes of this nomination, the neighborhood was defined as extending from West 9th Street on the north to Roosevelt Road on the south and from State Street on the east to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive on the west.

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Cathryn A. Slater*  
Signature of certifying official

3-30-99  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*[Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

5/29/99  
Date

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

The neighborhood surrounding what now is Paul Laurence Dunbar Junior High School historically has been predominantly—though not exclusively—African-American. Until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when restricted additions began being developed in Little Rock, the city's neighborhoods were not rigidly segregated by race, but certain areas—the “East End,” the “South End,” and this neighborhood around Dunbar—always were more black than white.

The Dunbar neighborhood was different from the East and South Ends, however, in being the location of many important public and private institutions and facilities that served the black community. Two historically black colleges—Arkansas Baptist (NR 4/30/76) and Philander Smith (NR 12/8/88)—have operated continuously in the neighborhood since being established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Long considered the best public school for blacks in Arkansas, Dunbar High School and Junior College (NR 9/6/80), now a junior high, opened in 1929 (replacing M. W. Gibbs High School, which dated from 1908). Mount Zion Baptist Church (NR 3/27/87) and Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church are two of about a dozen historically black churches in the neighborhood, which once also was location of the Lena Jordan Hospital, a general hospital for black patients. Evergreen Park, a small privately-operated amusement park for African-Americans, was part of the Dunbar neighborhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The George Washington Carver YMCA still operates in the neighborhood, as do three funeral homes serving black families.

The Dunbar neighborhood also differed from the East and South Ends in being adjacent to West 9th Street, center of African-American economic, political, social, and cultural life in Little Rock from the late-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Dozens of black stores, offices, theaters, restaurants, fraternal organizations, and other enterprises once lined a five-block stretch of 9th Street, from Broadway west to Chester Street. Now only two major buildings—Taborian Hall (NR 4/29/82) and the Mosaic Templars of America Building (NR 4/19/90)—remain to mark this northeastern corner of the area that once was the heart of the black community in Little Rock.

The presence of African Americans and their institutions in this section of the city predates the Civil War, when the area where Taborian Hall and the Mosaic Templars Building are located still was wooded countryside. In 1854, the family of one of Little Rock's founding fathers, Chester Ashley, gave land at the northwest corner of the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> and Broadway to a group of black Methodists for the purpose of erecting a church, which was called Wesley Chapel. Within a decade, another black church, Bethel A.M.E., was built just down the street at the northeast

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corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. These churches' existence probably served to encourage development of residences and other facilities for African Americans in the surrounding area. (The congregations of both Wesley Chapel and Bethel A.M.E. still exist but now are located in newer buildings. The oldest black church building still standing in Little Rock is First Missionary Baptist [NR 9/29/83], erected in 1882 at the southeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Gaines Streets, two blocks west of Broadway.)

In the early 1860s, the Ashley family also provided a block of property at the northwest corner of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway (the block where the Mosaic Templars of America Building was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) for the use of a former slave and his family. William Wallace Andrews had served as the Ashley family's butler, a position of responsibility that commanded respect among both black and white residents of Little Rock. After the Civil War, Andrews and three friends, all prominent figures in early Little Rock's black community, purchased the block at 10<sup>th</sup> and Broadway and made their homes there, providing further impetus for creation of a predominantly black section at the southwestern edge of Little Rock.

The "Licksillet" settlement was another reason that African Americans began congregating at the southwestern outskirts of Little Rock in the 1860s. During the Federal occupation of Little Rock, which began in September of 1863, Federal officials cleared trees from several undeveloped blocks within the Original City. The logs were used to build huts for newly-freed slaves who were pouring into Little Rock from the surrounding countryside. Licksillet (said to have been named when a Federal soldier saw a child in the settlement licking the inside of a pan) was located in the block on the east side of Broadway between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Exactly how long the Licksillet settlement existed is not known ("for many years," according to one source), but through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many modest dwellings for black residents—labeled "Negro shanties" on a map of the period—were located a block or two east of Broadway between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets. Growth of Little Rock's central business district and development of new predominantly white residential sections eventually eliminated much of the historically black development east of Broadway—and any lingering vestiges were destroyed by construction of Interstate 630 in the 1960s and 1970s. The interstate also spelled doom for the black business district on West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, which already had been weakened by the integration of previously white business establishments. To the south and west, however, the Dunbar neighborhood survived as an extension of the development that began during the Civil War era in the 7<sup>th</sup>-to-11<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway area.

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The area defined as the Dunbar neighborhood for purposes of this nomination—bounded on the north by West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, on the east by State Street (three blocks west of Broadway), on the south by Roosevelt Road (formerly 25<sup>th</sup> Street), and on the west by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive (formerly High Street)—comprises the southwestern section of the Original City of Little Rock and portions of three additions made to the city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: Centennial, Wright's, and Fleming & Bradford's. Development in this part of Little Rock began in the years after the Civil War, when rapid population growth—from 3,727 in 1860 to 12,380 in 1870 to 38,307 in 1900—created demand for housing in previously undeveloped areas of the city.

Much, though not all, of the Dunbar neighborhood's original development accommodated Little Rock's black population, which, like the total population, increased dramatically after the Civil War. In 1860, fewer than 900 African Americans, mostly slaves, lived in Little Rock, comprising about 23% of the total population. Ten years later, when the 1870 census counted 5,274 black residents (an increase of 518%), African Americans made up nearly 43% of Little Rock's population. Black population numbers leveled off after this one large jump, but in 1900 the black population stood at 14,694, 38% of the city's total.

Construction in the Dunbar neighborhood first moved westward, filling in empty blocks in the Original City between 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets (and continuing westward into the Centennial Addition), then turned toward the south, into Wright's and Fleming & Bradford's Additions, from 19<sup>th</sup> Street to Roosevelt Road. Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, the north-south streets—State, Izard, Chester, Ringo, Cross, Pulaski, Victory, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive—almost always were predominantly black. However, even in this older northern section of the Dunbar neighborhood, certain blocks—notably the 1000, 1100, and 1200 blocks of Ringo, Cross, and Pulaski Streets—originally were populated by white residents and remained predominantly white until about 1950, probably due to the presence of a white church. St. Paul's German Evangelical Church was established at 11<sup>th</sup> and Ringo Streets in the early 1890s, and its building continued to house white congregations until the early 1950s. Apparently as a result, a small enclave of white residents, many of German ancestry, existed for more than half a century in an otherwise predominantly black area.

From 13<sup>th</sup> Street south to 19<sup>th</sup> Street, most of the Dunbar neighborhood is historically black, with the exception of the two easternmost streets, State and Izard, which traditionally had higher concentrations of white residents. As development moved south of 19<sup>th</sup> Street during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 1900 through 2400 blocks of State and Izard were almost exclusively white, while the same blocks of Cross and Pulaski Streets always were predominantly black. On

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Chester, Ringo, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive some blocks were predominantly black and others were predominantly white. The distribution of white and black residents seems to have been influenced by topography. South of 19<sup>th</sup> Street the terrain becomes hilly and is criss-crossed by several creeks. Black residences typically occupied the less desirable, and less expensive, low-lying building lots; white residences were constructed where the ground was higher.

Houses in the Dunbar neighborhood that originally were built for white residents follow the same general architectural trends found in Little Rock neighborhoods of the same vintage that were predominantly white. The earliest remaining houses, built in the 1880s, were traditional frame cottages, sometimes with Italianate-influenced bay windows. Queen Anne cottages, a handful of larger Queen Anne/Colonial Revival houses, and numerous Colonial Revival cottages and Craftsman bungalows are found in sections of the neighborhood where the original residents were white.

The streetscape is rather different in portions of the Dunbar neighborhood that always have been predominantly black. The oldest remaining historically black houses are modest frame cottages, some with Queen Anne detailing. Several very good examples of the Craftsman style exist, as do some nice Colonial Revival and English Revival cottages. However, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, shotgun houses were the single most prevalent housing type in the historically black sections of the Dunbar neighborhood. As recently as the 1940s, the neighborhood had more than 400 of these modest houses. As many as twenty-five shotguns might be found in a single block, sometimes stacked two deep on a lot (leaving those in the rear without street access).

Probably because they usually were rental property, shotgun houses in the Dunbar neighborhood often were not very well built, and many were not very well maintained over the years. When the 1950 census labeled 26.6% of Little Rock's housing stock "substandard," a significant portion of the housing receiving that label was in the Dunbar neighborhood. As a result, in 1952 a 40-acre area around Dunbar High School was designated a "slum clearance project" under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949—the third such project in the United States—and much of the area was cleared. Similarly, in 1955 the area around historically black Philander Smith College became Little Rock's first "urban renewal project," authorized under provisions of the Housing Act of 1954, and about ten acres were cleared. This widespread demolition thoroughly changed the character of the historically black sections of the neighborhood. Only about a dozen shotgun houses still stand today, and, despite the age and history of the area, several blocks contain more buildings constructed during or after the 1950s than before.

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Many of the buildings removed by the Dunbar and Philander Smith clearance projects truly were dilapidated, including some that did not have indoor plumbing, but others seem merely to have been in the way of the Little Rock Housing Authority's plans for the neighborhood. Along with scores of shotguns, several substantial residences that had been the homes of prominent members of the black community were located within the boundaries of the Dunbar project. One particularly unfortunate loss was the home built about 1911 for John E. Bush, co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America. The Colonial Revival-style residence at 1600 Chester Street was in use as the Lena Jordan Hospital when it was demolished in the early 1950s. On its site, the city constructed the Dunbar Community Center, which opened in 1954.

Because of the many physical changes that have occurred to the neighborhood and its buildings, much of its significance today comes from its association with the prominent African-American families who were—and sometimes still are—its residents. Four generations of leaders in Little Rock's black community lived in the neighborhood around Dunbar. The neighborhood produced many of the successful black professionals who today are viewed not only as leaders within the realm of the black community but as full-fledged civic leaders.

The tradition of black leaders living in this area of Little Rock may have been established around the time of the Civil War, when William Wallace Andrews, the Ashley family's former butler, purchased the property at 10<sup>th</sup> and Broadway with three friends—William Warren, Solomon Winfrey, and Frank Evans. All four men were respected members of Little Rock's small antebellum black community, and their presence may well have encouraged other influential African Americans to locate nearby. Andrews' daughter, whose married name was Charlotte E. Stephens, became Little Rock's first black public school teacher and lived with her family at 916 Broadway from the 1880s through about 1915. Just up the street, 709 Broadway was the home during the 1880s and 1890s of Dr. James H. Smith, Little Rock's first black dentist. When Dr. Smith played host to Frederick Douglass in 1889, the *Arkansas Gazette* reported not only on Douglass' visit to Little Rock but also on the "air of refinement and taste exhibited in every feature" of the Smith residence. (In the late 1890s, Dr. Smith moved to 2100 Broadway, in a new but entirely white section of Little Rock [Governor's Mansion Historic District Amendment, NR 9/15/88], where his family is said not to have been warmly welcomed.)

At about the same time that William Wallace Andrews and others were locating on Broadway, a future leader was being groomed in a school for black students that was established during the Civil War in Wesley Chapel at 8<sup>th</sup> and Broadway. Described as "one of the brightest and most studious" of the school's students, John E. Bush (who married Solomon Winfrey's daughter)

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went on to become a leader of the Republican Party in Arkansas, as well as co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America, a black fraternal organization that eventually had chapters in twenty-six states. (The Mosaic Templars has been described as the "largest black organization of the time" in Little Rock, more important during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century than the NAACP.) Bush's residence at 16<sup>th</sup> and Chester Streets was a landmark in the Dunbar neighborhood for forty years, and homes built by some of his descendants still are among the neighborhood's nicest.

Little Rock's "aristocracy of color" during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries included several other families who lived in the Dunbar neighborhood and were headed by professional men, most often doctors, lawyers, ministers, educators, or businessmen. Attorneys Scipio Jones and Mifflin W. Gibbs; Isaac T. Gillam, Jr. and Rev. Joseph A. Booker, both educators; Daniel J. Dubisson, a successful business owner; and Drs. John G. Thornton, W. J. E. Bruce, and John M. Robinson are some of the prominent names attached to houses still standing in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the homes of many other similarly prominent African Americans are gone.

Writing for the *Blue Book of Little Rock and Argenta, Arkansas*, a 1907 compilation of biographies of the cities' most successful African Americans, John Bush provided a description of the black community in Little Rock:

*There are about 15,000 Negroes living in the city, the most of whom are of the highest type of their race. A large number of them own their own homes, a great number are engaged in various business enterprises, such as groceries, gents' furnishing stores, jewelry stores, blacksmith shops, saloons, restaurants, print shops, boarding houses, and they have one bank, the Capital City, one of the strongest financial institutions of its kind in the country.*

*The Negroes as a rule are industrious, thrifty and hard workers. A large number of them have very flattering bank accounts. They own and operate four colleges and have about thirty public school teachers.*

*They have many churches of various denominations. Their church property will compare favorably with any in any section of the country. They enjoy the respect and fullest confidence of their white neighbors. . . .*

A majority of the Dunbar neighborhood's residents appear to have been, as Mr. Bush said, "industrious, thrifty and hard workers." Besides the obviously successful professionals, the neighborhood also counted many craftsmen, railroad employees, barbers and beauticians, domestic workers, drivers, porters, laundresses, and railway mail clerks among its hard-working

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residents. Their homes, a number of which have survived, add to the understanding of the neighborhood's rich heritage of industry and self-reliance, particularly when it is known that the children and grandchildren of these working people usually grew up appreciating the value of education and often worked hard themselves to go to college and become professionals.

Ambitious black students in the Dunbar neighborhood did not have to go far for a good education. From its opening in 1929 until its "demotion" to junior high status in 1955, Dunbar High School and Junior College was a mecca for black students serious about obtaining an education. It was the first black school in Arkansas to receive North Central accreditation, and its junior college program prepared students to move on to larger institutions of higher education. Now a popular magnet junior high, the school still is a focal point in the neighborhood and continues to serve as evidence of the black community's ability to take care of its own during the era of segregation, often in the face of enormous obstacles.

Following the U. S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954, of course, many serious young black students aspired to more than a segregated education. Nine such students bravely agreed to enroll in Little Rock Central High School in 1957, and six of the "Little Rock Nine" lived in the Dunbar neighborhood. Ernest Green (Central High's first black graduate in 1958), Melba Pattillo, Thelma Mothershed, Gloria Ray, Minnijean Brown, and Jefferson Thomas were residents of the Dunbar neighborhood during the tumultuous 1957-58 school year. The Green, Pattillo, and Ray residences still stand, reminders both of the struggle for integration and of the fact that the Dunbar neighborhood was home to many of Little Rock's black leaders through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today the Dunbar neighborhood's population is virtually 100% African American, with a majority of incomes in the low-to-moderate range. Though many lower income residents of the neighborhood were moved out (and into public housing) by the Dunbar slum clearance project in the 1950s, an exodus of the more affluent, better educated residents of the neighborhood started in the 1960s as new residential areas—one called University Park, in particular—began to be an option for African Americans who could afford them. During the same decade, most remaining white residents of the neighborhood also left. Many members of the current generation of black professionals—the ones who are civic leaders and not only leaders in the black community—lived in the neighborhood as children, and their parents may still live there, but most of the "stars" of this younger generation have moved elsewhere, leaving the neighborhood with a very proud past but a rather uncertain future.

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**F. Associated Property Types****Name of Property Type:** Houses Originally Built for Black Residents**Description:**

With a few notable exceptions, the historic houses in the Dunbar neighborhood that were built originally for African Americans are modest versions of styles that were popular in Little Rock from the 1890s through the 1920s. Traditional frame cottages, some with Queen Anne-style detailing, and one- and two-story houses reflecting the influence of the Colonial Revival and/or Craftsman style are most prevalent. A few one-story English Revival-style houses exist, as does one especially noteworthy house influenced by the Prairie style. Only one house in the neighborhood, the A. E. Bush House at 1516 Ringo Street (NR 11/22/82), is known definitely to have been architect-designed (by white architects, Charles L. Thompson and Thomas Harding) but several are thought to have been constructed by an African-American contractor, S. E. Wiggins, who himself lived in the Dunbar neighborhood.

Most of the surviving historic houses built for black residents originally were owner-occupied, and their modest designs reflect the generally lower income levels that prevailed in the black community, even among those who were able to own their homes. Much of the rental housing—usually shotgun houses—that was built for African Americans is gone, thanks to the Dunbar slum clearance project of the early 1950s and to subsequent demolition that has eliminated all but a handful of the once-prevalent shotguns. (The remaining rental property that is more than fifty years old and was built for blacks most often takes the form of Craftsman-influenced duplexes.)

Most of the houses built for African Americans are of frame construction, although brick gradually became more common during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially for houses built by some of the neighborhood's most prosperous residents. The occasional stone porch columns, tile roof, or stuccoed gable ends are virtually the only other historic building materials to be found.

Houses built originally for black residents frequently show signs of extensive remodeling over the years and/or the use of recycled building materials. Not only were architectural styles updated but second stories sometimes were added, and brick veneer was applied to frame structures. Telltale clues to the remodelings usually survive; for example, 1890s woodwork remains in place downstairs while the upstairs is thoroughly 1920s. Even where it appears that a house probably was totally demolished and replaced, many pieces of the older dwelling—windows, doors, woodwork—may be found in the newer structure.

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Very few outbuildings of consequence survive in conjunction with houses built for African Americans in the Dunbar neighborhood. Those that do exist most often are frame one-car garages, although at least one garage is veneered with the same brick used on the house (which received its veneer in a remodeling).

The surviving houses in the Dunbar neighborhood that were built originally for black residents are concentrated in the section of the neighborhood that is south of 13<sup>th</sup> Street and north of 19<sup>th</sup> Street, the area that always has been predominantly black.

**Significance:**

The significance of the houses that were built for African Americans lies primarily in what they represent and only secondarily in how they look or were constructed. Some of these houses are associated with prominent members of Little Rock's black community; some—either because of the integrity they retain or because of the types of alterations they have undergone—represent various phases in the development of the Dunbar neighborhood; and a few are associated with the people and events of the 1957-58 school year, when the integration of Little Rock Central High School rocked the city, the state, and the nation.

The Dunbar neighborhood appears to have been the neighborhood of choice for professional African Americans in Little Rock from the turn of the century through the 1950s, and the surviving homes of these prominent members of the black community provide one important basis for the neighborhood's significance. Not only do these houses have prestigious associations but they usually are the larger and more stylish residences among those that always have had black occupants.

The Dunbar neighborhood was by no means, however, an exclusively elite black neighborhood; the homes of professional African Americans often literally were next door to the shotgun dwellings usually occupied by black laborers. The resulting close-knit but diverse community is credited with having helped its residents endure the rigors of segregation, a theme that can be interpreted by looking at houses that represent various phases in the neighborhood's development.

The modest design of most houses built for African Americans reflects one of the basic realities of segregation: it limited economic opportunities for most black people so that, among other things, they were less able to build large, stylish homes. Over a period of time, however, some residents of the Dunbar neighborhood did grow more affluent, but even then segregation held them back.

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Rather than moving to larger and more fashionable houses, perhaps in newer neighborhoods, African Americans frequently remodeled and enlarged their homes. These remodeling projects may indicate the need to be frugal, as well as an attachment to the neighborhood, but they also illustrate African Americans' lack of options with respect to neighborhoods in Little Rock by the early 1900s. The new neighborhoods that developed during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were for white people—advertisements said so, as did deed restrictions. Until the 1960s, prosperous African Americans in Little Rock had little choice but to stay put and remodel. The result is a number of extensively altered houses in the Dunbar neighborhood which can be construed as adding to its significance because of what they have to say about the way segregation influenced the neighborhood's development.

Last but certainly not least, the homes where three members of the Little Rock Nine—Ernest Green, Melba Pattillo, and Gloria Ray—lived during the 1957-58 school year remain standing in the Dunbar neighborhood. These houses add to the neighborhood's significance because they are associated with people and events that forever altered the course of public education in the United States.

**Registration Requirements:**

Houses built originally for black residents usually will meet registration requirements if they are located within the boundaries of the project area, are fifty or more years old, and were occupied originally by African Americans. In addition, they must retain a significant degree of integrity, *or* they must reflect an important theme in the development of the Dunbar neighborhood and/or be associated with a prominent person in Little Rock's black community.

**Subtype: outbuildings** To meet registration requirements, outbuildings must be part of a property included in the nomination, be fifty or more years old, and retain a significant degree of integrity.

**Name of Property Type:** Houses Originally Built for White Residents

**Description:**

The houses in the Dunbar neighborhood that originally were built for white residents tend to be more stylish than those of a comparable age that were built originally for black residents. In this case, though, the meaning of "stylish" is relative. The first white residents of the Dunbar neighborhood typically were working people, not professionals. Their homes—traditional frame

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cottages, sometimes with Italianate-influenced bay windows—would not have been considered stylish in a more affluent, predominantly white neighborhood, but they were stylish by comparison with the homes of most black residents of the Dunbar neighborhood at the time. Similarly, although the neighborhood has no full-blown examples of the Queen Anne style, the one-story cottages with the best 1890s millwork trim seem to have originally had residents who were white.

The only surviving houses in the neighborhood with two-story, asymmetrical, Queen Anne-style floorplans and Colonial Revival decorative details also originally were built for white families. This type of house, common in Little Rock from about 1895 to 1905, is not found anywhere in the Dunbar neighborhood except where homes originally had white residents. Examples of these transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival houses that originally had black residents may have been demolished, but Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps suggest that, until the Craftsman style arrived in the neighborhood around 1915, two-story houses were very rare in the areas of the Dunbar neighborhood that always have been predominantly black. Consequently, a two-story house built before 1915 generally can be presumed to have originally been occupied by white residents. (It also should be noted that the most stylish homes of African Americans during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Queen Anne style was most popular in Little Rock, probably were not in the Dunbar neighborhood but were located in the older Broadway/West 9<sup>th</sup> Street area.)

White residents of the neighborhood also were responsible for most of the one-story houses that have asymmetrical floorplans and Colonial Revival decorative details, referred to locally as “Colonial Revival cottages.” Typically built in the Dunbar neighborhood between 1900 and 1915, a few of these houses did originally have black residents, indicating that some more affluent African Americans were keeping up with recent styles in architecture. Even so, well-detailed Colonial Revival cottages in the Dunbar neighborhood more often originally had white than black residents.

Beginning with the arrival of the Craftsman style, it becomes more difficult to distinguish between houses originally occupied by white and black residents of the Dunbar neighborhood. Both African Americans and whites built numerous good examples of Craftsman bungalows, although most of the best two-story examples of the style still were built for white residents.

Craftsman-style houses were the last houses built in large numbers in the Dunbar neighborhood by white people. Unlike black residents of the neighborhood, who stayed and remodeled their homes (and even built new homes during the 1950s, in the wake of the slum clearance project), white residents left the neighborhood. Their numbers began dwindling during the 1920s and dropped

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rapidly after World War II, disappearing almost completely during the 1960s. From the 1920s forward, white residents left few visible marks on the Dunbar neighborhood.

Houses originally occupied by white residents are concentrated in the section of the neighborhood south of 19<sup>th</sup> Street but also are found scattered throughout much of the rest of the area. Some houses had white residents for only a few years while others were occupied by whites for two or three decades (or more—but those that still had white residents within the last fifty years are not taken into consideration here). The houses generally incorporate the same building materials found in houses that always have had black residents—frame being most common, followed by brick—but the decorative detailing often is richer.

**Significance:**

Houses in the Dunbar neighborhood that originally were built for white residents generally are significant for the same reasons that apply to houses built for African Americans, including their associations with prominent members of Little Rock's black community and their architectural integrity or the types of alterations they have undergone, which represent different phases in the neighborhood's development. (Once they were occupied by black families, houses originally built for white residents were subject to the same sorts of extensive remodeling projects that are seen in houses that always have been occupied by African Americans.)

There are, however, at least two differences in the reasons that houses originally built for whites and those built for African Americans are significant. First, since houses built for white residents tend to be some of the more stylish and well-detailed historic homes in the Dunbar neighborhood, design is a bigger factor in their significance than it is in the houses that originally had black residents. Second, no houses originally occupied by whites are known to have played a role in the events related to public school integration in Little Rock in 1957-58 (although additional research might demonstrate otherwise).

**Registration Requirements:**

Houses built originally for white residents must have been owned and/or occupied by African Americans for fifty or more years in order to meet registration requirements. In addition, they must be located in the project area and must retain a significant degree of integrity or must reflect an important theme in the development of the Dunbar neighborhood and/or be associated with a prominent person in Little Rock's black community.

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**Subtype: outbuildings** To meet registration requirements, outbuildings must be part of a property included in the nomination, be fifty or more years old, and retain a significant degree of integrity.

**Name of Property Type:** Historically Black Institutional Buildings

**Description:**

Historically black institutional buildings in the Dunbar neighborhood come in several forms, including public schools, private institutions of higher education, recreational facilities, and churches. Generally speaking, they are the largest buildings in the neighborhood, making them an important physical presence. In addition, to one extent or another, all institutional buildings have served as neighborhood gathering places, giving them important associations in addition to their physical qualities.

The most imposing buildings in the Dunbar neighborhood are churches and schools. Although not all of them are more than fifty years old (and, thus, eligible for inclusion in this nomination), they all are of masonry construction and some are architect-designed. Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, for example, is the work of architect John Parks Almand, and Dunbar Junior High was designed by the firm of Wittenberg and Delony.

Regardless of their appearances or even their age, most of the institutional buildings have associations with prominent people or events in Little Rock's black community and/or reflect some aspect of the Dunbar neighborhood's development. Many leaders in the black community taught at one of the public or private schools in the neighborhood or served as pastors in the neighborhood's churches. Other prominent African Americans attended those churches, and their children were educated in the neighborhood's schools and participated in extracurricular activities at its recreational facilities.

These historically black institutions generally are concentrated in the section of the Dunbar neighborhood that always has been predominantly black, south of 13<sup>th</sup> Street and north of 19<sup>th</sup> Street. Two major exceptions to this rule are Philander Smith College and Mount Zion Baptist Church, both in locations that once were adjacent to the black business district on West 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

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**Significance:**

While some of the historically black institutional buildings in the Dunbar neighborhood are impressive works of architecture, many of them are important primarily because of their associations and/or what they illustrate about the neighborhood's development. Consequently, their significance occasionally may be based partly on the quality of their architectural design but more often will be based largely on other factors.

Architecturally, the most important historically black institutional buildings still standing in the Dunbar neighborhood are Dunbar Junior High, the main building of Arkansas Baptist College, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, and Mount Zion Baptist Church (three of which, the school, college, and Mount Zion, already are listed in the National Register). Another architecturally distinguished institutional building in the neighborhood, the Philander Smith College Administration Building, is not exactly historically black; it was built originally as a white public elementary school and did not become part of Philander Smith College until the early 1950s. (It also already is listed in the National Register.)

The significance of most other historically black institutional buildings in the Dunbar neighborhood is derived from persons or events with which they are associated and/or from the manner in which they illustrate something about the neighborhood's development. Many leaders in Little Rock's black community have been educators whose names are found on the staff rosters of Dunbar (when it was a high school and junior college), Philander Smith, or Arkansas Baptist College. Likewise, pastors of several churches became leaders in the black community, and other well-known African Americans worshipped in the Dunbar neighborhood's churches. Schools, churches, and recreational facilities served as "incubators" for children of the neighborhood, helping prepare them to lead productive lives. Many of Little Rock's current black civic leaders grew up in the Dunbar neighborhood, attending its schools and churches and taking part in activities at the Dunbar Community Center or the George Washington Carver YMCA.

The churches in the neighborhood also reflect something of note about the neighborhood's development. Although some of the congregations date back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, none of them is housed in a building that is much more than seventy years old. Their original buildings were in the Broadway/West 9<sup>th</sup> Street area, and it apparently was not until the 1920s that it began making sense—due to the southwestward growth of Little Rock's black population—to relocate to the Dunbar neighborhood. One of the city's oldest black congregations, Bethel A. M. E., did not make the move until 1970.

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Either because of a relatively recent move to the Dunbar neighborhood or because an older building was replaced by a new structure, some churches are not yet old enough to qualify for National Register listing. The same is true of certain other institutional buildings that were built originally to serve the needs of the black community, including M. W. Gibbs Elementary School (now an integrated magnet school) and Dunbar Community Center—both of which were built on land cleared by the Dunbar slum clearance project in the early 1950s.

**Registration Requirements:**

To meet the requirements for registration, buildings in this property type must be institutional, historically black, located within the boundaries of the project area, fifty or more years old, and retain a significant degree of integrity.

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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Continuation SheetSection number   G   Page   1  **G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Beginning with Arkansas Baptist College in 1976, staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program prepared National Register nominations for most of the major architectural landmarks in the Dunbar neighborhood by the mid-1980s. In 1993 a broader study of the neighborhood was undertaken by the City of Little Rock using Certified Local Government Grant funding. In this study, consultants Constance Sarto and Sandra Taylor Smith compiled a synopsis of the neighborhood that concentrated on surviving buildings associated with prominent African Americans. To locate these buildings, the consultants relied heavily on interviews with long-time residents of the neighborhood but also consulted the few published references on black history in Little Rock, notably the 1907 *Blue Book of Little Rock and Argenta, Arkansas* and *Survey of Negroes in Little Rock and North Little Rock*, published in 1941. After completing their study, it was the view of Ms. Sarto and Ms. Smith, supported by observations of staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program who toured the neighborhood, that so much demolition had taken place in the Dunbar neighborhood that (1) a historic district could not be created, and (2) a full architectural survey would not be necessary to identify the resources eligible for inclusion in a multiple property nomination.

In 1997, the City of Little Rock again applied for CLG funding, this time to prepare a multiple property nomination. A preservation consultant, Cheryl Nichols, was hired to identify the properties eligible for inclusion in the nomination and to prepare the nomination. A four-pronged approach was used to identify properties: (1) the Sarto-Smith report was consulted; (2) windshield surveys of the neighborhood were conducted; (3) long-time neighborhood residents and experts on local black history were interviewed; and (4) research was conducted using both primary and secondary source materials. In particular, city directories and Sanborn Insurance Maps were used to determine as precisely as possible where African American homes and other buildings historically were located in the Dunbar neighborhood and how the neighborhood had evolved over the years.

The boundaries of the Dunbar neighborhood used for the nomination project largely reflect the boundaries of historically black development in central Little Rock, although some adjustments were necessitated by the loss of resources and by an overlap with the National Register-listed Central High School Neighborhood Historic District (NR 8/16/96). State Street was selected as the eastern boundary of the project area because it is the easternmost north-south street on which a number of historically black properties survive. West 9<sup>th</sup> Street was selected as the northern boundary because of its preeminent role in the history of Little Rock's black community. At one

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time, black development extended a few blocks farther to the north and east, but nothing remains of that area except two landmark buildings—the Mosaic Templars Building and First Missionary Baptist Church—that already are listed in the National Register. The project area's southern boundary is Roosevelt Road, formerly 25<sup>th</sup> Street, which historically was a dividing line between black and white residences (with black homes reappearing several blocks farther south, in the "South End" neighborhood). Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, formerly High Street, serves as the western boundary because it is a major north-south thoroughfare. Some historically black residences are located in the blocks just west of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive; however, that area is in the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District.

The historic contexts used in the nomination define the Dunbar neighborhood's sources of significance: the manner in which it developed, the prominent members of Little Rock's black community who lived there, and the role it played in Little Rock's 1957-58 public school integration crisis. Property types were based partly on use (houses, institutional buildings) and partly on whether they originally were constructed for black or white residents. The latter distinction was deemed necessary for houses in the neighborhood because of a pattern that emerged during research for the nomination: higher quality design usually indicated that a house originally was built for white occupants. In turn, this pattern helped document how the neighborhood originally developed and how it was affected by segregation.

All buildings in the neighborhood that are fifty or more years old initially were considered for inclusion in the nomination, as long as they also had been occupied by African Americans for at least that long. Houses that had had white residents within the last fifty years were not considered for the nomination and neither were buildings that had been altered severely *and* were not known to have significant associations. Association with a prominent African American individual or family, however, sometimes was determined to override integrity issues, particularly when it could be demonstrated that alterations were the result of an increasingly prosperous black family's need or desire not to relocate. Time and budget constraints also were factors in selecting the buildings that would become part of the nomination. Numerous buildings in the Dunbar neighborhood are vacant, and they generally were ruled out for the nomination because of the difficulties involved in locating absentee owners to obtain their consent. Forty-four (44) property owners were contacted regarding fifty (50) properties that might have been included in the nomination. The owners of twenty-nine (29) properties did not respond. The eight (8) properties in the nomination were selected from twenty-one (21) properties whose owners did give consent. As many as one hundred (100) other properties in the Dunbar neighborhood might be added to this multiple

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property nomination if additional funds were available and a more concerted effort could be made to educate property owners about the meaning of National Register listing.

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