

Historically Black Properties in Little Rock's Dunbar School Neighborhood

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Dunbar Junior High School, Little Rock, Arkansas

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Origins

The neighborhood surrounding what now is Paul Laurence Dunbar Junior High School historically has been predominantly-though not exclusively-African-American. Until the early 20th 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 and Philander Smith, have operated continuously in the neighborhood since being established in the late 19th century. Long considered the best public school for blacks in Arkansas, Dunbar High School and Junior College, now a junior high, opened in 1929 (replacing M. W. Gibbs High School, which dated from 1908). Mount Zion Baptist Church and Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church are two of about a dozen historically black churches in the neighborhood. Lena Jordan Hospital, a general hospital for black patients, was another important facility located in the neighborhood. Evergreen Park, a



First Missionary Baptist Church (AHPP Photo)

small, privately operated amusement park for African-Americans, was part of the Dunbar neighborhood in the late 19th 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, the center of African-American economic, political, social and cultural life in Little Rock from the late-19th to the mid-20th 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 and the Mosaic Templars of America Building, 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 still are located 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 8th 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 corner of 9th 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, erected in 1882 at the southeast corner of 7th 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 10th Street and Broadway (the block where the Mosaic Templars of America Building was built in the early 20th 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 10th 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 7th and 8th streets.

Exactly how long the Licksillet settlement existed is not known ("for many years," according to one source), but through the late 19th 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 7th and 11th 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 doomed the black business district on West 9th 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 7th-to-11th Street and Broadway area.

The area defined as the Dunbar neighborhood for purposes of this nomination is bounded on the north by West 9th Street, on the east by State Street (three blocks west of Broadway), on the south by Roosevelt Road (formerly 25th Street), and on the west by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive (formerly High Street). It comprises the southwestern section of the Original City of Little Rock and portions of three additions made to the city in the late 19th 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 residents 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 percent of the total population. Ten years later, when the 1870 census counted 5,274 black residents (an increase of 518 percent), African-Americans made up nearly 43 percent 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 percent of the city's total.

Construction in the Dunbar neighborhood first moved westward, filling in empty blocks in the Original City between 9th and 19th streets, continued westward into the Centennial Addition, and then turned toward the south, into Wright's and Fleming & Bradford's Additions, from 19th Street to Roosevelt Road. Between 9th and 10th 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 because of the presence of a white church. St. Paul's German Evangelical Church was established at 11th 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 13th Street south to 19th 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 19th Street during the early 20th 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 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 19th 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 originally built for white residents follow the same general architectural trends found in predominantly white Little Rock neighborhoods of the same vintage. 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 in the historically predominantly black portions of the Dunbar neighborhood is rather different. 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 19th and early 20th 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 25 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 percent 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 10 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.

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 St. 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 10th 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 of Dr. James H. Smith, Little Rock's first black dentist, during the 1880s and 1890s. 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, 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 8th 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, 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 26 states. (The Mosaic Templars has been described as the "largest black organization of the time" in Little Rock, more important during the early 20th century than the NAACP.) Bush's residence at 16th and Chester streets was a landmark in the Dunbar neighborhood for 40 years, and homes built by some of his descendants still are among the neighborhood's nicest.



Mosaic Templars of America Building, Eighth and Broadway, Little Rock (AHPP Photo)

Little Rock's "aristocracy of color" during the late 19th and early 20th 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 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 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 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 20th century.

Today the Dunbar neighborhood's population is virtually 100 percent 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 professional, civic leaders not only 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.

Historic Architectural Resources of the Dunbar Neighborhood

Houses Built for African American Residents

With a few notable exceptions, the historic houses in the Dunbar neighborhood built originally for African Americans are modest versions of styles 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 St., is known definitely to have been architect-designed (by white architects Charles L. Thompson and Thomas Harding). 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, built for African-Americans is gone, thanks to the Dunbar slum clearance project of the early 1950s and to the subsequent demolition that has eliminated all but a handful of the once-prevalent shotguns. The remaining rental property that is more than 50 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 20th 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 was totally demolished and replaced, many pieces of the older dwelling -- windows, doors, woodwork -- may be found in the newer structure.

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 13th Street and north of 19th Street, the area that always has been predominantly black.

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.

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 20th 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 adds to its significance because of what they say about the influence of segregation in 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.

Houses Built for White Residents

The houses in the Dunbar neighborhood originally built for white residents tend to be more stylish than those of a comparable age 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 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 Africans-Americans during the last decade of the 19th 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 9th 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 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 19th 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 50 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.

Houses in the Dunbar neighborhood originally 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).

Historically Black Institutional Buildings

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 50 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 13th Street and north of 19th 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 9th Street.

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



Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church (AHPP Photo)

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. 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 by 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-19th century, none of them is housed in a building that is much more than 70 years old. Their original buildings were in the Broadway/West 9th Street area, and it apparently was not until the 1920s that it began making sense -- because of 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.

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, including M. W. Gibbs Elementary School (now an integrated magnet school) and Dunbar Community Center, that were built originally to serve the needs of the black community. Both were built on land cleared by the Dunbar slum clearance project in the early 1950s.

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 and 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 Sarto and 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



Entrance detail, Dunbar Junior High School (AHPP Photo)

loss of resources and by an overlap with the National Register-listed Central High School Neighborhood Historic District. 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 9th Street was selected as the northern boundary because of its preeminent role in the history of Little Rock's black community. At one 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, which already are listed in the National Register. The project area's southern boundary is Roosevelt Road, formerly 25th Street, which historically was a dividing line between black and white residences (black homes reappear 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 50 years old or older in the neighborhood initially were considered for inclusion in the nomination, as long as they also had been occupied by African-Americans for at least 50 years. Houses with white residents within the last 50 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 property owners were contacted regarding 50 properties that might have been included in the nomination. The owners of 29 properties did not respond. The eight properties in the nomination were selected from 21 properties whose owners did give consent. As many as 100 other properties in the Dunbar neighborhood might be added to this multiple-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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Dunbar Neighborhood Structures Nominated to National Register of Historic Places

Bush-Dubisson House, 1500 South Ringo St.

The Prairie-style Bush-Dubisson House occupies a spacious site comprised of a little more than two lots on a prominent corner in the heart of the Dunbar neighborhood. Its style and the materials of its construction -- brick, stucco and tile -- dramatically set the house apart from its neighbors. It is one of the most architecturally distinguished homes built by an African-American that still stands in the Dunbar neighborhood, and its Prairie-style design would make it unusual anywhere in Little Rock.

Built in 1925 for Aldridge E. Bush, a son of the co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America, the Bush-Dubisson House is remembered by older African-Americans in Little Rock as a home they very much admired in their youth: a beautiful brick residence with a large, well-manicured lawn encircled by a neatly-trimmed hedge. The house was considered the showplace of the Dunbar neighborhood, especially during the tenure of its second owner, Daniel J. Dubisson, a successful black businessman. Its significance lies in its Prairie-style architecture and in its association with two men who represent the success attained by a limited number of African-Americans in early 20th century Little Rock.

S. E. Wiggins, a black contractor described as “very meticulous about his work,” built the Bush-Dubisson House at 1500 Ringo St. in 1925 for Aldridge E. Bush and his wife, Ellastein. A. E. Bush was the youngest son of John E. Bush, co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America, a black fraternal organization that grew to national scope before its demise during the Depression. A. E. Bush had the house built shortly after he became the Mosaic Templars’ chief officer, a position called “National Grand Scribe and Treasurer.” He followed in the footsteps of his father and eldest brother, both of whom had held the position before their deaths. Bush’s choice of the Prairie style for his new house was unusual in Little Rock, where few homes, even in the most affluent neighborhoods, were influenced by that style.



The Bush-Dubisson House (AHPP Photo)

The house at 1500 Ringo was the second in the block built for A. E. Bush. The first one, a smaller Craftsman-style design, was the work of the architectural firm of Thompson and Harding. It was constructed about 1919 at 1516 Ringo and is listed in the National Register as is the Bush House. The four houses on the west side of the 1500 block of Ringo Street often are said to comprise the "Bush Block" because all of them were built originally for members of the Bush family.

A. E. Bush's life reflects the dramatic progress some African-American families were able to make after the end of slavery. His father had achieved success in the face of enormous obstacles: he was born a slave, orphaned at 7 and struggled to obtain a high school education. Aldridge Bush, on the other hand, had a comfortable childhood and graduated from Gibbs High School in Little Rock before taking a business administration course at Tuskegee Institute and attending Howard University in Washington, D.C. When he returned to Little Rock, he immediately went to work for the Mosaic Templars.

In the early 1930s, Aldridge and Ellastein Bush sold the house at 1500 Ringo to Daniel J. Dubisson and his second wife, Lula. Dan Dubisson was another local success story. Born in 1872 in Tennessee, at the age of 12 Dubisson moved to Little Rock with a brother and began working, initially in a saloon. (A 1907 biographical sketch labeled him a "mixologist.") In 1917, he joined forces with an embalmer to establish an undertaking business which was known as Dubisson Undertaking Parlor at the time he purchased the house on Ringo Street. This business, now Dubisson Funeral Home, remains in existence today. For several years, Dan Dubisson also operated Dubisson Insurance Association.

It was while the Dubissons lived at 1500 Ringo that the house became known as "the hub of social events in that area," as well as the "ideal" residence that young African-Americans wished they could have -- or at least could visit. Its architectural style and the quality of its construction materials set it apart from all of its neighbors, as did its expansive lawn-which was maintained during the Dubisson era by a "yardman" who lived above the two-car garage. At a time when even famous African-Americans were barred from Little Rock's best downtown hotels, the Bush-Dubisson House provided overnight accommodations for Marian Anderson and other notables.

After the death of Dan Dubisson in 1952, the house became rental property and began a gradual decline which first led to its being divided into a duplex and culminated, in the late 1980s, with its being unoccupied, except by drug dealers. In 1989, the local alumni chapter of a black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, purchased the house from out-of-state members of the Dubisson family and launched a renovation that made the house usable by the fraternity as its headquarters. (The second floor is rented as an office.) The house again is full of activity as fraternity members carry out their service projects, most of them designed to help young African-Americans.

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Green House, 1224 W. 21st St.

Situated on a sloping lot at the northeast corner of 21st and Pulaski streets, the one-story Green House is a Craftsman bungalow. While exhibiting many typical features of the Craftsman style, such as broadly-pitched, gabled rooflines with exposed rafter ends, the house is somewhat different in plan from the typical bungalow in Little Rock.

The Craftsman bungalow at 1224 W. 21st St. was built about 1916 as the residence of William E. Alexander, an African-American mail carrier. Within a few years, however, the house had become rental property. Between the early 1920s and the late 1930s, it was occupied by a succession of tenants, including a porter, a carpenter, a laborer and a stonemason. In the late 1930s, the house was purchased by Ernest and Lothaire Green. At the time, Mr. Green was a custodian at the post office, and Mrs. Green was teaching at Dunbar High School.

A few years later, in 1941, the Greens became parents of a son, Ernest G. Green, Jr. Like other African-American children of the era in Little Rock, the young Ernest Green grew up attending all-black schools. Unlike most of his peers, however, Ernest Green made the decision to enroll in previously all-white Central High School when the opportunity presented itself.

After the U. S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which stated that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," the Little Rock School District began planning for desegregation. Initially, the district conceived an approach that would have resulted in substantial integration beginning at the grade school level. The plan that actually was adopted, however, provided for only token desegregation, beginning in the fall of 1957 at one senior high school, Little Rock Central. Limited desegregation would be phased into junior high and elementary schools over several subsequent years.



The 101st Airborne patrols Central High School, 1957 (Arkansas History Commission Photo)



The Green House (AHPP Photo)

Through various means, including a rigid screening process, the school district restricted the number of black students who were eligible to enroll at Central. In addition, not all black students were interested in leaving familiar surroundings in order to further the cause of integration, particularly when they were told that they would not be able to take part in extracurricular activities at Central.

The decision to attend Central reportedly was one that Ernest Green, Jr. made on his own. Daisy Bates, president of the Little Rock chapter of the NAACP in the late 1950s, recalled Ernest's mother telling her that when "Ernest announced to the family that he was going to enroll at Central, we knew it was useless to try to talk him out of it." Ernest Green, Sr. had died in 1953, perhaps contributing to his son's maturity, which Mrs. Bates described as "beyond his years."

The Little Rock School Board ultimately gave approval for about 25 black students to enroll at Central, but by the time school was scheduled to begin in the fall of 1957, the number had dwindled to nine. Sixteen-year-old Ernest Green was the only senior among the "Little Rock Nine."

School opened in Little Rock on Sept. 3, 1957, but segregationists, supported by Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus, prevented the Nine from entering Central, thus setting the scene for the first major test of the Brown decision. When negotiations between the state and federal governments failed to resolve the situation, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered 1,200 members of the 101st Airborne Division -- the "Screaming Eagles" -- to Little Rock from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. On Sept. 25, these federal troops surrounded Central High School, and a small detachment escorted the Nine into the school to attend classes for the first time. Some of the paratroopers remained on hand at Central until Thanksgiving. For the rest of the school year, the federalized Arkansas National Guard was responsible for maintaining order.

Unfortunately, "order" during the 1957-58 school year was a relative term. While the Nine knew that attending Central would mean leaving behind friends and extracurricular activities, they had not realized that it also

would mean braving a daily gauntlet of hostile white adults outside the school and being tormented, verbally and physically, inside Central by white students. The crowds of segregationists (many of whom were not from Little Rock) eventually dispersed, but throughout the year, the Nine were subjected inside the school to name-calling, spitting and physical assaults. One of the Nine was expelled from Central early in 1958 after she succumbed to the pressure and lashed out at a tormentor. The other eight finished the school year. All of the black students' parents suffered also, worrying about their children's safety and being threatened themselves by the loss of jobs.

Throughout this year of turmoil, Ernest Green, Jr. lived at 1224 W. 21st St. with his mother, who by then was teaching in a black elementary school, and his younger brother, Scott. At the end of the school year, Ernest became the first African-American to graduate from Central High School. He received his diploma on May 27, 1958-the only black student in a class of 602. Among the 4,500 people on hand in Central's Quigley Stadium for the commencement ceremony was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The majority of the other members of the Little Rock Nine would not have the opportunity to graduate from Central High School. In an effort to avoid desegregation, Little Rock residents voted to close all of the city's public high schools for the 1958-59 school year. Like hundreds of other Little Rock high school students, the remaining members of the Nine made assorted arrangements to continue their educations during that year; only two of them eventually returned to Central to graduate.

Following his own graduation, Ernest Green left Little Rock to attend Michigan State University, where he received bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology. He then moved to New York to work for an organization that helped put African-Americans and other minorities into the skilled construction trades, serving for several years as the organization's executive director. In January 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed him Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training, and he held that post until 1981. After several subsequent years as a consultant, he went to work as an investment banker for Shearson Lehman Brothers, Inc., where today he is managing director.

The pivotal role that Little Rock Central High School played in the civil rights movement and, more specifically, in public school desegregation in the United States led to its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1982, just 25 years after the event for which the school was being recognized had taken place. Late in 1998, 40 years after the fateful 1957-58 school year, Central High School joined the National Park System as a National Historic Site. Regarding the events at Central, the National Park Service has stated:

“The integration of Central High was a landmark battle in the struggle for civil rights. It forced the people of a city and a nation to confront themselves on the issue of discrimination, pitted a president against a governor, forged new attitudes of racial tolerance, and robbed nine teenagers of their youth.”

As the only senior among those nine teenagers, Ernest Green, Jr. holds a special place in the Central High story. Just as the National Park Service did not wait 50 years to commemorate the events that took place at the school, it is appropriate now to recognize Ernest Green, Jr.'s home (which he has owned since his mother's death in 1976), even though only 41 years have passed since Green became Central High School's first African-American graduate.

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Henderson House, 1510 S. Ringo St.

A two-story Craftsman-style house with a simple rectangular plan, the Henderson House sits on a narrow lot near the center of its block. Two widths of weatherboard are used in the home's frame construction, which is accented by stuccoed gable ends. Low-pitched roofs on the main section of the house and the one-story front porch feature exposed rafter ends and knee braces under the eaves.

Like the other three houses on the west side of the 1500 block of Ringo Street, the Henderson House was constructed for a member of the Bush family. Benjamin D. Henderson was a nephew of John E. Bush, co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America, and cousin of the builders (Aldridge E. Bush and Chester E. Bush) of the other houses in the so-called "Bush Block." The significance of this house derives both from its association with a member of the Bush family and from its virtually unaltered Craftsman design.

The Henderson House was built in 1925 for Benjamin D. Henderson and his wife, Loraine. Ben Henderson was John E. Bush's nephew, and at the time this house was built he was secretary-in-charge of the Mosaic Templars of America Adequate Rate Department.

As a member of the Bush family and officer of a division of the Mosaic Templars, Ben Henderson occupied a prominent position in Little Rock's black community and was better off financially than most of the city's African-Americans. While smaller and less stylish than the Bush-Dubisson House next door, the Henderson



The Henderson House (AHPP Photo)

House is a nice Craftsman design and ranks among the best remaining examples of that style in the Dunbar neighborhood that were built for African-Americans. The original design of the house also is very much intact. A modest rear addition is the only alteration the exterior of the house has undergone since its construction.

The house was sold by the Hendersons in the early 1930s, but it was owned and occupied by members of the black middle-class -- an insurance agent, a teacher at Dunbar Junior College, and a Missouri-Pacific Railroad employee -- for most of the next 60 years. The current owners maintain it as rental property.

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Little Rock City Directories: 1925-1965.

Scipio A. Jones House, 1872 S. Cross St.

One of the Dunbar neighborhood's most richly-detailed Craftsman-style houses, particularly among those built originally for black residents, the Scipio A. Jones House is located on one lot at the northwest corner of 19th and Cross streets. The variety and quality of materials used in the home's construction -- brick, stucco, tile and granite -- distinguish it from its neighbors and indicate that it was built for a person of more than average means. Unfortunately, poor maintenance and the partial enclosure of the home's front porch presently comprise its appearance to some extent.

The Craftsman-style Scipio A. Jones House was built about 1928 for an African-American attorney who was one of the most prominent members of Little Rock's black community during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Because of the respect he earned as a lawyer and leader of the black community, Jones also served as a bridge to Little Rock's white power structure. The home is significant for its association with Scipio A. Jones and his accomplishments.

When he died in 1943, Scipio Africanus Jones was described by a statewide newspaper, the *Arkansas Gazette*, as "one of Arkansas's best known Negroes and recognized throughout the United States as a leader for his race. . . ." He had practiced law in Little Rock for more than 50 years and was remembered especially for having secured the release of 12 black men convicted of murder following the Elaine (Arkansas) Race Riot of 1919.

Born into slavery in rural Arkansas in 1863, Scipio Jones moved to Little Rock about 1881 in order to further his education. He finished a "preparatory" course at Philander Smith College, then enrolled in North Little Rock's Shorter College, graduating with a bachelor's degree. He subsequently taught school while "reading law" in the office of three white attorneys. His long legal career began when he passed the bar examination in 1889, becoming one of Little Rock's first black lawyers.

The successful appeal that Jones brought on behalf of 12 men who had been tried and convicted of murder following the Elaine Race Riot resulted in his receiving national recognition during the 1920s. The riot had occurred in October 1919, when an attempt was made to organize black sharecroppers in the eastern Arkansas Delta. Several whites and more blacks were killed, leading to the arrests of more than 100 African-Americans. Within a month, an all-white jury had convicted 12 black men of murder and sentenced them to death. The NAACP soon hired a white Little Rock attorney, George W. Murphy, to appeal the convictions. Murphy, in turn, asked Scipio Jones to assist him. When Murphy died unexpectedly less than a year later, Jones took the lead in the appeal, and charges against six of the men eventually were dismissed. To assist the other six



The Scipio A. Jones House (AHPP Photo)

defendants in an appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court, the NAACP again hired a white lawyer, Moorfield Storey, but Scipio Jones is credited with having prepared the briefs on which Storey's successful argument was based.

Long before Jones attracted national attention, he was well-known locally as the attorney for several black fraternal organizations and as a powerful member of the Republican Party in Arkansas. He worked for years, not always successfully, to ensure that African-Americans had a voice in party decisions. Despite white Republicans' growing support for segregation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jones held several responsible party positions, including serving as a delegate to the 1928 Republican National Convention.

During his more than 60 years in Little Rock, Jones had several residences, all but two of which now are gone. While he was single, he lived in two or three different locations. Following his marriage in 1896, Jones moved with his bride, Carrie, to 1808 Ringo St. in what now is the Dunbar School Neighborhood. Here, their only child -- a daughter, Hazel -- was born. Around the time of Carrie Jones' death in 1908, Scipio and Hazel Jones moved a few doors down the street to 1822 Ringo. Both of these Ringo Street residences were in the block where Dunbar High School later was built. In 1917, Scipio Jones married Miss Lillie Jackson. Their first home together, a frame Colonial Revival cottage, still stands at 1911 Pulaski St.. They lived at this address until 1928, when they moved to their new Craftsman-style home at 1872 Cross St.

Although the house on Pulaski Street was Jones' residence during the period when he was representing the Elaine Race Riot defendants, the more substantial and stylish house at 1872 Cross St. represents the "fruit" of his career because it was made possible by the financial resources he accumulated during his many years as a lawyer. Jones' continued prominence during the latter years of his life is underscored by the appearance of his biography in the 1930-31 volume of "Who's Who in America."

Both Scipio and Lillie Jones lived out their lives at 1872 Cross St.. Scipio Jones died in the home on March

28, 1943. Following Lillie Jones' death a few years later, the house was purchased by members of the family that owns it today.

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Miller House, 1853 S. Ringo St.

Situated on a corner lot located diagonally across the street from Dunbar Junior High School, the Miller House underwent a major remodeling around 1924 that converted it from a one-story frame cottage into a two-story Craftsman-style house. Some 20 years later, additional work enlarged it again and added brick veneer. Since that time, its appearance has remained largely unchanged.

About 1924, Arthur T. Miller, a clerk for the railway mail system, remodeled and expanded an older house at 1853 Ringo St., creating a two-story, Craftsman-style residence. Two decades later, he further enhanced the house by veneering it with brick. Miller's remodeling projects illustrate a practice that was common in the neighborhood around Dunbar during the era when segregation prevented African-Americans from moving wherever they could afford to move. The house is significant because it demonstrates the effects of segregation on the Dunbar neighborhood's development and because of its association with Arthur Miller, who is a compelling example of the manner in which African-Americans bettered their circumstances during segregation. In addition, the house has architectural merit as a good example of the Craftsman style that was built for African Americans.

Originally built about 1906 as a one-story, frame cottage, the house at 1853 Ringo St. initially was occupied by a black laborer named William Holman, but by 1910 it had become the residence of various members of the Miller family: Ellen, a laundress and domestic worker; William, a laborer for Brandon & Turner Stove Company; Loney, who sold fuel; and Louis, a laborer. Arthur T. Miller first is listed by city directories at the address in 1917, when he is identified as a chauffeur for Pfeifer Brothers Department Store.

By about 1920, Arthur Miller was the sole occupant of the house, and he had secured a job that was considered by members of the black community (as well as by many white people) to be a "plum": he was a clerk for the railway mail system. Along with working for a railroad or becoming a letter carrier, a position with the railway mail system was coveted because of the security it represented. Such positions often were occupied by black men who were overeducated for the duties of the job, which, in the case of the railway mail system, consisted of sorting mail as it traveled from city to city by train. But the pay was good, comparatively speaking, and there were benefits, including a pension at retirement. In becoming a railway mail system clerk, Arthur Miller clearly had bettered his circumstances in life and probably had achieved significantly more than other members of his family who previously lived at 1853 Ringo St.

Miller's success allowed him to undertake the remodeling projects that more than doubled the size of the house at 1853 Ringo St. and updated its design in the popular Craftsman style. At the time the first remodeling was done in the 1920s, Miller and his wife, Willie, would have been prohibited from buying a new house



The Miller House (AHPP Photo)

in the suburban neighborhoods developing at the outskirts of Little Rock. The Millers' remodeling project was one of many similar projects undertaken in the Dunbar neighborhood during the early 20th century, illustrating both the growing prosperity of some residents and the limits within which they had to operate because of segregation.

Arthur Miller remained at 1853 Ringo St. for the rest of his life. His widow sold the house in 1977 to its present owner, who notes that the Millers had no children and speculates that they must have created such a large house simply because they could afford to do so.

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Little Rock City Directories: 1906-1965.



The Thornton House (AHPP Photo)

Thornton House, 1420 W. 15th St.

Originally a one-story cottage, the frame residence of Dr. and Mrs. John G. Thornton underwent two significant remodelings before reaching its current two-story, predominantly American Foursquare configuration. Initially, the circa 1896 cottage had a gable-front and wing plan with an ell extending to the rear at right angles off the wing; a small front porch was confined within the “L” formed by the gable and wing. During the early 20th century, front and rear additions squared off the plan of the house, and a full-width front porch was constructed. Around 1920, another extensive remodeling added a second story, giving the house its present American Foursquare appearance.

Built about 1896 for Charles E. Taylor, a white “traveling agent” for a local hardware company, the house at 1420 W. 15th St. in Little Rock’s Centennial Addition became the residence of Dr. and Mrs. John G. Thornton around 1906. Dr. Thornton, who has been described as one of the “deans of black physicians” in Little Rock, was born in St. Louis in 1873 but grew up in Mississippi, graduating in 1893 from the State Normal College at Holly Springs. He then taught for several years, using his teaching income to put himself through Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. After graduating in 1902, he first practiced in Greenville, Mississippi. He moved to Little Rock, where he married Miss Bessie Stephens in 1904. Bessie Stephens Thornton, a graduate of Walden University in Nashville, was a teacher and the daughter of Charlotte E. Stephens, who is remembered as Little Rock’s first black public school teacher. Mrs. Thornton’s maternal grandfather was a leader in Little Rock’s antebellum black community and served as butler for the family of one of the city’s founding fathers, Chester Ashley.

During his long career, Dr. Thornton devoted his energies not only to caring for his own patients but also to ensuring that all African-Americans had access to good medical care and facilities. In 1905, he and another African-American physician in Little Rock, Dr. John M. Robinson, co-founded the Arkansas Medical, Dental

and Pharmaceutical Association, an organization for black medical professionals that remains in existence today. One of the Association's first projects was opening a hospital to address the need for better medical facilities for African-Americans at a time when Little Rock had no integrated hospitals. Although the Association's hospital was short-lived, it helped pave the way for subsequent, more successful efforts to provide quality medical care for black patients.

Dr. Thornton's practice initially was located at 701 W. 9th St. in the black business district, but he eventually moved his office into the Mosaic Templars Building at 9th and Broadway, where he served as "National Grand Medical Examiner." Through the Mosaic Templars, he continued his efforts to ensure that African-Americans had access to good medical care by laying the groundwork for the Mosaic Templars to operate hospitals that would serve its members.

As a leader in the black community, Dr. Thornton held numerous positions and received many honors. He served as physician to Shorter College, a historically black school in North Little Rock, and as vice president of the National Medical Association, a professional association for black physicians that eventually merged with the American Medical Association. Dr. Thornton also was active in efforts to re-establish African-Americans as a force in the Republican Party, taking part in a bold attempt to force "Lily White" Republicans to recognize black delegates to the 1920 Pulaski County Republican Convention.

Dr. Thornton's success enabled him to enlarge and update his home twice, first around 1906, when the floorplan was expanded and stylish Colonial Revival decorative details were added, and again around 1920, when a second story was built to create a then-popular American Foursquare with Craftsman-style details. By that time, Little Rock real estate developers were openly excluding African-Americans from new residential areas. Consequently, it is unlikely that the Thorntons had the option of building a larger house in a newer neighborhood—certainly not in one of the suburban neighborhoods then under development. The twice-remodeled Thornton House illustrates the fact that even successful African-Americans had to accommodate themselves to segregation and is one of several extensively remodeled homes in the Dunbar neighborhood that demonstrate how segregation influenced the neighborhood's development.

Dr. Thornton lived for more than 50 years at 1420 W. 15th St. and died at the age of 84 in 1957.

A footnote to the significance of the Thornton House is the brief period during the 1920s when Charlotte E. Stephens lived with her daughter and son-in-law. Stephens, who was between permanent residences at the time, lived at 1420 W. 15th St. from about 1923 to 1925. She is an important figure in Little Rock's history not only because she became the city's first black public school teacher but also because she taught longer in Little Rock than anyone else ever will. Her teaching career began in 1869, when she was 15; she retired in 1939 at the age of 85. A public elementary school in Little Rock is named for her.

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Womack House, 1867 S. Ringo St.

The existing Womack House, a very nice frame example of a Craftsman bungalow, apparently replaced a shotgun house that previously stood at the same address. The house is situated on one elevated lot near the south end of its block. A low-pitched, gabled roof with exposed rafter ends, porch gable with decorative knee braces and "battered" porch columns are among the typical Craftsman characteristics found in the design of the house. The Womack House appears to have undergone almost no alteration since its construction.

The family of Dr. A. A. Womack lived at 1867 Ringo St. from 1911, when a shotgun house was located at that address, until 1956, when Mrs. Womack sold the existing circa 1922 bungalow to its current owners. As a professional, Dr. Womack was well-respected in Little Rock's black community, and he was financially able to build a very nicely detailed Craftsman bungalow as his family residence. The Womack House is significant both for its association with Dr. Womack and for its unaltered Craftsman design.

Dr. Womack's office was located on West 9th Street, in the black business district that flourished along that street for several decades. His wife, Myrtle, worked for a time as a clerk for the Mosaic Templars of

America, the black fraternal organization that was headquartered at West 9th Street and Broadway. (Later, Mrs. Womack served as a notary public.)



His profession ensured Dr. Womack's prominence in the black community and provided him with the means to build a very nice home. The Womack House is significant as a nearly unaltered, well-detailed Craftsman bungalow that was built for a prominent African-American resident of the Dunbar neighborhood.

The Womack House (AHPP Photo)

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The Hubble Funeral Home (AHPP Photo)

Hubble Funeral Home, 924 S. Cross St.

With a side-gabled roof that is unusual in having virtually no overhang, the two-story, brick-veneered house that for many years was occupied by Hubble Funeral Home stands on a corner lot that is near the northern edge of the Dunbar School Neighborhood. Simple in its detailing, the house appears to incorporate building materials recycled from older structures. A one-story Craftsman-influenced front porch is the home's most stylish exterior feature.

From the late 19th century until about 1920, a grocery store-operated by a succession of white grocers stood at 924 Cross on the northwest corner of 10th and Cross streets. Attached to it on the north at 922 Cross was a small residence occupied by the grocer. The house and store apparently were demolished around 1920, and the property remained vacant until about 1928, when the existing house was built for Edward W. and Minnie Gilchrist.

Gilchrist, an African-American painter, perhaps was prospering as a result of work provided by the building boom of the 1920s. Because it is brick-veneered and has two stories, the house he built at 924 Cross St. is more substantial than most homes built for African-Americans. However, it also shows some of the cost-

consciousness that is typical of homes built for black residents of the Dunbar neighborhood: it does not have a very stylish design, and it incorporates windows that apparently were salvaged from older structures.

The effects of the Depression probably explain why the Gilchrists left the house in the early 1930s, leaving it vacant until it was taken over by Hubble Funeral Home about 1936. With its main location in a historically black section of North Little Rock, the funeral home was expanding into the Little Rock market by establishing this branch. For several years, members of the Hubble family -- first Mary Hubble and later Hannibal Hubble -- occupied living quarters on the second floor of the house. Eventually, this living space was rented to other tenants. Other Hubble enterprises -- Cosmopolitan Life Insurance Company and Hubble Burial Society -- also operated from 924 Cross St. for many years.

The business now known as Hubble Brothers Funeral Home still operates in North Little Rock, but the Little Rock branch was closed around 1996, and the house was purchased by Mount Zion Baptist Church. Presently the house is vacant and awaiting a new use.

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The Bruce House (AHPP Photo)



Dunbar Neighborhood Structures Listed on the Arkansas Register of Historic Places

Bruce House, 1102 S. Pulaski St.

A large Craftsman-style residence, the Bruce House, is situated on two lots at the north end of the 1100 block of Pulaski Street. The two-story, frame structure has many excellent Craftsman features, including a nicely detailed porch with granite columns. However, the Bruce House is not a typical example of the Craftsman style, perhaps because it was built around the remnants of an earlier house that is thought to have burned.

Dr. Warren J. E. Bruce, one of Little Rock's first African-American physicians, lived at 1102 Pulaski St. from the late 1890s until about 1926. The home's association with him, along with the type of work he oversaw during his tenure in the house, are the basis for its significance.

The house that originally stood at 1102 Pulaski St. was built about 1885 for Henry K. Pittmore. He at the time was editor of the *Mosaic Guide*, the official publication of the Mosaic Templars of America, a black fraternal organization founded in Little Rock in 1882. Pittmore sold the house about 1889 to F. B. T. Hollenberg, a white businessman, who maintained it as rental property. Dr. Warren J. E. Bruce moved into the house in the late 1890s, apparently renting it from Hollenberg for several years before purchasing it.

Unfortunately, biographical information about Bruce is sparse, but it is known that he was among a handful of African-American physicians who practiced in Little Rock before 1900. A graduate of Meharry Medical

College in Nashville, Tennessee, he initially located in Wrightsville, Arkansas, before moving to Little Rock in 1891. Bruce's name first appears in the Little Rock city directory for 1893-94, when he is listed as one of two black physicians in the city. His office was in the black business district on West 9th Street.

About 1915, several years after Bruce bought 1102 Pulaski from F. B. T. Hollenberg, the house is thought to have been extensively damaged by fire. In Pulaski County real estate records, the assessed value of the improvements to Bruce's property dropped from \$1,000 in 1915 to \$350 in 1916, an indication of major damage to the house. Charred wood found in the house indicates that the damage was caused by fire.

Like other cost-conscious residents of the Dunbar neighborhood, Bruce evidently did not level his old home and rebuild entirely from scratch. Rather, it appears that he worked around the original floorplan, incorporating undamaged sections into his new residence. A three-sided bay at the front of the house, an Italianate-style staircase and many two-over-two, double-hung windows are conspicuous leftovers from the original 1880s structure. Even so, the "new" Bruce House-rebuilt during 1916-boasted a fashionable Craftsman-style exterior with an especially well-detailed front porch.

Bruce remained at 1102 Pulaski until about 1926. The house subsequently has had four owners, including one who put it to use as a rooming house during the 1930s and 1940s. The current owner, who bought the property earlier this year, would like to return the house to its appearance during Bruce's tenure.

Although it has been altered, the Bruce House's association with one of Little Rock's first African-American physicians makes it an important representative of the city's black heritage. In addition, the work that Bruce oversaw after the original residence was damaged by fire illustrates a common theme in the history of the Dunbar neighborhood's development: the tendency of even the more prosperous black residents to stay in one location and remodel their homes, often incorporating pieces salvaged from older structures.

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Chester E. Bush House, 1524 South Ringo Street

An American Foursquare with a Craftsman-style porch, the Chester E. Bush House anchors the south end of the “Bush Block,” the group of four houses on the west side of the 1500 block of Ringo Street. Although the house has been altered, it retains much of its original form and detail. In fact, despite its alterations, the Chester E. Bush House has some of the richest decorative detail of all of the houses in the Bush Block.

Built about 1917 for Chester E. Bush, eldest son of John E. Bush, co-founder of the Mosaic Templars of America, this house is the only one in the so-called Bush Block that still is owned and occupied by a member of the Bush family. Its long association with the prominent Bush family is the main factor in the Chester E. Bush House’s significance.

S. E. Wiggins, a black contractor, is believed to have built this house for Chester E. Bush and his wife, Ursuline, about 1917. It was one of the first two houses in the “Bush Block.”

Chester E. Bush was the eldest son of John E. and Cora Bush. His mother was the daughter of Solomon Winfrey, a leader in Little Rock’s antebellum black community. His father had co-founded the Mosaic Templars of America in the 1880s for the purpose of providing services-including insurance, loans, and medical care-that otherwise were difficult for Africa- Americans to obtain. Headquartered in Little Rock, the Mosaic Templars eventually boasted 80,000 dues-paying members in 26 states, Central and South America, the Canal Zone and the West Indies.

Born in 1886, Chester Bush attended public schools in Little Rock and Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. When he returned to Little Rock, he began his career with the Mosaic Templars as editor and manager of the organization’s official publication, the Mosaic Guide. Later he was promoted to secretary-treasurer of the “Monument Department,” and after his father’s death in 1916, he assumed the organization’s top position, National Grand Scribe and Treasurer. Shortly after that, he had the new home at 1524 Ringo St. built for his family.



The Chester E. Bush House (AHPP Photo)

Just a few years later, Chester Bush suffered a stroke that led to his death in 1924 at the age of 38. His obituary noted that in addition to his work for the Mosaic Templars, he had been a founder of the black YMCA in Little Rock and a member of First Missionary Baptist Church. He was survived by both his mother and his wife, as well as three children, a sister, and a brother (Aldridge, who then became Mosaic Templars National Grand Scribe and Treasurer and built the Bush-Dubisson House at 1500 Ringo St.).

Chester Bush's widow, Ursaline, remained at 1524 Ringo St. until her death in 1950, when the house was inherited by her son, John E. Bush, III, and daughter, Clothilde Bush. (John E. Bush, Jr., the son of the Mosaic Templars' co-founder and brother of Chester E. Bush, died when he was only 15. Chester Bush kept the name in use by giving it to his son, John E. Bush, III.) After remodeling the house to create a living unit on each floor, John E. Bush, III and his wife, Alice Saville Bush, occupied the first floor with their three children. Clothilde Bush lived upstairs. Mrs. Alice Bush still owns the house and lives in the ground-floor unit created by the remodeling project.

Both the 1950s remodeling and the more recent application of steel siding by Mrs. Bush are overshadowed by the importance of the Bush family and its uninterrupted association with the house for more than 80 years.

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