



SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY OF LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

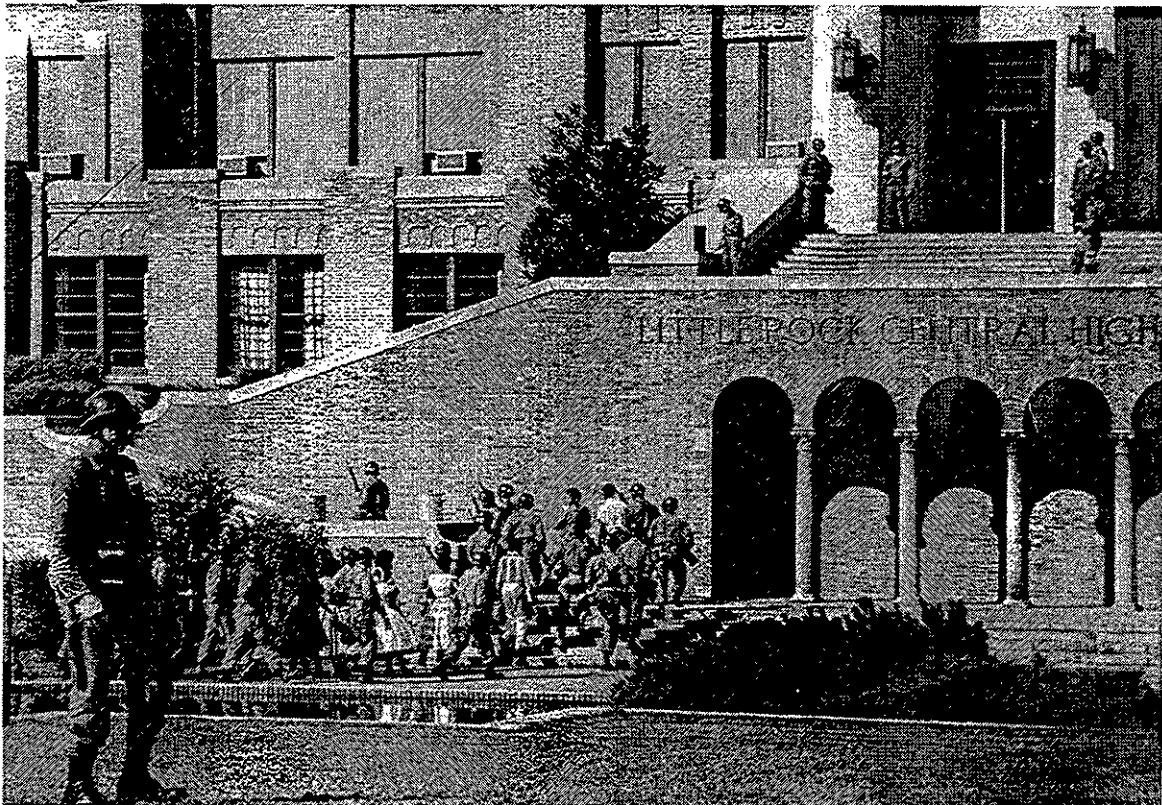
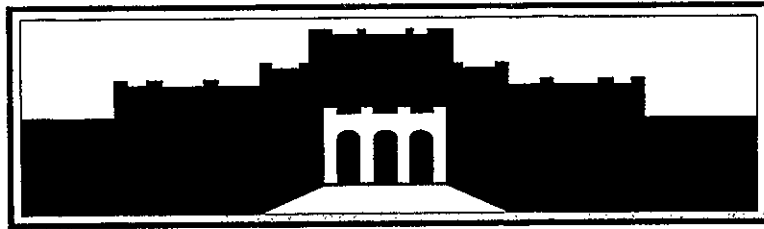


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DEDICATED TO THE COURAGE OF THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

Minnijean Brown



Elizabeth Eckford



Ernest Green



Thelma Mothershed



Melba Pattillo



Gloria Ray



Terrence Roberts



Jefferson Thomas



Carlotta Walls

SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

August 1998

LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Little Rock, Arkansas

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INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to enactment of Public Law 105-83 (known as the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998; 111 Stat. 1543-1627), on November 14, 1997, Senate Report 105-56 directed that:

Within the funds provided for general management plans, \$150,000 should be provided for a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, as a unit of the National Park System due to its importance in interpreting the development of the civil rights movement in the United States.

In accordance with this legislative direction, the National Park Service has prepared this special resource study for Little Rock Central High School. The study includes a historical overview that describes and analyzes the historical significance of the school, a suitability and feasibility analysis to determine if the school warrants inclusion in the national park system, and an examination of the possible visitor experience goals and interpretive themes for the site. Three alternatives that explore potential management frameworks that would provide for resource protection and public use of the school are also described and evaluated.



Photo Courtesy of Will Counts



Photo Courtesy of Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 1998

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

ESTABLISHMENT OF LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

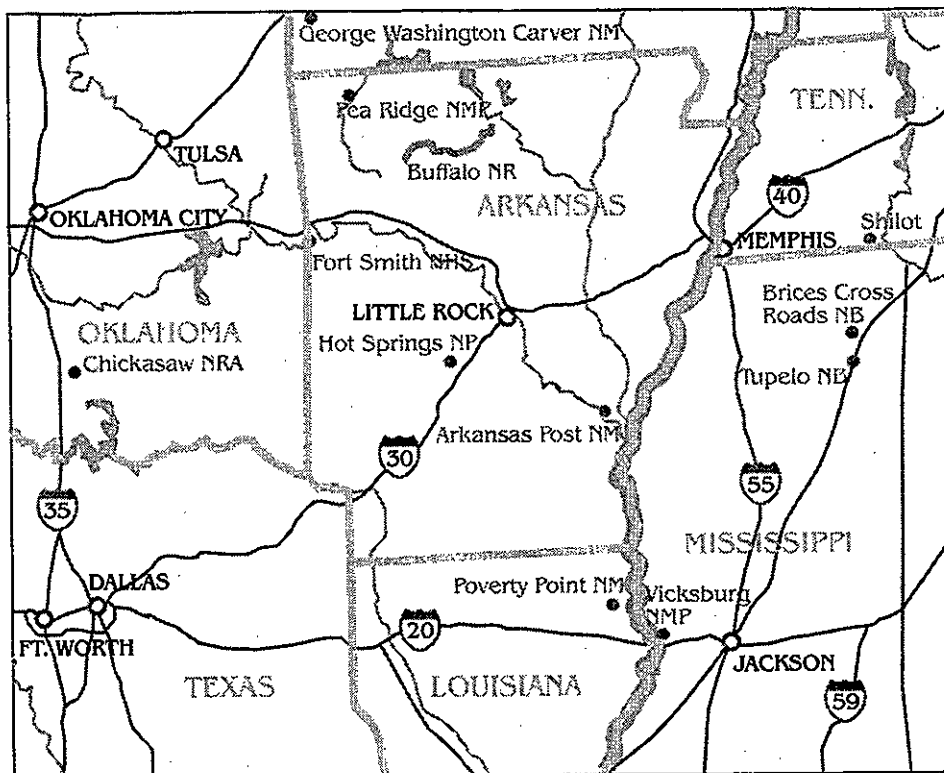
The opening of Little Rock Central High School in 1927 marked a new high point in the history of public education in the Arkansas state capital. (Until 1953, it was known as Little Rock Senior High School.) In 1853, a decade after enabling legislation was passed, the first public school was opened in Little Rock, offering six years of free education. The curriculum and terms of the city's public schools grew gradually; within 20 years the city offered 12 years of instruction.

Central High traces its beginning to 1869 when the city's high school, located in a wood frame structure at Eighth and Sherman Streets, was known as Sherman High School. However, it was not until June 13, 1873, that the school produced its first graduating class. In 1885 the city high school was moved to the corner of 14th and Scott Streets, where it was named Scott Street School, although it was generally called City High School. The high school was moved again in 1890 to the corner of Capitol and Gaines Streets and named Peabody High School in honor of philanthropist George Peabody, who donated millions of dollars to southern states after the Civil War for building school systems. Little Rock received nearly \$200,000 from Peabody; this was the largest sum received by any southern city. In 1905 Peabody High School was abandoned, and a new high school, named Little Rock Senior High, opened at 14th and Scott Streets. By the 1920s, the growing student population necessitated a larger building. The far-sighted plans of the school board resulted in construc-

tion of a new high school on a site in Civitan Park at 14th and Park Streets.

Central High was designed in the Neo-Gothic Revival style by Little Rock architects George R. Mann, Eugene John Stern, John Parks Almand, George H. Wittenberg, and Lawson L. Delony. Gordon Walker of Salina, Kansas, was the general contractor for the building, while the landscape architect for the site was John Highberger of Memphis, Tennessee. When it was completed in 1927, the \$1.5 million, five-story, buff-brick building, with its irregular but generally Y-shaped plan, was the nation's largest high school and the state's second largest structure, ranking only behind the State Capitol. Architecturally unique among Arkansas school structures, the American Institute of Architects labeled it as "America's Most Beautiful High School." Among the most impressive features of the new building were the four statues of Greek figures located over the front entrance which represented Ambition, Personality, Opportunity, and Preparation. Three thousand pupils, with a recessed locker for each, could be accommodated in the 100 classrooms of the new school, and its auditorium, which seated 2,000 people, was the largest stage in the state.

When 12,000-seat Quigley Stadium (named for Earl Quigley who was a coach for Tiger football teams from 1914 until 1935) was constructed on the campus in 1936, it was the state's largest stadium and one of the largest in the South. The Tiger fieldhouse was constructed in 1951 to provide updated facilities for the school's basketball teams, who had been using the auditorium stage for their games.



VICINITY

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In 1969 a new library-media center, named for Jess W. Matthews who served as principal of Central High from 1945 to 1965, was constructed on Central's campus. Other new additions to the high school in recent years include modern instrumental music facilities, a vocal musical center, a guidance center, and a business education facility for simulated office practice.

LITTLE ROCK CRISIS

Influence of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka

Two cases (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*), concerned with the legality of separation by race in public education, reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 and 1955. In the first case (347 U.S. 483), often referred to as *Brown I*, the Court held

that segregation in public schools at all levels was unconstitutional. While the *Brown I* decision (May 17, 1954), reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), with its "separate but equal" ruling on railroad accommodations, the 1954 ruling was the culmination of the legal debate on segregation in education that had been before the courts since 1938. The Court held that to separate black schoolchildren by race induces a sense of inferiority that retards educational and mental development, that "separate education facilities are inherently unequal," and that the plaintiffs were "by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."

In the second *Brown* case (349 U.S. 294), often referred to as *Brown II*, on May 31, 1955, the Court held that the pace of desegregation in schools was the responsibility of school authorities,

would depend on the problems and conditions facing individual communities, and should be carried out "with all deliberate speed." After the 1955 decision, the case was returned to federal district courts for implementation.

The Supreme Court's refusal to require immediate implementation of its decision in *Brown* and its adoption of the "all deliberate speed" standard in 1955 provided notice that the struggle to gain the promised right to equal educational opportunity would be long and difficult. Nevertheless, the *Brown* decision became the symbol of racial equality and led to the dismantling of overt racial segregation policies that marked every important public function in much of the country. It sparked major reform in racial laws, policies, and even patterns of thought and behavior. Moreover, it heightened the expectations of African-Americans, particularly those of an expanding middle class, thus contributing enhanced vitality to the ongoing civil rights movement.

After marking time for some months after the *Brown II* decision, during which limited progress toward school integration was made in the border states and upper South, segregationists began actively to obstruct implementation of the Supreme Court's ruling in early 1956. The unanticipated action of lower courts in upholding the Supreme Court's ruling bred widespread panic among many southern whites and gave rise to a pervasive mood of defiance in the region. Politicians in Virginia urged massive resistance to the Court's orders and invoked the doctrine of interposition, claiming that the state had a right to interpose its authority against an alleged violation of the Constitution by the Supreme Court. One hundred Congressmen issued a "southern manifesto" in March 1956, censuring the Supreme

Court and praising state efforts to resist forced integration by lawful means. White citizens' councils sprang up in numerous southern communities, ostensibly to protect the constitutional rights of whites, but actually to prevent free access of blacks to public schools. Given a new lease on life by the mood of resistance sweeping the South, a revived Ku Klux Klan found considerable support among hard-core segregationists ready to commit or condone virtually any activities to preserve white supremacy in America.

Emergence of the Crisis: May 1954 – August 1957

Surprisingly, the great test for the resurrected doctrine of interposition came in Little Rock. Of all southern cities, Little Rock was among the least likely scenes for a dramatic confrontation between state and federal power. This comparatively progressive upper-South capital city had been among the first communities in border states and the former Confederacy to make preparations for compliance with the *Brown* decision. The percentage of black students in Little Rock public schools was less than that of Wilmington, Louisville, Washington, Baltimore, or St. Louis — all of which had previously abandoned "Jim Crow" educational facilities. The Little Rock school system also contained relatively fewer blacks than did those of Nashville, Charlotte, Greensboro, or Winston-Salem — the southern cities that joined Little Rock in desegregating in the fall of 1957.

One day after the May 17, 1954, *Brown* decision, the Little Rock school board instructed Superintendent of Schools Virgil T. Blossom to draw up a plan for compliance. Although less than enthusiastic about the change, neither

Blossom nor any board member suggested defiance of the Supreme Court's ruling. Later in May 1954, school authorities made public their decision and announced that planning for school desegregation would begin immediately.

During the following year Blossom formulated and reformulated desegregation arrangements. Originally conceived as a plan for substantial integration beginning at the grade school level, the Little Rock Phase Program (Phase Program plan) that emerged in May 1955 provided for token desegregation starting in September 1957 at one senior high school — Central. The second phase would extend tokenism to junior high schools by 1960, with the final step of desegregation on the elementary level tentatively scheduled for the fall of 1963. A transfer provision would permit students to escape from districts where their race was in the minority, thus assuring that the heavily black Horace Mann High School zone would remain segregated. A rigid screening process eliminated most of those remaining black students who were eligible and who wanted to attend the formerly white Central High School. By August 1957, having further reduced the number of black children who might possibly attend Central High School during the 1957-58 school year, the school board gave tentative approval for approximately 25 black students to enroll at Central — a figure that was about 10% of the number it had told the federal district court would be attending. By the time that school started, it developed that only nine children, with their parents' consent, decided to make the effort to attend Central High School in the face of mounting opposition. These students — Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Pattillo, Gloria Ray, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and

Carlotta Walls — would become known as "The Little Rock Nine," and in 1958 they would be awarded the prestigious Spingarn Medal by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

In its final form, the Phase Program plan, although consistent with the gradual, token approach set out in the Supreme Court's second *Brown* decision, contained a questionable approach to the problems of desegregation. The plan contained a key flaw. Desegregation was delayed until 1957 specifically to allow time for construction of two new city high schools — Hall High School in west Little Rock for whites, and Horace Mann High in east Little Rock for blacks. With the exception of limited facilities for technical training, Little Rock had traditionally operated two senior high schools — one (Dunbar) for blacks and one (Central) for whites. Located at the corner of Eleventh Street and Wright Avenue, the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School had been dedicated on April 14, 1930, to replace Gibbs High School as Little Rock's black high school. During 1931-32, Dunbar became one of only two industrial arts schools in the South to receive a junior college rating.

Upon completion, Hall, located in the western part of the city, enrolled students from the Pulaski Heights area, the status residential area and home of Little Rock's most influential people. Central, situated geographically between the two new schools and the only school to be desegregated, was left with pupils drawn primarily from the city's lower and middle classes. This arrangement added an element of class conflict to the racial controversy and allowed segregationist spokesmen to charge that integrationists were sacrificing the common citizen while protecting the wealthy. More important,

it removed the center of white moderation from direct involvement in the desegregation efforts.

In January 1956, some 20 black students attempted to enroll in Little Rock's white public schools. When they were denied admittance, the NAACP filed suit in federal district court. On August 27, 1956, in *Aaron v. Cooper* (143 F. Supp. 855; E.D. Ark. 1956), Judge John E. Miller rejected the NAACP's argument and upheld the Phase Program plan on the grounds that it was in compliance with the Supreme Court's second *Brown* decision. He retained jurisdiction of the suit in the event that further questions might arise during the course of the plan's implementation. The NAACP appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, and on April 29, 1957, the appellate court unanimously affirmed Miller's ruling (243 F. 2d. 361; C.A. 8, 1957).

During the next several months, the Capital Citizens' Council, later assisted by the League of Central High School Mothers, aggressively promoted public opposition to desegregation. Although a member of the Arkansas Association of Citizens' Councils, the Capital Citizens' chapter was a local movement which drew its greatest popular support from working-class districts, although it enjoyed sympathy from substantial numbers of other white citizens, particularly those in lower-class neighborhoods and in lower-status, middle-class areas. Ministers, lawyers, and occasional independent businessmen were most prominent among the organization's leadership. Ministers, mainly of the Missionary Baptist denomination, were probably the most active single group. Robert E. Brown, publicity director for a Little Rock radio-television station, was chapter president in 1957, but Amis Guthridge, an attorney and states' right

political figure, appeared to be the council's foremost leader.

During the spring of 1957, the Capital Citizen's Council launched an intensive propagandist campaign, disseminating leaflets and sponsoring advertisements attacking integration, holding rallies (three times with out-of-state speakers), initiating letter writing campaigns aimed at Governor Orval E. Faubus, spreading, and perhaps originating, rumors about impending violence, and organizing crowds to disrupt public meetings of the school board. The segregationists' most persistent demand was for Faubus to intervene to prevent violence and preserve dual segregated school systems in the state capital.

The appearance of Governor Marvin Griffin and Roy Harris of Georgia, frequent orators on the Citizens' Council circuit throughout the South, at a council fund-raising banquet in Little Rock on August 22 was one of the more publicized events in the summer-long war of nerves. Assuring listeners that Georgia would not allow school integration, the two featured speakers called upon Arkansas to join in the support for white supremacy and the defense of segregation. On August 20, two days prior to the dinner, Faubus had telephoned Griffin to request that he refrain from advocating violent action while in Arkansas. When Griffin gave assurances, the Arkansas governor invited the visiting Georgia governor to stay overnight in the executive mansion. Although the conversations between the two men and the Arkansas governor allegedly concerned topics other than segregation, the Georgians' visit proved to be one of several effective Capital Citizens' Council propagandist strokes. Faubus testified shortly afterward that people were approaching him and asking why Arkansas had integration if Georgia did not.

As a result of these developments, the approaching integration of Central High School emerged as a highly politicized event that was not merely a local school administrative issue. Fearing difficulties and perhaps becoming aware of their exposed position, school authorities began a desperate search for support of their desegregation plan. During the summer of 1957, Blossom conferred frequently with Little Rock Chief of Police Marvin H. Potts, an opponent of desegregation who, although promising to maintain law and order, showed little enthusiasm and was apparently hesitant to make specific commitments. The superintendent and School Board President William G. Cooper, Jr., appealed to Federal District Judge John E. Miller asking for a public pronouncement pointing out to potential troublemakers the consequences of obstructing the court-approved desegregation plans, but the judge refused.

Blossom then turned to Governor Faubus, requesting that the governor issue a public statement promising to maintain order and to permit no obstruction to integration, thus making the state responsible for peaceful school desegregation in Little Rock. After Faubus refused to issue such a statement, Blossom, accompanied by members of the school board, made repeated attempts to press the governor for a commitment. Anxious to justify their request, school spokesmen probably exaggerated the dangers of public disorder by reiterating fears that outside agitators might converge on Little Rock to disrupt desegregation as they had in the northeastern Arkansas town of Hoxie in 1955.

However, the publicity resulting from Hoxie's desegregation difficulties, effective agitation by white supremacy organizations, and the growing mood of

social reaction spreading across the South made racial issues too immediate to be ignored. In January 1956, Faubus released the results of a public opinion poll that showed that a large majority of Arkansas citizens were opposed to integration. At the same time, he made his first detailed statement on racial issues during his 13-month tenure in office, declaring that he would not be a party in any attempt to force acceptance of change on people so overwhelmingly opposed to change. Faubus encouraged local communities to work out plans of action in accordance with the needs of their school districts and the demand of their patrons and promised that the force of the governor's office would be used to defend the decisions of the individual school districts in the state. Shortly thereafter, he endorsed the work of an unofficial committee studying problems posed by the Supreme Court ruling. The committee, composed entirely of East Arkansas (Eastern Arkansas had the highest concentrations of blacks in the state, and thus its schools were the ones most significantly affected by the *Brown* decision) spokesmen, recommended a locally administered pupil assignment measure and a protest interposition resolution. The proposed pupil placement act delegated to district school authorities the task of assigning pupils to schools according to certain criteria. With Faubus' backing, both measures became law by initiative petition.

During the 1956 gubernatorial primary, Faubus' chief opponent was White Citizens' Council organizer James D. Johnson who rested his primary appeal to Arkansas voters on racial demagoguery. Since the election campaign developed no other issue, Faubus turned to a more positive defense of segregation. Although he denounced Johnson and another staunchly segregationist

candidate as "hate preachers," Faubus repeatedly promised that there would be no forced integration of public schools in the state during his governorship. Faubus handily won in the first primary by polling more votes than his four opponents combined. Thus, the election results seemed to indicate that the governor's "common man" approach and racial "moderation" were pleasing to a solid majority of Arkansas' citizens.

In practice, Arkansas followed a laissez-faire policy toward compliance with the *Brown* decision prior to the autumn of 1957, leaving each school district to work out its own racial problems. Under this arrangement, five Arkansas communities desegregated, and five more were planning to do so in 1957.

The Crisis from August – September 1957

Little Rock, however, interrupted the state's policy of drift. Here, school authorities and organized segregationists — the effective voices of both the proponents and the enemies of desegregation — insisted that the governor take action to preserve order. Faubus found himself in a dilemma, having promised not to force integration upon an unwilling community and at the same time having indicated an intention not to subvert federal law with state action. Fearful of being pushed to the unpopular side of a major racial controversy, Faubus maneuvered to avoid taking a stand at Little Rock during the last days of August 1957.

Faubus first invited the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to accept the burden. The Department of Justice responded to Faubus' inquiry by sending Arthur B. Caldwell, head of its civil rights section, to Arkansas to meet with the governor on August 28.

Faubus, expressing fear of violence, questioned the Justice Department representative about federal assistance in the event of trouble. Caldwell could only explain that the Eisenhower administration did not wish to get involved and would assume no advance responsibility for maintaining order. The Eisenhower administration compounded Faubus' problems by allowing a report on the confidential conversation with Caldwell to leak to the press, and Faubus reacted angrily when reporters asked about the talks. The governor observed that the federal government was "cramming integration down our throats" and then demanding that we "protect ourselves while we're carrying out their orders."

After the conference with Caldwell, the governor helped initiate, and testified in support of, a Mothers' League petition asking an Arkansas chancery court to enjoin school authorities from carrying out planned desegregation at Central High. Faubus informed the court that violence was likely if immediate integration were attempted in the increasingly tense city. Relying heavily upon the governor's testimony, the chancery court judge issued the injunction on August 29. The following day, however, federal district court Judge Ronald Davies injunction voided the chancery court order.

With the school opening date fast approaching, Faubus had to choose his course of action. On September 1, 1957, he announced publicly that he had no plans concerning Little Rock and privately indicated that he intended to let city officials deal with the problem. That night he had a long talk with Superintendent Blossom, who again impressed upon Faubus the necessity for state support. Faubus refused to make the commitment, hinting instead that he might intervene to block the

school board's desegregation plans. The governor did act on the next day by ordering the State Militia of the Arkansas National Guard, which had been alerted earlier, to prevent desegregation at Central High School. Appearing on television that evening, he explained that the mission of the soldiers was "to maintain or restore order and to protect the lives and property of citizens." During the emotion-packed weeks that followed, Faubus insisted that he was not interposing state authority to defy a federal court order. He reiterated that he was neither opposing integration nor defending segregation, and he stated repeatedly that he acted only to prevent violence. Nevertheless, he had committed himself to a segregationist course of action, and finding that his actions rode a wave of popularity, he found his range of political maneuvering sharply narrowed. During the weeks that followed, he became increasingly demagogic and irresponsible.

Governor Faubus dispatched the National Guard and state police units to Central High School on Monday, September 2. That evening Blossom and the school board released a public statement asking the nine black children scheduled to begin classes with their approximately 1,900 white schoolmates the next morning to remain at home until the legal issues of school integration had been settled. The guardsmen turned back the black employees at Central High School, while the board, now trapped between national and state power, appealed to the federal district court in Little Rock for instructions. Judge Ronald Davies ordered the board to carry out its desegregation plan.

On September 4, eight of the black children, together with a group of black and white ministers, went to Central High School and attempted to approach

the building only to be refused admittance by armed guardsmen. Elizabeth Eckford arrived later by bus and was met by a jeering mob as she alighted from the bus at 14th and Park Streets. Seeing the guardsmen a block or so away, she hurried in their direction. She was not allowed to pass the soldiers and was forced to return through the growing mob to her bus stop. Members of the mob crowded around her with taunting remarks, and she proceeded in the direction of Ponder's Drug Store at the corner of Park and Sixteenth Streets to escape. A store employee saw her coming and locked the door. She then went and sat on a bench at the bus stop with a howling mob around her. Finally, aided by a sympathetic white woman, she boarded a city bus to leave the area.

School officials returned to court on September 5, petitioning Judge Davies for a temporary suspension of desegregation calling attention to the developing tension and antagonism which, it felt, would disrupt education at the school. Hearings on this request were held on September 7, and Judge Davies rejected the board's plea that same day. Two days later, Davies ordered the U.S. Attorney General to file a petition immediately for an injunction against Faubus and two officers of the Arkansas National Guard. The Department of Justice filed the petition on September 10, and Davies set the hearing for ten days hence.

During the period between September 2 and September 20, the Eisenhower administration watched indecisively as National Guard troops maintained segregation at Central High School in defiance of federal authority. Not until September 5 did the president make a firm statement that "the federal Constitution will be upheld by me by every legal means at my command."

This pronouncement, however, was qualified the following day when an administration spokesman assured reporters that Eisenhower still opposed the use of federal troops to enforce court orders.

Meanwhile, the National Guard remained at Central High School watching the curious crowds that in turn had gathered to watch them. In a telegram to Eisenhower, Faubus stated his suspicions that federal agents were not only tapping his telephone lines but were also "discussing plans to take into custody, by force, the head of a sovereign state." While the governor dramatically surrounded the executive mansion with guardsmen, U.S. Congressman Brooks Hays sought a negotiated settlement of the impasse and arranged a meeting between Eisenhower and Faubus at Newport, Rhode Island, on September 14. The meeting ended inconclusively, and race relations deteriorated in Little Rock as sentiment hardened on all sides.

On Friday, September 20, the federal district court began hearings on the Department of Justice's petition for an injunction against Governor Faubus and the National Guard officers. The governor's attorney immediately presented arguments that the district court had no right to question a chief executive's judgment in relation to "the performance of his constitutional duties" and that Davies should disqualify himself for lack of impartiality. When the judge dismissed the motion, Faubus' attorneys demanded and received permission to depart. The hearings continued despite the absence of the defense. Later that day, Davies issued a petition enjoining Faubus, the National Guard commanders, and any of their agents from further obstructing desegregation in Little Rock. Faubus promptly removed the guardsmen and departed for the

southern governors' conference, predicting that violence would result if desegregation were attempted.

The precipitous removal of the soldiers left Little Rock to rely upon its own resources in dealing with what had now become a dangerously tense situation. The city had the weekend of September 21-22 to prepare for the beginning of desegregation on Monday, September 23. During this period, Mayor Mann attempted to support the school administration, releasing a statement calling for peaceful acceptance of integration and warning that peace officers would deal sternly with illegal interference. By this time, however, Mann's authority had collapsed. He was unable to control his own administration, and no Little Rock civic club or any other element of civic leadership offered support to the beleaguered mayor. The police department agreed to maintain order but refused to escort black children to Central High School. The city appealed to both Judge Davies and the Justice Department for federal marshals to escort the black students, but both refused. The fire department balked at providing hose equipment, although police officials made it clear that success in mob control depended largely on "the supplementary use of water." Thus the leaderless city slipped toward violence.

Desegregation began under the protection of the undermanned and ill-prepared city police on Monday morning, September 23. The black students entered Central High School, but by lunchtime the mob of some 1,000 whites outside had become so large and belligerent that apprehensive school and city administrators, fearful lest there be bloodshed, ordered the removal of the black students by a side exit. That afternoon Mann asked the Eisenhower administration for federal troops to restore order. Eisenhower issued

Proclamation 3204 (22 F.R. 7628) commanding "all persons engaged in such obstruction of justice to cease and desist therefrom, and to disperse forthwith." Although the black students did not appear at Central High School on September 24, a crowd, though smaller and less violent than the one the day before, reformed. The situation in Little Rock remained explosive. Mann, after several telephone conversations with Justice Department officials, sent a telegram to Eisenhower officially asking for federal intervention. Later that day, the president issued Executive Order 10730 (22 F.R. 7628) which provided "Assistance for the Removal of an Obstruction of Justice Within the State of Arkansas." The order federalized the National Guard and ordered the Secretary of Defense to employ the Arkansas soldiers as well as federal troops to enforce the federal district court order. Within hours some 200 soldiers of the 327th Airborne Battle Group of the 101st Airborne Division from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, arrived in Little Rock, encamping on the athletic fields behind Central High School.

The following morning, September 25, the federal troops surrounded Central High, while a small detachment went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Bates, who had moved to Little Rock in 1941 to establish the *Arkansas State Press*, a black newspaper, and were leaders of the Little Rock chapter of the NAACP. At the Bates residence they picked up the nine black teenagers. After a short drive to the high school, the youngsters formed a single file and, surrounded by soldiers carrying rifles with bayonets fixed, marched through a jeering crowd into Little Rock Central High School to begin the fall school term.

For nearly a month, while a sullen calm settled over the city, the nine black children attended school with a troop

escort. On November 27, the last of the Regular Army forces were withdrawn, leaving a shrinking detachment of federalized guardsmen in control until the commencement of the school year on May 29, 1958.

By this time, Little Rock had become the hub of southern resistance to racial desegregation. The city gained international media attention as it became a mecca to be visited by segregationist speakers from throughout the South. Race relations worsened, and the Capital Citizens' Council assumed a major voice in urban affairs. Governor Faubus demonstrated a growing penchant for demagoguery, filling the media with accusations such as the charge that soldiers were entering the girls' physical-education dressing rooms at the high school.

Aftermath of the Crisis: 1957 - 1959

Integrated classes at Central High continued throughout the 1957-58 school year. Despite the continued presence of the federalized National Guard, there were problems at Central High. The nine black children attending Central High were subjected to an endless campaign of harassment. More than 100 white students were suspended and four were expelled for such activities, while one of the black girls was expelled. Nevertheless, integration was achieved, and in May 1958, Ernest Green, who would become an assistant secretary of labor and is currently a managing director at a major investment firm in Washington, D.C., became the first black to graduate from Central High.

During the 1957-58 school year, Faubus continued to confront federal authority, and in January 1958 he declared that "the Supreme Court

decision is not the law of the land." This was the first time that he had publicly questioned the legal validity of the *Brown* decision. In his quest for the Democratic gubernatorial renomination, Faubus campaigned against the federal government, outsiders in general, the NAACP, and the *Arkansas Gazette*, as well as against two moderate opponents and a number of prominent politicians supporting them.

In July 1958, Faubus won an almost unprecedented third term, obtaining almost 70% of the ballots and carrying every county in the state. His margin of victory was so great that the *Arkansas Gazette* editorialized that the moderate position "has been rejected by the mass of voters in this upper Southern state and is now clearly untenable for any man in public life anywhere in the region." In the same election, former Citizens' Council President James Johnson won nomination for a seat on the Arkansas Supreme Court, and, in November, Dale Alford, a segregationist on the Little Rock school board, completed the rout of the moderates by beating incumbent Brooks Hays for a seat in Congress. Claiming that the election demonstrated the voters' approval of his efforts "to retain the rights of a sovereign state as set out in the federal constitution," Faubus reported that he had new plans for continuing the struggle with federal authority.

Events moved rapidly in Arkansas during late August and September 1958. Calling a special session of the legislature, he recommended measures to strengthen the state's authority over the public school system, the most important of which was a bill authorizing the Arkansas governor to close any school by proclamation. Convening on August 26 in a crisis atmosphere, the legislators promptly approved all the

bills recommended. The special session added 14 new laws to the Arkansas legislative arsenal. However, Faubus delayed signing them until the U.S. Supreme Court refused an opportunity to retreat from the principle of the *Brown* decision.

Earlier the Little Rock school board had petitioned the federal courts for a 2-1/2-year delay in the implementation of the integration order. The board argued that actions by the state government, community hostility, and the turmoil of the 1957-58 school year had made orderly education on a desegregated basis impossible. On June 20, federal district court judge Harold E. Lemley granted the delay, but the NAACP appealed immediately. After a series of procedural maneuverings, the court of appeals overturned Lemley's decision. The school board then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and in August, the Court agreed to hold a special session to consider the question (only the third such term in modern history). The school board therefore delayed the opening of school for the 1958 fall term while both the Arkansas legislature and the Supreme Court met in extraordinary sessions to decide the fate of desegregation in Little Rock. On September 12, 1958, the Court issued its landmark decision *Cooper v. Aaron* (358 U.S. 1, 78 S. Ct. 1401), denying the stay and ordering the school board to proceed with its gradual integration program in compliance with the integration order given by Judge Miller in 1956. Governor Faubus immediately signed the aforementioned 14 bills into law and released a proclamation on September 13 closing all of Little Rock's high schools.

On September 27, 1958, the city's voters endorsed the governor's action in a special election. Less than 30% of the electorate favored "For racial integration of all schools within the Little Rock

School District" as the option for reopening the closed schools listed on the ballot. Faubus assured voters that the high schools could be promptly reopened as segregated, private institutions, but federal district and Eighth Circuit Court injunctions prohibited transfer of the school buildings and equipment to private groups. The circuit court order, handed down on November 10, 1958, followed close on the heels of Congressman Brooks Hays' failure to win reelection in the Little Rock congressional district. After buying up Superintendent Virgil Blossom's contract, all the board members except Congressman-elect Dale Alford resigned. On December 6, 1958, Little Rock elected a new school board. The massive resistance forces, led by the Capital Citizens' Council and supported by Faubus, put up one slate of candidates, while a group of Little Rock businessmen recruited an alternate ticket which took a more "moderate" position in the campaign. The voters chose three board members from each group, resulting in a hopelessly divided board.

During the early months of 1959, Little Rock drifted — its high schools closed and its citizens torn between the racial extremism institutionalized by the Capital Citizens' Council and a growing voice of moderation. After a number of school teachers and administrators incurred the wrath of white supremacy elements due to their generous treatment of black students at Central High School the previous school year, the school board took up the question of teacher contracts at its May 5, 1959, meeting. The three segregationist members wanted to dismiss the offending employees, while the three moderate members favored rehiring all school personnel. After lengthy debate, the three moderates walked out, and the three segregationist members proceeded

to terminate the contracts of 34 teachers, 2 principals, 5 other administrative officials, and 3 secretaries.

Little Rock moderates, having failed to rally effectively behind the cause of public education, now had a new issue. Local PTAs, other school organizations, and the Women's Emergency Committee (WEC) to Open Our Schools, led by Mrs. Adolphine Terry, initiated the antipurge movement. The Women's Emergency Committee, a middle-class organization established at the Terry Mansion (presently the Decorative Arts Museum, a part of the Arkansas Arts Center, in Little Rock) to support an open-schools vote in the September referendum, now numbered more than 1,000 members. Important Little Rock business leaders were already publicly committed to the reopening of schools, and they gave strong support to the antipurge movement. Earlier in March 1959, the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, alarmed by the negative impact the school controversy was having on the city's economy, released a formal statement of policy. While expressing faith in segregation, the statement defended the rule of law and the importance of public education. It called for the schools to be reopened on a desegregated basis. Three days after the purge of the schoolteachers, the WEC, along with 179 Little Rock business and civic leaders, organized the Committee to Stop This Outrageous Purge (STOP). The group issued a statement demanding the recall of the three segregationist board members and undertook to circulate recall petitions.

The Capital Citizens' Council, the Mothers' League, and the newly formed States' Rights Council countered by circulating petitions for the recall of the three moderate board members. Within days both STOP and the segregationists had enough signatures to force elections for all six seats on the board.

STOP led the moderate campaign, while the segregationists created the Committee to Retain Our Segregated Schools (CROSS) to lead their election effort.

Although Faubus intervened late in the campaign on the side of the segregationists, the hard fought election on May 25 resulted in a decisive victory for the moderates. The three anti-Faubus board members, basing their moderate campaign on a program promoting order, stability, and economic growth of the city, retained their seats, while the three segregationist members were recalled. This represented the first time that Governor Faubus had been decisively beaten on a matter pertaining to race and the public schools.

During June 1959, the Little Rock school board, now composed of three moderates and two new members appointed by the county board of education, voted to strike the May 5 session completely from the record and discussed reopening the high schools in the fall. At its next meeting, the board announced formally that the schools would be reopened on a basis acceptable to the federal courts. On June 18, a three-judge federal district court declared the Arkansas school-closing and funds-withholding laws unconstitutional and ordered the city school board to proceed with its original desegregation plan.

Little Rock peacefully desegregated its white public high schools on August 12, 1959. Although Faubus stated that he remained opposed to "forced" desegregation, the school board received organized public support. The city government, breaking a long silence, announced that disorder and lawlessness would not be tolerated. The police department, now capably led and properly prepared, dealt firmly and promptly with public disturbances. Thus, the Little Rock desegregation crisis came to an end.

When the schools reopened in 1959, they did so under a pupil assignment desegregation plan, in which attendance zone lines were redrawn to enhance desegregation. This arrangement was maintained until 1964, when the district instituted a "freedom of choice" plan allowing students in all grades to attend the school of their choice if space was available.

LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL TODAY

Since the fall term of the 1959-60 school year, Central High has been operated as a three-year public high school with an average enrollment of approximately 1,800 students and a faculty of 115. Today, it is the largest of six high schools in the Little Rock School District and the only one located in the inner city. The school has a black principal, and the student body represents a cross-section of the community, drawing from the most affluent areas of Little Rock, as well as from a broad swath of middle- and low-income areas. Racially, 62% of the student body is black, 36% are white, and 2% are "other," mainly Asian. Central has served the metropolitan area for many years as an unofficial magnet school, and it now houses an International Studies Magnet component within the school curriculum. The school offers approximately 125 courses, including 13 advanced placement courses and six foreign language courses.

Central High School is considered a national model in the field of human relations. It is a participant in the Model Schools Program sponsored by the National Governors Association. In 1990 when the Little Rock school board was making a list of the strengths and weaknesses in its system, Central High was listed as the No. 1 strength of the school district.

SIGNIFICANCE OF LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Little Rock Central High, the symbol of the end of racially segregated public schools in the United States, was the site of the first important test for implementation of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision of May 17, 1954, declaring that segregation in public education was an unconstitutional violation of the "equal protection of the laws" clause in the Fourteenth Amendment. The incidents at the high school during the fall of 1957 drew international attention. Little Rock became the epitome of state-resistance when Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus questioned the sanctity of the federal court system and the validity of the Supreme Court's desegregation ruling and challenged the executive branch of the federal government either to come to the rescue of the courts or permit a fundamental deviation from the course of American federalism. Even more significant, the Little Rock controversy was the first fundamental test of the national resolve to enforce black civil rights in the face of massive southern defiance during the period following the *Brown* decision. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower was compelled by the magnitude of white mob violence to use federal marshals and troops to ensure the right of black children to attend the previously all-white Little Rock Central High School, he became the first president since the post-Civil War Reconstruction period to use federal force in support of black civil rights.

As a result of the Little Rock controversy, the city became the symbol of southern racist reaction. Furthermore, the controversy sharpened political antagonisms in the South, reestablishing the front lines of massive resistance in the upper South and becoming an integral part of the course of massive

resistance. Bowing to the influence of segregationist and state sovereignty proponents, Faubus threw up sudden, crude barricades against national law and created a major constitutional crisis. Nevertheless, the controversy ultimately demonstrated the futility of directly defying federal court orders by graphically illustrating the economic costs of total resistance to social change. Little Rock was the most decisive test of American federalism during the 1950s.

RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Little Rock Central High School was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 19, 1977, under criterion A (because of its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American history) and criteria consideration G (because it achieved significance within the previous 50 years). On May 20, 1982, it was designated a national historic landmark.

On August 16, 1996, the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District was listed on the national register under criterion A because of its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American history (area of significance — community planning and development) and criterion C because of its architectural characteristics and qualities with local significance. Within the historic district, 417 buildings were determined to be contributing to the district's significance, while 401 buildings were classified as noncontributing. The historic district listing was amended on January 17, 1997, to include the Wright Avenue Christian Church (now known as the Church of the Living God) at 1850 South Park Street.



Photo Courtesy of Will Counts

SUITABILITY / FEASIBILITY

SUITABILITY OF THE SITE

While Little Rock Central High School's national significance has been recognized, any proposed site must also be evaluated against criteria for suitability and feasibility before consideration for inclusion in the national park system.

To be suitable for inclusion in the national park system, an area must represent a theme that is not already adequately represented in the system or is not comparably represented and protected by another public agency. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the proposed area to other units of the national park system for differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resources, and opportunities for public appreciation.

Various partners in the Little Rock area already are working to preserve the resources of Central High School and are attempting to provide public educational opportunities to learn about the school's stories. Little Rock schools maintain Central High School in generally good condition. Central High Museum, Inc., a private organization, operates a visitor center in a converted gas station across from the school. However, little is being done to proactively ensure preservation of the cultural landscape in the school environs. Historic preservation is not the primary mission of the school district.

Further, Central High Museum, Inc., only has enough funds to operate the existing visitor center through June 1999. The future of the facility after this is uncertain. It is possible that the museum board could receive additional grants to keep the facility open, or it might have to be closed or have its

hours reduced. Thus, the long-term availability of public visitor facilities is uncertain.

To evaluate the suitability of Little Central High School for inclusion in the national park system, other sites in the country were examined to determine the extent of representation of sites related to the historic theme of the civil rights movement that are preserved and interpreted. That list includes the following.

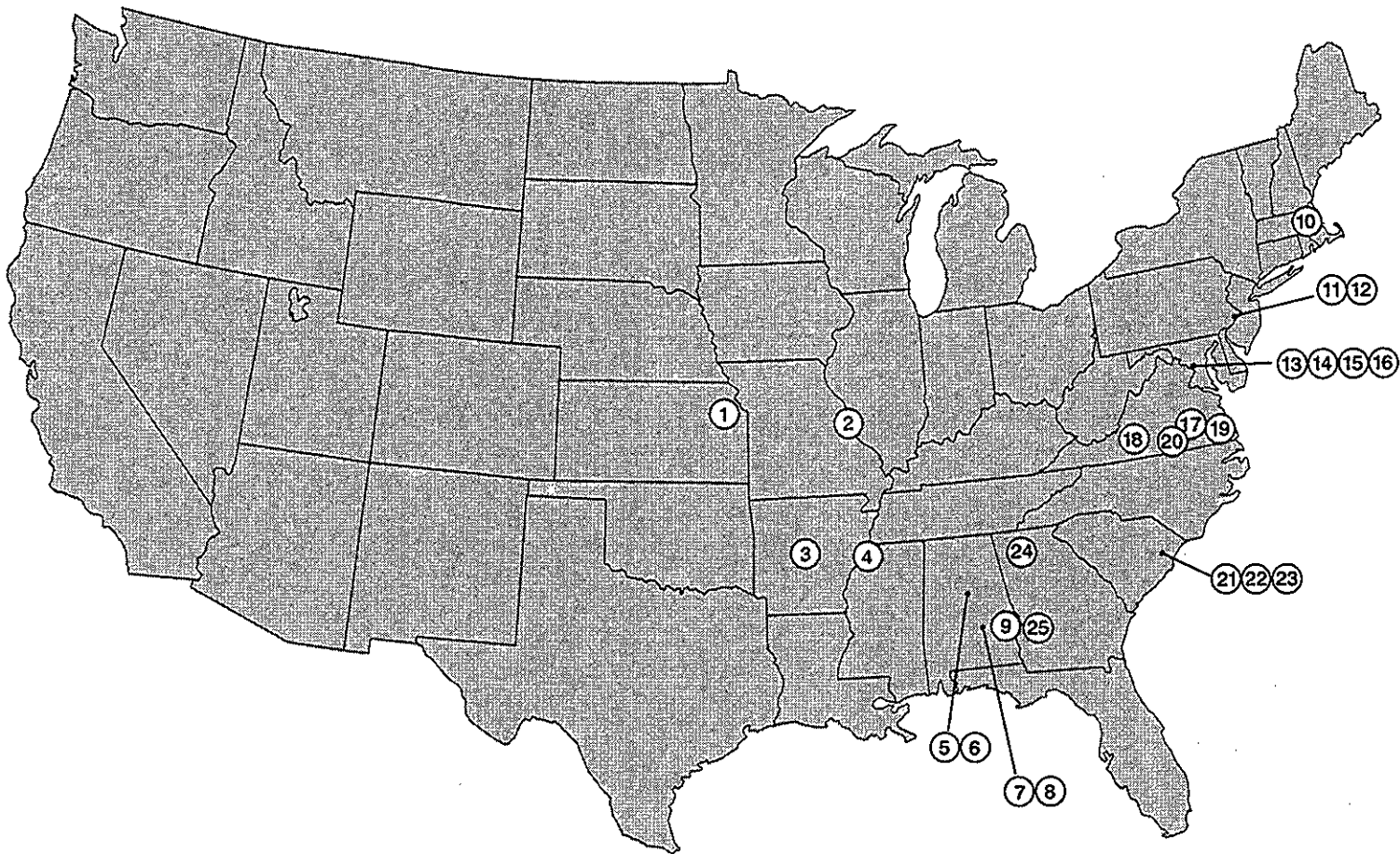
RELATED HISTORIC SITES

National Park Service Units

Booker T. Washington National Monument (Hardy, Virginia). This site was the birthplace and early childhood home of the famous African-American leader and educator.

Boston African-American National Historic Site (Boston, Massachusetts). The site contains 15 pre-Civil War African-American history structures, linked by the 1.6-mile Black Heritage Trail. The meeting house is the oldest, standing, African-American church in the United States. Augustus Saint-Gaudens' memorial to Robert Gould Shaw, the white officer who first led African-American troops during the Civil War, is located along the trail.

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (Topeka, Kansas). The 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that concluded that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and constituted a violation of the equal protection of the laws clause of the Fourteenth Amendment led to the end



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|---|--|
| ① Brown v. Board of Education NHS | ⑭ Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS |
| ② Jefferson National Expansion Memorial | ⑮ M Street High School |
| ③ Dunbar High School | ⑯ John Philip Sousa Junior High School |
| ④ National Civil Rights Museum | ⑰ Maggie L. Walker NHS |
| ⑤ Birmingham Civil Rights Institute | ⑱ Booker T. Washington NM |
| ⑥ Sixteenth Street Baptist Church | ⑲ Hampton Institute |
| ⑦ Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail | ⑳ Robert Russa Moton High School |
| ⑧ Dexter Avenue Baptist Church | ㉑ Liberty Hill Baptist Church |
| ⑨ Tuskegee Institute NHS | ㉒ Summerton School |
| ⑩ Boston African American NHS | ㉓ Scotts Branch School |
| ⑪ Louis Redding House | ㉔ Martin Luther King, Jr., NHS |
| ⑫ Howard High School | ㉕ William Spencer Industrial High School |
| ⑬ Frederick Douglass NHS | |

RELATED HISTORICAL SITES

Little Rock Central High • Arkansas
 U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service
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ON MICROFILM

of racial segregation in the public schools of the United States. That decision is commemorated at Monroe School, 1515 Monroe Street. This is the segregated school attended by Linda Brown, who was represented before the Supreme Court by Thurgood Marshall, later the first African-American to sit on the Court. This school symbolized the harsh reality of discrimination in educational facilities under the "separate but equal" doctrine prior to the Court's historic decision. The park was established not only to commemorate the Brown decision proper but also to interpret the integral role of that decision in the history of the civil rights movement.

Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (Washington, D.C.). From 1877 to 1895, this site was the home of the nation's leading 19th-century African-American spokesman. Douglass was a leader in the effort to abolish slavery prior to the Civil War, and after the war he was active in the struggle to ensure that the newly-freed slaves would enjoy the full measure of their civil rights under the Constitution.

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (St. Louis, Missouri). This park on St. Louis' Mississippi riverfront includes the Old Courthouse where Dred Scott sued for freedom in the historic slavery case. In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that Scott was not a citizen of the United States or the state of Missouri, and thus was not entitled to sue in the federal courts. The ruling also stipulated that Scott's temporary residence in free territory had not made him free upon his return to Missouri.

Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site (Richmond, Virginia). This house at 110 1/2 E. Leigh Street was the home of an ex-house slave's daughter who became

a bank president and a leading figure in the Richmond African-American community.

Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site (Atlanta, Georgia). The birthplace, church, and grave of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights leader during the 1950s and 1960s, are the principal sites in this park. The neighborhood also includes the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. The surrounding 68.19-acre preservation district includes Sweet Auburn, the economic and cultural center of Atlanta's African-American community since the 1920s.

Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site (Washington, D.C.). This is the headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, established by Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935. It commemorates Bethune's leadership in the black women's rights movement from 1943 to 1949. Bethune was a founder of Bethune-Cookman College in Florida.

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail (Alabama). This 54-mile trail commemorates a 1965 voting rights march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The marchers walked along U.S. Highway 80 from Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery. The march helped inspire passage of voting rights legislation signed by President Lyndon Johnson on August 6, 1965.

Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site (Tuskegee, Alabama). Booker T. Washington founded this college for African-Americans in 1881. The college remains an active institution, and the site includes the brick buildings the students constructed themselves, Washington's home, and the George Washington

Carver Museum, which serves as the visitor center.

National Historic Landmarks

Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (Montgomery, Alabama). The original headquarters of the Montgomery Improvement Association, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which carried out a successful boycott of segregated city buses in 1955, thus initiating what would become known as the modern-day civil rights movement in the United States.

Hampton Institute (Hampton, Virginia). Now a liberal arts college, the institute was founded by the American Missionary Society in 1868 to offer vocational education to former slaves. Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, was a graduate.

Sites Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Howard High School (Wilmington, Delaware). The school is significant for its role in the 1951 *Gebhardt v. Belton* school desegregation case in New Castle County, Delaware. Ethel Belton led the petition drive for African-American students in Claymont, a Wilmington suburb, to attend a local white high school rather than commute to Wilmington to attend the black Howard High School. *Gebhardt v. Belton* would later become one of the school desegregation cases before the Supreme Court when it rendered its historic *Brown* decision.

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (Birmingham, Alabama). The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is located next door to the National Civil Rights Institute. A center for civil rights activities

and the site of the Ku Klux Klan bombing in 1963 that killed four girls attending Sunday School.

M Street High School (Washington, D.C.). The M Street High School represents one of the finest educational facilities for African-Americans constructed during the early 20th century. Faculty members provided academic training in the liberal arts rather than the industrial arts, and encouraged African-American students to pursue graduate and professional education at leading American universities and to break down society's racial barriers. Carter G. Woodson and Charles Hamilton Houston are among the school's most illustrious graduates.

Dunbar High School (Little Rock, Arkansas). Opened in the autumn of 1929, this high school was named for Paul Laurence Dunbar, a noted African-American poet during the early 20th century. Hailed as the finest high school in the South for African-American students, the school was the first industrial arts-academic high school for African-American students in Little Rock.

Sites not Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

John Philip Sousa Junior High School (Washington, D.C.). In 1950 Garner Bishop led a campaign to integrate John Philip Sousa Junior High School, which had been reserved for white students living in southeast Washington, D.C. James Nebrit, an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, filed a lawsuit, *Bolling v. Sharpe*, to effect the integration of the District's public schools. This case would later become one of the school desegregation cases before the Supreme Court when it rendered its historic *Brown* decision.

Liberty Hill Baptist Church (Clarendon County, South Carolina). The majority of meetings associated with the grass-roots movement to desegregate the public schools in South Carolina were conducted in this Clarendon County church. Rev. J.A. De Laine, pastor of the church, and the local African Methodist Episcopal Church pastor solicited support from African-American residents in the Summerton area to challenge discriminatory treatment in the area's public school system. As the principle African-American leader, De Laine recruited plaintiffs and received legal aid from the NAACP for litigation of the *Briggs v. Elliott* case that would later become one of the school desegregation cases before the Supreme Court when it rendered its historic *Brown* decision.

Louis Redding House (Wilmington, Delaware). Louis Redding, counsel for the plaintiffs in *Gebhardt v. Belton*, lived in this home during the litigation of the landmark school desegregation cases. In 1929 Redding became the first African-American admitted to the Delaware bar, beginning a lengthy distinguished career as a civil rights advocate.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (Birmingham, Alabama). The institute includes a museum that offers extensive exhibits and multimedia programs that interpret American endeavors for the extension of civil rights with particular attention to Birmingham's role in those efforts. The institute promotes research and sponsors seminars and conferences on civil rights as well as global human rights issues.

Kelly Ingram Park, the setting for many confrontations during the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, is across the street from the institute. The park contains dramatic metal sculptures

depicting police dogs, water cannons, and jailed children.

National Civil Rights Museum (Memphis, Tennessee). This museum, developed through a cooperative private and public funding effort, offers an elaborate set of interpretive displays, including audiovisual and interactive techniques relating to civil rights endeavors in the United States. The museum is housed within the facade of the Lorraine Motel where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in 1968. The room where King was staying and the balcony where he was shot have been preserved.

Robert Russa Moton High School (Farmville, Virginia). This school served as a segregated high school for African-Americans in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Overcrowding had reached crisis levels by 1951, resulting in a student protest strike led by Barbara Johns. Student action soon led to formal litigation in *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*. The county school board adopted a policy of resistance and opted to improve Moton High School rather than integrate its public schools. The *Davis* case would later become one of the school desegregation cases before the Supreme Court when it rendered its historic *Brown* decision. The Moton High School has been recommended by the advisory board for designation as a national historic landmark, and the National Park Service is now preparing a study for this site at the request of Congress.

Scotts Branch School (Summerton, South Carolina). The historic Scotts Branch School building no longer stands. This school was the primary focus of legal arguments to demonstrate the inequality of educational facilities provided for African-American students

when compared with those for white students in the *Briggs v. Elliott* school desegregation case.

Summerton School (Summerton, South Carolina). This school is significant for its association with the *Briggs v. Elliott* school desegregation case. It was the white school that was used as a comparison to the facilities available to African-American students at Scotts Branch School in Summerton.

William Spencer Industrial High School (Columbus, Georgia). In 1931 this school was dedicated to the educational advancement of African-American students by providing college preparatory subjects.

Suitability Analysis

While it is true that various other important sites associated with the civil rights movement exist within the national park system or are preserved by other managing agencies, none equal the ability to illustrate the potent issues as exemplified by the Little Rock incident of 1957. Little Rock Central High School offers superior opportunities to illustrate and interpret themes related to desegregation in public education. Possible designation of the site as a unit of the national park system would not duplicate the resources and stories already depicted in the system at the *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site. Rather, inclusion of Central High School in the national park system would complement and expand upon the themes represented at *Brown v. Board* National Historic Site.

The events surrounding the integration of Central High School compelled Americans to confront issues of race and citizenship in ways not experienced since Reconstruction and the election of 1876, when the future of black citizens was politically bartered away into what would become known as the Jim Crow era of American history. Court decisions made prejudice the law of the land,

institutionalizing a philosophy of "separate but equal" apartheid policy for African-Americans. More than 50 years later, *Brown v. Board of Education* reversed that decision. A portion of the events following this landmark court case were acted out on the steps of Central High School.

Central High School represents various large national themes in American history. The legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction, federal and state relationships, civil rights, school integration policy, interracial relations, judicial interpretation of the constitution, and continuing conflict resolution played a part in the history of the school, its neighborhood, and its community.

Central High School became preeminent in the symbolism of school integration because of the influence of television technology and the news media. Through televised coverage of the events, American citizens became American neighbors in fact, experiencing in their living rooms the plight of the Little Rock Nine and the deployment of troops on behalf of blacks' civil rights. The images of students such as Elizabeth Eckford and her attackers became synonymous with Central High School, providing a vivid picture that is now part of our national historical memory. Television and related media acted as a national lens by which Americans confronted their individual feelings about race and civil rights. They could see themselves as a nation and experience first hand the hate and fear associated with the questions of civil rights and school integration. Through media technology, the school and its neighborhood became part of the nation's collective reality.

Central High School is also different from other civil rights sites in that its legacy continues to live in the high school programs that continue today, the school district that supports those programs and, most importantly, in the students that make up its living legacy. The citizens of Little Rock and the

Central High School community continue to make their own personal stories of conflict and reconciliation available to the nation and world.

Central High School is not just a story of hatred and violence, but, more importantly, it is a living monument to the human spirit — it is a story that provides evidence that courage and conviction provide hope in the face of adversity. The history of the community and its school is the embodiment of the adage, "If you want peace, work for justice." The 1957 integration of Central High School, its students, and its community is a story and a resource that the American nation can look to with continuing pride as we continue to build upon its legacy. Such a legacy is worthy of inclusion as a part of the nation's national park system.

Thematic Framework

Beyond a strict suitability analysis, the National Park Service uses a thematic framework of American history and prehistory in studying and interpreting historic sites. Until 1990, the publication *History and Prehistory in the National Park Service and the National Landmark Program* (NPS 1987) was used for that purpose. The revised thematic framework outline is reflected in this study and points to three primary history themes — Theme II: Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Theme III: Expressing Cultural Values, and Theme IV: Shaping the Political Landscape.

Theme II: Creating Social Institutions and Movements. This theme focuses on the diverse formal and informal structures such as schools or voluntary

associations through which people express values and live their lives. Americans generate temporary movements and create enduring institutions to define, sustain, or reform these values. Sites such as Women's Rights National Historical Park and the Eugene V. Debs National Historic Landmark illustrate the diversity and changeable nature of social institutions.

Theme III: Expressing Cultural Values.

This theme covers expressions of culture — people's beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit. For example, Boston African-American National Historic Site reflects the role of ordinary Americans and the diversity of the American cultural landscape. This theme also encompasses the ways that people communicate their moral and aesthetic values. The gardens and studio at the Augustus Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in New Hampshire are an example of this theme.

Theme IV: Shaping the Political

Landscape. This theme encompasses tribal, local, state, and federal political and governmental institutions that create public policy and those groups that seek to shape both policies and institutions. Sites associated with political leaders, theorists, organizations, movements, campaigns, and grassroots political activities illustrate aspects of the political environment. Independence Hall is an example of democratic aspirations and reflects the nation's political ideals. Places associated with leaders in the development of the American constitutional system such as Abraham Lincoln's home and the birthplace of Martin Luther King — both national historic sites — embody key aspects of the political landscape.

FEASIBILITY

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area's historic setting must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resource and to accommodate use by the public. It must have potential for efficient administration at a reasonable cost. Important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.

In the case of Little Rock Central High School, the historic setting has changed little from 1957. While undergoing some additions and modest growth to the eight-block campus, the core building retains its architectural appearance as constructed in 1927. The single addition to the complex that has occurred since 1957 is the construction of the Jess W. Matthews Library-Media Center northeast of the main school building. It is largely hidden from view from South Park Street and was designed to be architecturally compatible with the original school. The school's interior remains largely as constructed in 1927 and used in 1957. Classroom spaces, hallways, stairways, and cafeteria spaces are largely unchanged from 1927. A fieldhouse was added in 1951 that updated athletic facilities, but it has little impact on the school building.

The neighborhood surrounding the school also retains a high degree of integrity, having undergone little significant change during the past 40 years. Facing the front of the school are seven houses on South Park Street that have retained much of their 1957 appearance. The Bullock Temple C.M.E. Church was constructed in 1971. The Ponder's Drug Store on the corner of South Park and 16th Street retains a

high degree of integrity. The Mobil Service Station at 14th and South Park Streets was restored in 1997 to function as a visitor center with exhibits related to the integration of Central High School. The landscape in front of the school and the streetscape of South Park Street remain largely unchanged from 1957. Generally the school, surrounding landscape, and adjacent properties are intact and currently accommodate a moderate level of visitor use.

The probable partnership nature of a national historic site at Central High School makes description of such details as a management structure, programs, and partner roles both speculative and premature. Such decisions would need to be made jointly by all partners as part of a general management plan process. However, in general, the National Park Service would see its primary roles at a potential national historic site as being focused on:

1. facilitation of site management by promoting partnerships and by convening meetings and encouraging dialogue between partners to make decisions and to achieve mutual goals
2. developing and leading a comprehensive interpretive program (perhaps to include management of the existing visitor center, though this would best be decided through a general management plan process)
3. developing and implementing a volunteer program to support the site
4. providing technical assistance and, if authorized by Congress, limited financial assistance for historic preservation to Little Rock Schools,

the city of Little Rock, and neighborhood residents and property owners to ensure long-term preservation of cultural resources and landscapes

5. working with partners to recruit additional public and private sector support for the site and to pursue sources of additional funds and resources to supplement and expand site programs and objectives

The National Park Service does not envision a role in matters related to the operation of the high school, nor in maintenance or capital improvements to the school or any other structures within boundaries of a national historic site. The National Park Service does not envision a role that would usurp nor supplement the city of Little Rock's responsibilities for public health and safety or for land use management and controls. Further, the National Park Service does not envision that it would serve as a traditional land manager at Central High School. The National Park Service would acquire little or no property and would not seek regulatory authority (other than for the minimal property it might own in fee). Any property that might be desirable for NPS ownership would be identified in association with a general management planning process.

In consideration of the likely roles of the National Park Service at a possible national historic site, an estimate of the budget necessary to operate the unit would be between \$400,000 and \$500,000 annually (in 1998 dollars). This estimate is extrapolated from comparisons of the budgets of similar national historic sites already in the system. Of course, the actual needed funding would be contingent on the specific roles identified for the National Park Service through a general management plan process. Further, the cited

figures represent the budget required for a unit that is fully functional. Initial start-up operations would likely require less funding. Land acquisition and construction costs cannot be predicted until such time as a precise role for the National Park Service is defined and the need, if any, for acquisition or development is identified. However, this amount would likely be minimal. Land acquisition, should any be necessary, would not be expected to cost in excess of \$150,000 (based on 1998 property values).

Designation of a national historic site would generate a number of issues that would need consideration and cooperation by the National Park Service, Little Rock School, and the community. For example, designation as a national historic site would increase the number of persons who visit the school and surrounding area each year. The exact number of potential visitors is difficult to predict. Similar existing NPS historic sites in urban areas have annual visitation ranging from 65,000 to 500,000. Current annual visitation to the Central High Museum and Visitor Center is estimated at about 25,000. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that annual visitation would increase by at least a factor of two, and possibly by much more.

Such an increase in visitation could generate a variety of challenges:

- Parking space is limited in this residential neighborhood. However, opportunities exist to provide additional offstreet parking.
- Demand for access to the existing visitor center and to tour or view school property would increase. Conflicts with school operations and neighborhood lifestyle are possible. However, there are opportunities to

expand visitor facilities and to provide controlled and managed access to the school, its grounds, and the neighborhood so as to minimize adverse impacts. In fact, designation of a national historic site not only would provide for better protection of resources and public understanding of American history, it also could create unique opportunities to enhance education through development of specialized curriculum or through recruitment of students to support national historic site programs.

- The potential demand for services to accommodate visitor use would increase. There could be a higher incidence of requests for police and emergency medical services in the area. However, it is unlikely the demand would exceed the capabilities of the city of Little Rock and other partners. Requests for permits or zoning accommodations for commercial enterprises might grow. However, visitors can be directed to other nearby locations in the city where they can obtain products or services.
- The very idea of establishing a national historic site that includes a functioning school, in itself, has many inherent potential challenges. However, precedence has shown that such an arrangement can successfully be implemented without undue impacts on education. The Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site in Alabama is on the campus of a functioning university. On its

website that university proudly identifies itself as, "The only college or university campus in the nation to be designated a National Historic Site by the U.S. Congress."

Although issues like these listed would present challenges, it is the opinion of the National Park Service that none of the issues is insurmountable given strong commitment and cooperation between the National Park Service and local partners.

In all the alternatives that follow, Central High would continue as an operating high school. While consideration is given to interpretation inside the school building, acquisition of school property is not necessary for the implementation of any alternative. Administrative arrangements could be achieved efficiently either through adaptive use of one of the many existing nearby structures or leasing space in the neighborhood. Two vacant properties across the street from the school offer a reasonable opportunity to provide administrative space and/or support functions for visitor use. Access is direct from most areas of Little Rock and arrival via West 14th Street allows easy connection with Interstate 630. The national historic landmark status of the school property and the surrounding historic district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, afford protection from threats that would significantly affect its historic integrity and significance.

CONCLUSION

Little Rock Central High School is suitable for addition to the national park system because of its place in American civil rights history as a preeminent symbol and icon of the continuing struggle for equal protection under the law for all American citizens. No other existing unit of the national park system, nor similar area managed by another entity, matches the potential of Central High School to create vivid understanding and appreciation for our country's struggles and accomplish-

ments related to desegregation in public schools.

Furthermore, Little Rock Central High is feasible for inclusion in the national park system because of the high degree of historic integrity demonstrated by the resource and the ease and efficiency by which the National Park Service could partner with others to administer the site. Anticipated costs associated with possible national historic site designation are reasonable.



Photo Courtesy of Will Counts

ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVES FOR RESOURCE PROTECTION AND PUBLIC USE

In addition to establishing resource significance and measuring the sites against criteria for suitability/feasibility, this study has explored differing management frameworks for Little Rock Central High School. Three alternatives that examine differing operational and administrative approaches and optional boundaries and visitor experiences have been considered. They are founded on the twin principles of ensuring con-

tinued protection for the nationally significant resource and providing for a quality experience to the visiting public. It should further be recognized that the three alternatives are possibilities that offer broad distinctions largely based on the level of involvement of the National Park Service. Many of the specific components of the individual alternatives could change.

ALTERNATIVE A: LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

This alternative constitutes the existing conditions approach to the future of Central High and the interpretation of the events of 1957. This alternative would embrace the existing conditions of the operating high school and the visitor center. The existing partnership between the Central High Museum and Visitor Center and Little Rock Central High would continue as the principal management framework. Little change would be made to Little Rock Central High School as a historic resource, although growth and expansion might be undertaken as future conditions dictated. The primary distinction between alternative A and the following alternatives is that the National Park Service would not be involved under alternative A. This alternative is framed to continue those existing partnerships for management of the site with protection provided by the current national landmark designation.

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The existing management would continue principally by the Central High Museum, Inc., in cooperation with Little Rock School District and Central High administration. A partnership with Central High Neighborhood, Inc., and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock or other local educational institutions would continue to encourage historic preservation practices in the surrounding historic district and reinforce the historic experience offered by the visitor center. Under this alternative the partners would continue to participate in efforts such as raising funds, seeking grants, and recruiting new and broader partners. Central High would remain an operating school. The National Park

Service would not be involved in the management of the resource.

BOUNDARY RECOMMENDATION

The current national historic landmark boundary would remain. No designation would be sought for lands beyond the eight-block area that constitutes the national historic landmark. The historic district that currently surrounds the national historic landmark would constitute a secondary boundary.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

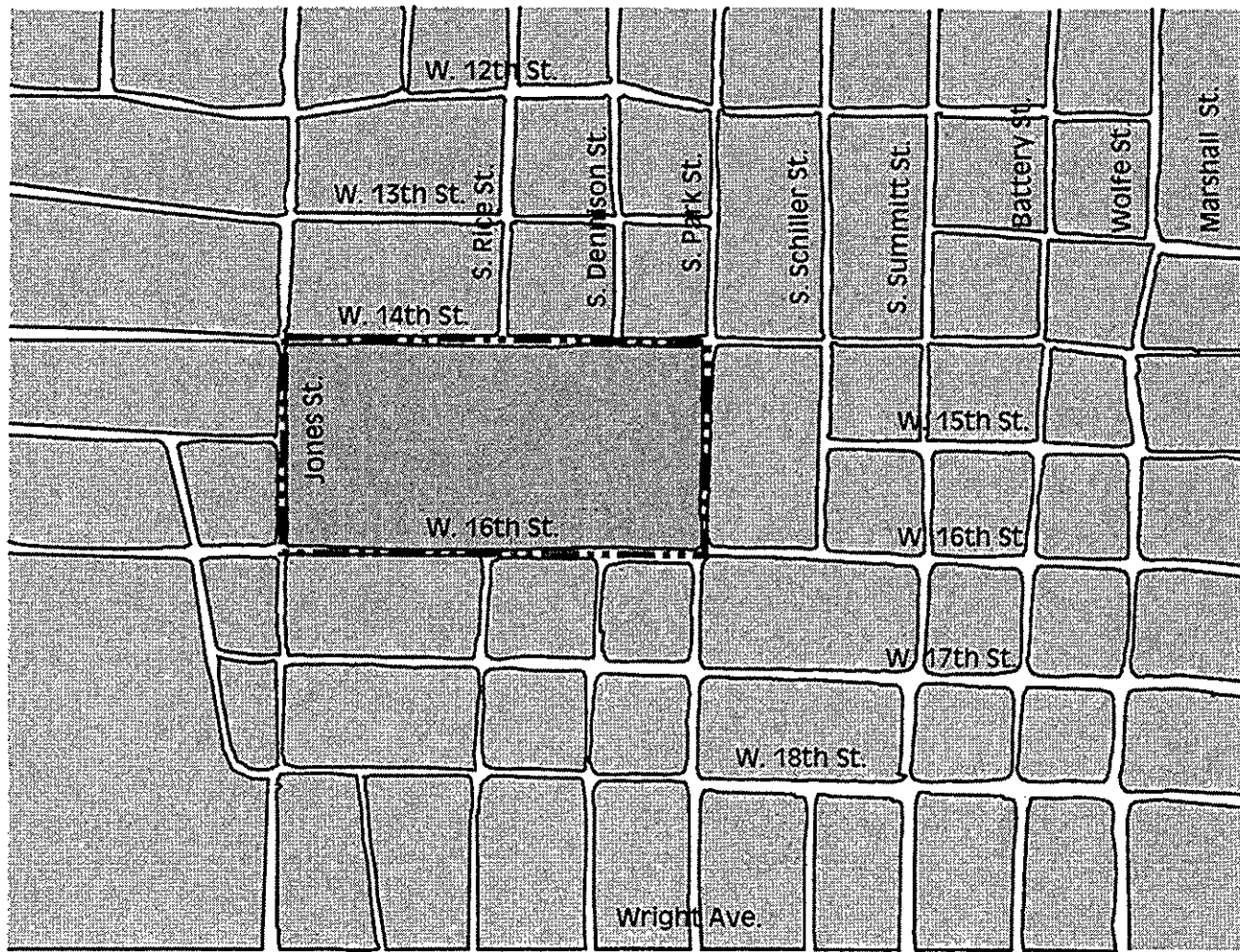
The boundary established for the national historic landmark and the surrounding historic district would help ensure the necessary protection. The protection mechanisms associated with the national landmark designation and the historic district, as defined in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, would be available to ensure protection of the historic qualities of the resource.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Little Rock Central High School as a symbol and as a site would continue to interpret the events of 1957 much as it does today. The existing visitor center would remain the primary focus of the visitor experience and continue as the principal destination for visitors. Interpretation would concentrate on the timeline of events and the recorded history of 1957-58. The school would remain as a functioning high school but continue to offer periodic tours to interested parties as it does today. The

landscape at the front of the school and the streetscape of Park Street would remain available for interpretation by the staff of the visitor center. An expanded

visitor experience could evolve through the implementation of a commemorative garden on an adjacent vacant property.



----- Boundary Recommendation

ON MICROFILM

ALTERNATIVE A and B
Boundary Recommendation

Little Rock Central High • Arkansas
U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service
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ALTERNATIVE B: LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH AS AN AFFILIATED AREA

This alternative would explore a future for Little Rock Central High as an affiliated area of the national park system. Affiliated areas usually are resources that are neither owned by the United States nor administered by the National Park Service but are recognized by an act of Congress or by designation of the secretary of the interior as a resource of significance. Affiliation with the national park system would generally entail technical and/or financial assistance offered to the managing partner by the National Park Service.

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Central High Museum, Inc., would continue to be the principal manager in cooperation with Little Rock School District and Central High administration. A partnership with Central High Neighborhood, Inc., and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock or other local educational institutions would continue to encourage historic preservation practices in the surrounding national historic district and reinforce the historic experience offered by the visitor center. The National Park Service would participate by offering technical and financial assistance in accordance with legislation, if authorized by Congress, or through any cooperative agreements developed among the interested parties. Again, the interested partners would continue to work together in such activities as raising funds, seeking grants, and recruiting new and broader partners.

BOUNDARY RECOMMENDATION

As an affiliated area, Little Rock Central High could be designated as a national

historic site but acquisition of property by the federal government would not be undertaken. For that reason the boundary recommendation would be the same as the previous alternative (see alternative A).

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Technical assistance would be available to aid in the protection of the historic resource beyond the mechanisms available to protect a national historic landmark.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

As described in alternative A, Little Rock Central High would continue to be the principal feature of the visitor experience. The existing visitor center would remain the primary focus of the experience and continue as the principal destination for visitors. The school would remain as a functioning high school but would continue to offer tours to interested parties as it does today. The landscape at the front of the school and the streetscape of Park Street would remain available for interpretation by the staff of the visitor center. Interpretation would be expanded through the connection with similar resources currently managed by the National Park Service, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historical Park. Technical assistance for interpretive programs, exhibits, publications, and waysides would also be available. An expanded visitor experience could evolve through the implementation of a commemorative garden on an adjacent vacant property.

ALTERNATIVE C: LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

This alternative commemorates Little Rock Central High School as a nationally significant resource by recommending designation of the school and surrounding area as a unit of the national park system. It would explore an evolutionary approach to Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site that involves multiple parties in the management and development of the resource. It would establish an early National Park Service presence on site and encourage partnerships with others. As opportunities arose, preservation and interpretation would expand to include additional resources that would broaden and enlarge the mission of the national historic site.

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

An array of possibilities for the overall management of Little Rock Central High National Historic Site would be explored under this alternative. The critical parties would include the Board of Central High Museum, Inc., the Little Rock School District, the Central High Neighborhood, Inc., the city of Little Rock, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock or other local educational institutions, and the National Park Service. The precise nature of any agreement(s) among these parties would be negotiated.

Little Rock Central High National Historic Site would operate as a distinct unit of the national park system. The National Park Service would assign staff to the unit, including a superintendent or site manager. However, the role of the National Park Service would not be that of a traditional land manager. The National Park Service would not acquire the school. Any NPS acquisition of land would be from willing sellers only. Property needs would be determined through a general management planning process and would be limited to nearby property that might be necessary to

accommodate the roles defined for the National Park Service. Property necessary to accommodate NPS programs and functions also could be achieved through lease or cooperative agreement mechanisms (thereby limiting the need for any federal acquisition).

The National Park Service would not have regulatory authority on land other than any it might acquire in-fee. Thus, the Park Service would not interfere with the Little Rock School District's authority to administer Central High School. Decisions related to such elements as school operations and academic and extracurricular programs would continue to be the sole responsibility of the school district. Similarly, responsibility for land use controls and law enforcement and other city services in the neighborhood surrounding the school would continue to rest with the city of Little Rock.

The National Park Service would serve primarily as a management facilitator, functioning as a catalyst to encourage cooperation among partners and to maximize the combined resources of those partners. The Park Service would work closely with the school district, the city, and others to implement park programs and achieve goals for the national historic site through cooperation and mutual initiatives. The Park Service would also bring additional resources and capabilities to management of the national historic site, possibly including some combination of resources to enhance interpretive programs, public use management, historic preservation, and partnership development.

Legislation for the site could authorize the National Park Service to enter into agreements with other entities to further the purposes of the enabling act and to accomplish objectives outside the scope of the federal government's role. Agreements with the following

entities could be undertaken and are presented as examples of possible agreements.

The Little Rock School District to provide for access and interpretation on the grounds and possibly inside the school

The Central High Museum Board to assist with interpretation, communication and cooperation, volunteer coordination, and general support

The student body and alumni associations of Central High to promote appreciation of Little Rock Central High School as a national historic site and as an operating educational institution

The Central High Neighborhood Association and other private entities to develop and operate a museum/institute for the purpose of research and communication regarding interracial relations, constitutional history, and the future of these and related issues

The city of Little Rock to promote visitation and use of the site, provide access, law enforcement, zoning controls, historic preservation, and overall cooperation

The state of Arkansas, such as the Arkansas History Commission and state historic preservation office, to promote tourism, historic preservation, and historic research

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock to preserve archival data related to Central High, conduct research, and promote understanding of historic events related to Central High

Finally the National Park Service could coordinate with other sites, both within and outside the national park system, to research and interpret related themes, including black history, constitutional decisions regarding civil rights, and interracial relations.

BOUNDARY RECOMMENDATION

Designation as a national historic site and inclusion in the national park system would entail a legislatively established boundary. The boundary would be based on the evaluation of significant historic resources, features necessary for visitor use, and property needed for efficient administration. Based on a preliminary investigation, the critical resources would include the Central High School property, the visitor center property and its adjacent parking area, the streetscape of South Park Street, the seven private homes and the Bullock Temple C.M.E. Church facing the school, Ponders Drugstore, and the two vacant properties facing West 14th Street. Additional properties might be important for preservation and interpretation but would have to await further research to determine significance and value. Once a more complete study was undertaken, a definitive recommendation on the boundary of the national historic site would be developed. It should be noted that designation as a national historic site would be a legislatively enacted addition to the eight-block Central High School National Historic Landmark designation already in place.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Designation of Central High as a national historic site would afford increased protection of resources through greater awareness, recognition, and understanding of the site's importance. Because the National Park Service would not have regulatory authority on lands other than those it might own in fee, the laws, regulations, and policies normally applying to units of the national park system would not be applicable to most of the site.

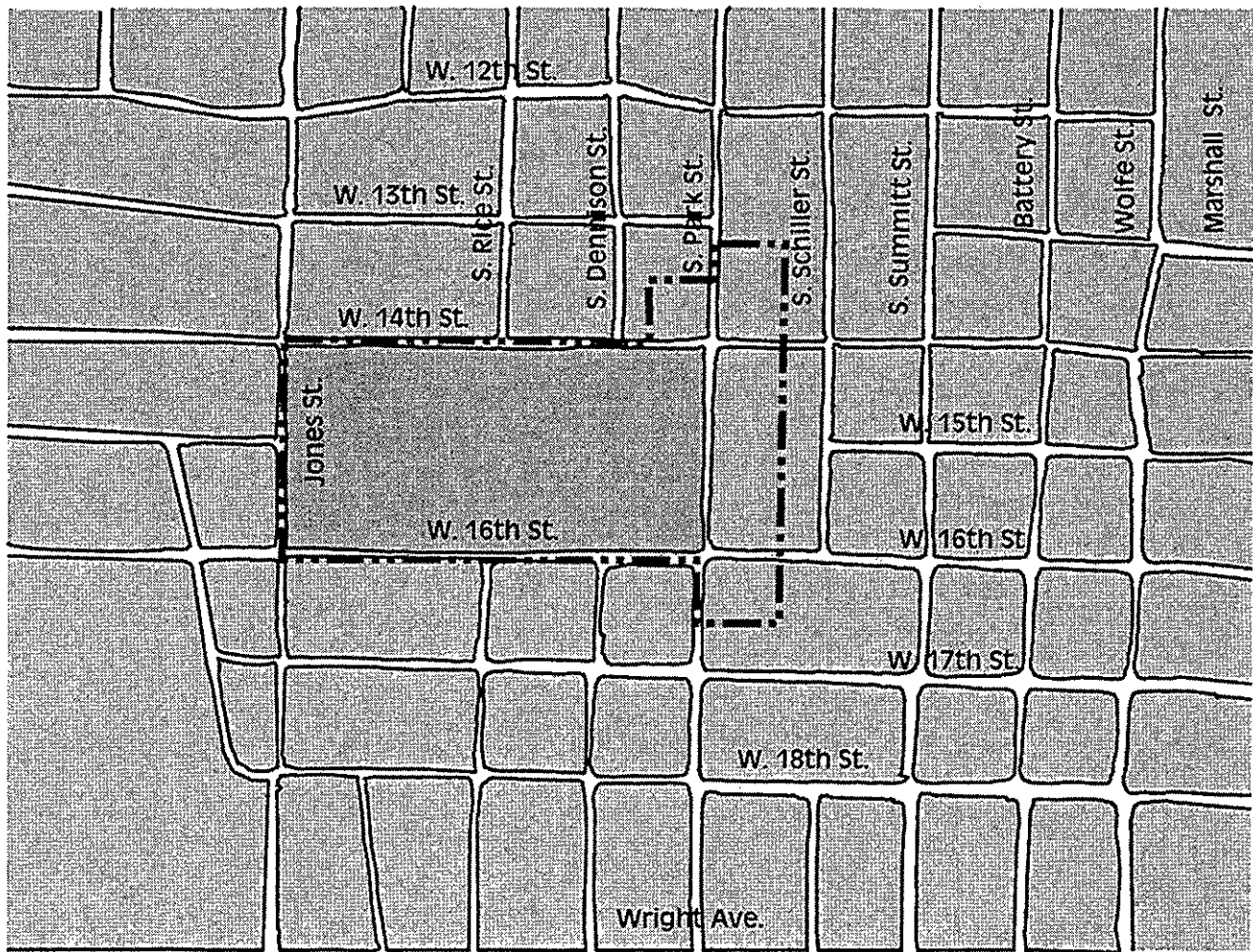
VISITOR EXPERIENCE

In keeping with the evolutionary approach of this alternative, the intent

would be to start small but as opportunities arise to expand the visitor experience. At the outset of establishing the national historic site, the visitor experience would be similar to the one presented by the Central High Museum, the landscape in front of the school, and periodic tours offered by the school. The visitor experience concepts that follow allow for expansion of the experience to include possible interpretation within the school itself, linking the related sites in and around Little

Rock and an interpretive connection with related sites throughout the country. Use of the landscape and streetscape for exhibits and wayside interpretation would be explored. The potential for a commemorative garden, an expanded visitor center, and an institute on interracial relations would be examined in the future.

Additional details about a potential national historic site can be found in the earlier discussion of feasibility.

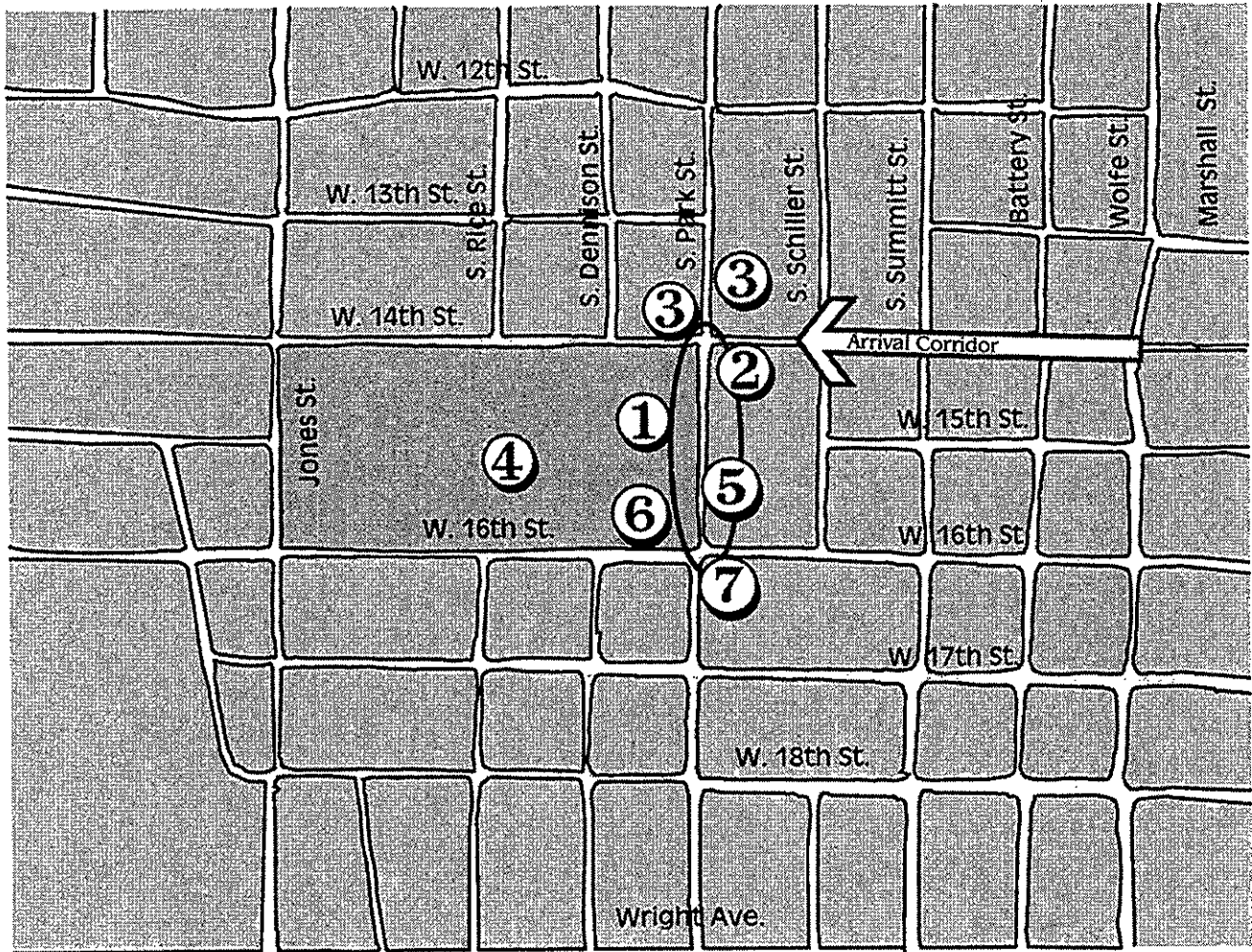


----- Boundary Recommendation

ALTERNATIVE C Boundary Recommendation

Little Rock Central High • Arkansas
U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service
DSC • May 98 • 41000

637



- ① Little Rock Central High School
- ② Visitor Center
- ③ Vacant Property
- ④ Encampment
- ⑤ Church
- ⑥ Campus Inn
- ⑦ Ponders Drugstore

○ Streetscape

INTERPRETIVE FEATURES

Little Rock Central High • Arkansas
 U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service
 DSC • JUL 98 • 20004

ON MICROFILM



Photo Courtesy of Central High Museum Historical Collections / UALR Archives

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

INTERPRETATION AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

This section describes the experiences visitor could have when they visit Central High, its surrounding neighborhood, and the Little Rock vicinity. While the focus of any experience would certainly be the high school, related resources in the neighborhood, city, and nation would provide variety and richness to the experience. To satisfy diverse interests, a range of opportunities would be available based on the interpretive themes identified for Little Rock Central High that follow.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The Event

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.

Civil Rights Movement

The event that happened here was only one of many battles in the ongoing struggle for equal rights for all; only one of many sites commemorating the sacrifices made in the quest for equality.

Use of Executive Power

President Eisenhower's issuance of Executive Order 10730, which provided "Assistance for the Removal of an Obstruction of Justice within the State of Arkansas," represented a national

commitment to enforce black civil rights. It was also one of the few times in history that a president has exercised his right to use executive power to contravene state authority.

Equal Rights

In the Declaration of Independence, the United States proclaimed as its founding philosophy a commitment to certain "self evident truths," including the assertion that "all men are created equal." Almost 200 years later, Little Rock Central High would put that commitment to a monumental test.

The School

Central High is much more than a building. It is a symbol of excellence in education, an architectural achievement, the end of a segregated school system, and humanity at its best and worst.

The State

As the capital of a relatively progressive, upper-South state, Little Rock was an unlikely site for civil unrest. However, a series of political events in the state combined to create an explosive situation.

The Neighborhood

The neighborhood surrounding Central High helped set the stage for an explosive situation, gave rise to heroes, heroines, and hecklers, and watched as one of the most dramatic incidents in American history unfolded. Today, the once white lower- to middle-class

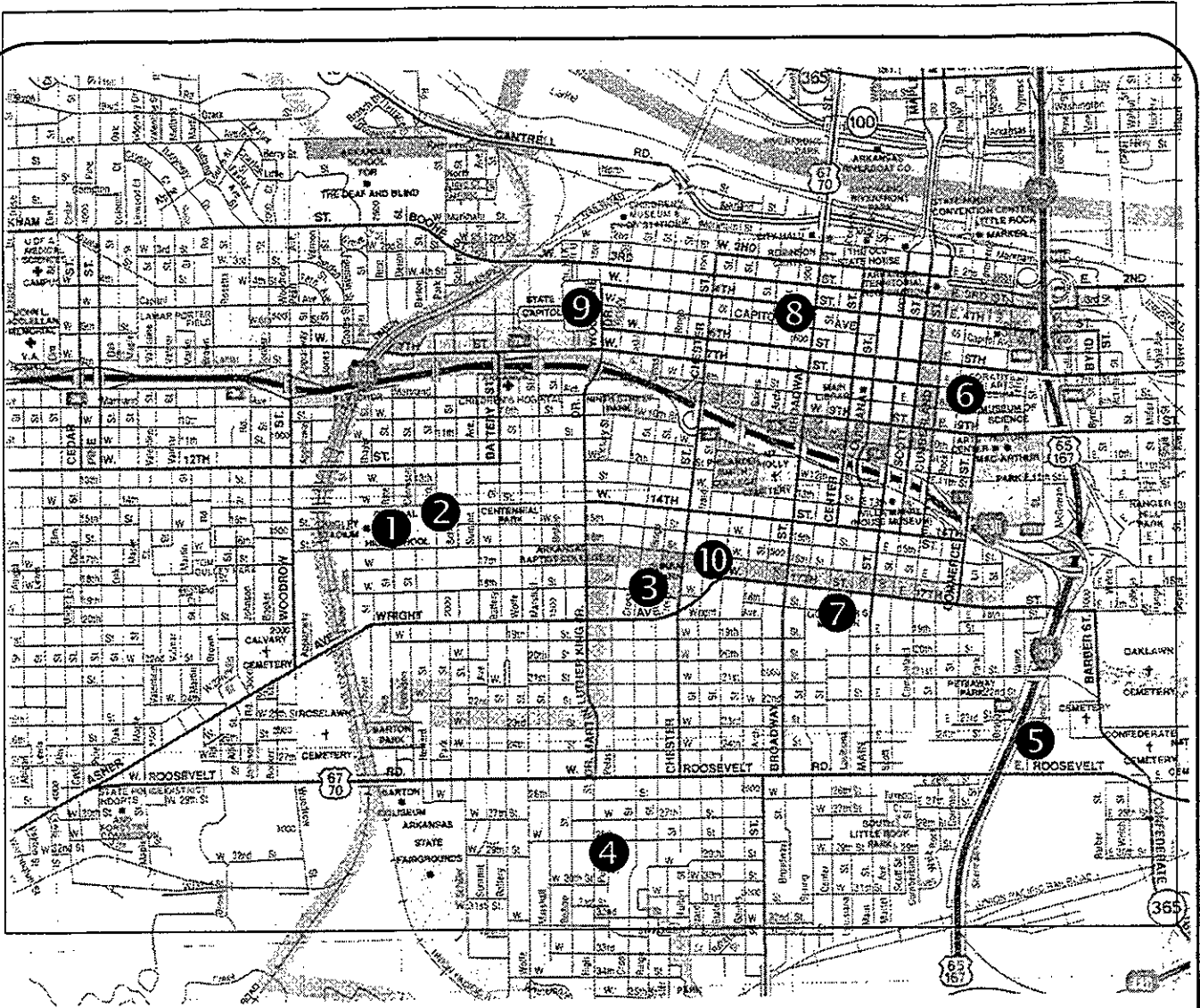
neighborhood is 92% black and struggling to recover from the negative effects of racism.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

To design a quality visitor experience for Little Rock Central High, the following preliminary visitor experience goals have been developed that build upon the resources as well as the themes discussed above.

Visitors will have opportunities to

- learn about and feel the emotions of the events surrounding the integration of Central High and be able to relate those events to the overall civil rights movement, to current events and to themselves
- meet the people involved, e.g., Little Rock Nine, white students, school administrators, soldiers and others; feel their emotions and hear or have access to their stories
- put locations and events in context by walking or viewing the school grounds, South Park Street and the streets of the surrounding neighborhood and, if they choose, visiting related sites
- learn about Jim Crow laws and society before 1957, and realize that Americans enjoy rights today because of sacrifices made by others yesterday
- learn about the history, framework, and workings of the Constitution and legal issues involved in its interpretation and application
learn about other sites and stories associated with civil rights
- have access to the contemporary story, such as happenings at the school and in Little Rock today, how the students and residents feel about past and present events, school pride, and the racial situation today
- receive a brief history of Little Rock and Arkansas to learn why this happened here
- view the high school inside and out to gain an appreciation for its size, history, ambiance, and architectural significance
- understand race relations of past, present, and future generations



- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Central High School | 6 Terry Mansion |
| 2 Visitor Center | 7 Governor's Mansion |
| 3 Dunbar Jr. High School | 8 U.S. Courthouse |
| 4 Home of Mrs. Daisy Bates | 9 State Capitol |
| 5 Horace Mann Jr. High School | 10 Bethel A.M.E. Church |



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RELATED INTERPRETIVE SITES

Little Rock Central High • Arkansas
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 DSC • JUL 98 • 20005



Photo Courtesy of Will Counts

RESPONSE

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE STUDY

This special resource study began on February 16, 1998, with a trip to Little Rock, Arkansas, to examine the resource, collect data, and meet with interested parties. Discussions were held with members of Central High Neighborhood, Inc., the Central High Museum Board, and Central High School Administration; the director of the Central High Visitor Center Laura Miller; elected officials; and Elizabeth Eckford.

During the week of April 6, 1998, workshops were held in Little Rock to determine the response to the special resource study preliminary findings and conclusions. Workshops were held with the Central High Neighborhood, Inc., the Central High Museum Board, members of the student body of Central High, and the general public.

The first forum with members of Central High Neighborhood, Inc., addressed a broad range of issues related to designating Central High as a national historic site. Much general interest and questions were expressed concerning the ramifications for the neighborhood. Of particular interest was the effect on the high school if the National Park Service became involved coupled with concerns over such issues as interpretation inside the school, the potential for federal funds being available for school maintenance, the future of Central High as an operating institution, and school crowding. Another issue of importance to the neighborhood was the need for a neighborhood comprehensive plan and the potential for a museum/institute on race relations. Questions on the status of the vacant properties adjacent to the school arose as did questions regarding property acquisition. Finally, the neighborhood had questions about NPS experience in dealing with urban park units and managing resources through partnerships with multiple organizations.

The second meeting with the Museum Board also involved questions concerning the effect of national historic site designation on the neighborhood, school, visitor use, and the visitor center. People wanted clarification about the Park Service's role and fiscal responsibilities if national historic site designation was enacted. Informed discussion was raised relating the Little Rock Central High School example to other national historic sites around the country. Concern over Senator Bumper's legislative initiative and future congressional support was also expressed.

The meeting with the students of Central High largely focused on two overriding concerns — the implications that future actions may have on the school facilities and its need for maintenance and repair, and the effect of national historic site designation on the student population educationally and programmatically. The students were also interested in the possible effects of national historic site designation on day-to-day realities at Central High, such as traffic on Park Street and increased visitation at the visitor center.

The final meeting was an open public forum held at the school. Again, the principal attention was the impact on the school and its continued operation as an education institution. Specific recommendations were also presented at this meeting, such as restoration of the reflecting pond in front of the school. A comprehensive list of the questions asked at each meeting is presented in appendix A.

Following the workshops, letters were received from many of the organizations and political institutions concerned with the future of Little Rock Central High. These letters are in appendix B.



Photo Courtesy of Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 1998

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RAISED AT MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

During the course of this special resource study, every effort was made to collect as much information as possible that might influence the conclusions. That effort included soliciting ideas and opinions about the future of Little Rock Central High from individuals, organizations, and interest groups. The ideas, issues, concerns, and questions that were brought forward are listed below.

MEETING WITH CENTRAL HIGH NEIGHBORHOOD, INC., BULLOCK TEMPLE, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS — APRIL 7, 1998

1. When the National Park Service says that Central High School is safe and secure, is it referring to the high school buildings and grounds or to the area around the school? How do we define "safe and secure"?
2. Does national historic site designation mean any funds will be provided for repair of the high school buildings?
3. Will there be interpretation in the school? What will the National Park Service place inside the school?
4. Are there any operating schools in the national park system? If so, how do they operate?
5. Is there any funding attached to the designation bill? What are the chances of funding for the proposed national historic site?
6. Is the high school a threatened site?
7. Will the high school continue to operate?
8. If the school does not continue to operate, what would the buildings be used for?
9. Questions were raised about the Museum Board's decision to construct a sculpture garden in the vacant lot across from the high school.
10. The Neighborhood Association is/has been working on a comprehensive plan for the high school area. How would this planning effort be impacted by national historic site designation?
11. What is the status of the vacant lots across the street from the high school? What are the possible future uses of these properties if they are designated a national historic?
12. How important is the support and involvement of the Little Rock School District in the operation of the proposed national historic site?
13. If the houses across Park Street from the high school are included in the national historic site, will the National Park Service acquire them? How can they be included in the national historic site if they are not acquired?
14. Are the proposed alternatives for the national historic site real? What effect will they have on the designation legislation?
15. Will the national historic site be designated and then forgotten?
16. What effect will the national historic site have on the area?
17. Concern about private property rights was voiced.

18. What will the National Park Service and the planning team tell Senator Bumpers?

19. What is the quid pro quo for the Neighborhood Association's support of the national historic site legislation?

20. If alternative C were adopted, who would be technically in charge of the national historic site?

21. Is the idea of a partnership area realistic?

22. Is the National Park Service familiar with operating urban partnership park areas?

23. Development of a museum inside the school would result in conflicts with operation of the school.

24. Where would a museum be constructed? How would it impact the school? How big would it be? What would it include? How would it compare/contrast with the existing visitor center? Would it contain an archival facility?

25. A new museum should be built that includes exhibits on topics such as human relations, the civil rights movement from the post-Reconstruction era to the present, etc. It should be educational, dynamic, global, and interactive.

**MEETING WITH MUSEUM BOARD,
ROBINSON CENTER, LITTLE ROCK,
ARKANSAS – APRIL 8, 1998**

1. How does the National Park Service explain the statement that threats to the high school are not apparent?

2. The partnership under alternative C – how would it work? Who would be in charge of the national historic site?

3. Who would have fiscal responsibility for the national historic site?

4. What would the national historic site designation do for the high school, the community, etc.?

5. How would the national historic site affect the existing museum/visitor center? Would designation provide funding for an expanded museum?

6. The question of construction of new structures vs. adaptive use of existing structures was raised.

7. Could the Museum Board ask the National Park Service to come in and operate the national historic site?

8. Comment was made that more space than the existing visitor center has is needed to tell all of the Little Rock stories.

9. Comment was made that related sites pertaining to the high school should be treated somewhat like Boston, Dayton, etc.

10. What are the cost impacts of the proposed national historic site?

11. Will Senator Bumpers' retirement affect implementation of the national historic site or the funding of its operation?

12. How will the planning effort/special resource study affect the national historic site designation legislation?

13. Interest was expressed in comparing the proposed national historic site with Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

14. Questions were raised as to the technical assistance that would be available to the national historic site

under alternative B as compared with alternative C.

15. How will the planning team/effort influence Senator Bumpers?

16. Comment was made expressing need for an expanded museum facility having expanded interpretive themes/stories.

17. Max Brantley, editor of the Arkansas Times, made a motion that the Museum Board go on record in support of alternative C. Motion was carried unanimously.

MEETING WITH LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS — APRIL 9, 1998

1. Which alternative is Senator Bumpers leaning toward?

2. How would national historic site visitors affect operation of the high school?

3. How would high school students be involved in national historic site activities/operations?

4. What is meant by the phrase "highest level of resource protection"?

5. Would the high school buildings be made handicapped-accessible if the national historic site were established?

6. Would people still live in houses across the street from the high school if they were included within the national historic site boundaries?

7. Would Park Street be closed to vehicular traffic if the national historic site was established?

8. Will visitation to the high school increase if the national historic site is established?

9. What does the National Park Service mean when referring to the encampment area at the high school?

10. Will any finances go to any part of the high school other than the room(s) that might have exhibits?

11. How would funding for the proposed national historic site compare with the financial commitment to the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka site?

12. What role would the National Park Service play in operation of the national historic site?

13. How will the high school benefit from national historic site designation?

14. Students are interested in having the school buildings repaired.

15. Will taking over several classrooms for exhibits cause more overcrowding in school?

16. What are the chances of passage of Senator Bumpers' national historic site designation legislation?

17. If the national historic site took over a portion of the school building for exhibits, who would have authority in that part of the school?

18. Would the highest degree of preservation be implemented only for that part of the school used by the national historic site?

19. Questions were raised about the boundaries of the proposed national historic site.

20. Will racial progress be interpreted at the proposed national historic site?

**PUBLIC MEETING, LITTLE ROCK
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL, LITTLE
ROCK, ARKANSAS — APRIL 9, 1998**

1. Is the National Park Service involved elsewhere in operating an educational institution as a partnership area?

2. What is the difference between a national monument and a national historic site?

3. What are the benefits of the proposed national historic site designation?

4. What impact would visitors have on school operations?

5. Comment was made to have the fish pond restored in front of the school.

6. What is the timetable between designation and appropriation for the national historic site?

7. Would the planning team continue with general management planning after national historic site designation?

8. What would NPS presence mean for school maintenance? The school buildings are deteriorating.

9. Would the National Park Service be involved in programs in the high school and the community?

10. Adjustments should be made to the proposed national historic site map — boundaries should be extended to include a 14th Street arrival corridor and 1957 troop positions, roadblocks, etc.

11. There is a need for comprehensive planning for the high school, neighborhood, and greater community.

APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF SUPPORT



STATE OF ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

State Capitol
Little Rock 72201

Mike Huckabee
Governor

June 3, 1998

Bill Schenk
Regional Director
National Park Service
1709 Jackson St.
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

I have reviewed the Special Resource Study - Preliminary Findings and Alternatives Considered, for the Little Rock Central High Project.

I believe that Little Rock Central High as a National Historic Site, Alternative "C" would be the proper choice. We have the opportunity for a unique partnership from the federal level all the way down to the school and the neighborhood, that could result in a fascinating historical and educational site for our citizens and visitors. The resource is there as is the interest and the history. I would urge the National Park Service not to miss this opportunity.

If we can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call Eric Munson, Economic Development Liaison, at (501) 682-3635. Also, if Parks and Tourism can be of any assistance in helping to coordinate this effort, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Huckabee".

Mike Huckabee

MH:epm

cc: Richard W. Davies, Executive Director
Department of Parks and Tourism



**DEPARTMENT OF
PARKS & TOURISM**

One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201
Phone: 501-682-7777
FAX: 501-682-1364
History Commission
501-682-6900 (V/T)
Personnel Section
501-682-7742 (V/T)
State Parks Division
501-682-1191 (V/T)
Tourism Division
501-682-7777 (V/T)
Internet
www.arkansas.com

Mike Huckabee
GOVERNOR

Richard W. Davies
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE PARKS,
RECREATION
& TRAVEL
COMMISSION**

Jane Christenson
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Jim Gaston
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Billy Lindsey
Donna Kay Matteson
Montine McNulty
Billy St. James
Ness Sechrest
J.D. "Bud" Shamburger
Ovid Switzer
Wade Williams

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Anita Middleton
KEEP ARKANSAS
BEAUTIFUL

**AN EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY/
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/
AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT
EMPLOYER**

Arkansas

THE NATURAL STATE

June 1, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk, Regional Director
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Bill:

I want to urge you to select Alternative "C" - The Legacy, from the Special Resource Study on Little Rock Central High School. I think it would give the National Park Service, the State of Arkansas, the City of Little Rock, the Little Rock School District, the school itself and Central High Neighborhood, Inc., and unprecedented partnership opportunity. I think this one really is different.

I realize the NPS studies a lot more areas than it ever takes into the system. That's as it should be. I also know there is probably a built-in reaction every time one of these is suggested that is something along the lines of, "Oh no, not another one..." Yet every now and then we really do find a gem, and I think Central High can be it.

As you have probably found out, people all over the world know of Little Rock Central High. For years, those of us in Little Rock would rather they forgot about it. They didn't, and I suspect they won't. I think a lot of people wish that it would just go away. It won't and it shouldn't. My kids have a hard time believing that something like that even happened -- or had to happen. An important piece of American History happened at Little Rock Central High, and it deserves NPS recognition and involvement.

We appreciate the study, and look forward to your favorable recommendation.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Davies
Executive Director

RWD:bj



City of Little Rock

Jim Dailey
Mayor

City Hall, Room 203
500 W. Markham
Little Rock, AR 72201-1427
(501) 371-4516
FAX (501) 371-4498

April 10, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

The City of Little Rock supports the efforts of Central High Museum, Inc. to have Little Rock Central High School designated as a National Historic Site by the National Park Service. As Mayor, I acknowledge the need for a partnership between the National Park Service, Central High Museum Board, the Little Rock School District, the Central High neighborhood and the City to make this a reality. The City wholeheartedly supports this initiative.

As you are aware, Central High School was thrust upon the world stage during the events of 1957. Forty years later it is still serving as one of the premiere high schools in our state and country, and as a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1995, Central High Museum, Inc. began work to develop a Visitor Center and Museum to collect, preserve and display items which chronicle the history of the school and particularly its role in the civil rights struggle of our country.

The City has been a willing partner in this effort and we will continue to fully support the Central High Museum Board in their endeavors to obtain National Park status for Central High.

Sincerely,

Jim Dailey
Mayor

JD:mb

WILLIAM L. "BILL" WALKER, JR.

SENATOR
17TH DISTRICT

P. O. BOX 1609
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72203



VICE-CHAIRMAN
ACTING & LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE
MEMBER
REVENUE & TAXATION
COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

THE SENATE
STATE OF ARKANSAS

April 9, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

I recently met with representatives from the National Park Service and heard their preliminary feasibility study for declaring Central High School a National Park Site. I represent the district that includes Central High in the Arkansas State Senate and I must tell you that I enthusiastically support Alternative C described in the plan.

I welcome the opportunity to develop a partnership with the Park Service, and if there is anything I can do as the study progresses, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Walker".

William L. "Bill" Walker, Jr.

WLW/mj



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

Representative IRMA HUNTER BROWN
1920 South Summit Street
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72202-6250

501-371-0488 Business
501-372-4140 Residence

April 9, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk
Natural Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

My Legislative District houses the Central High School area - an area that is being proposed as a National Park site. As per discussion, it is exciting to realize that such an historic area can be preserved for generations to come.

The community as well as those who are interested in the growth of civil rights in our country will be pleased when legislation is passed to designate Central High School as a National Park making it eligible to receive all the benefits that are designated for preservation of a National Monument.

I therefore urge the Senator - Senator Bumpers - to move forward with legislation and call upon Congress to move swiftly with this proposal.

I stand ready to assist you in anyway possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irma Hunter Brown".

Irma Hunter Brown



**LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

April 10, 1998

Mr. William Schenk, Regional Director
National Park Service
Midwest Support Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

On behalf of the Little Rock School District Board of Directors, I would like to express our support for the initiative to designate Central High School as a National Park site. This designation would enhance our commitment to preserve and protect this historic landmark, which will continue to provide a quality education for all children.

Central High School will continue to serve as a positive focal point for the future of the school district, the city, the state, and the nation.

Sincerely,

Judy Magness, President
Board of Directors

Leslie V. Carnine
Superintendent of Schools



April 8, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

RE: Little Rock Central High School

Dear Mr. Schenk:

I am pleased to report that the Board of Directors of Central High Museum, Inc. met for two hours today with Bill Koning and the other members of the NPS planning team for Little Rock Central High School. Bill did an excellent job of summarizing the Special Resource Study completed by his team, including the three alternatives envisioned as possibilities. The Board unanimously adopted a resolution of support for Alternative C, which designates Little Rock Central High School as a National Historic Site.

We believe a partnership of our Board with the National Park Service, the Little Rock School District, the City of Little Rock, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and the Central High Neighborhood offers the best opportunity for long-term success. All of the entities mentioned have been involved in the beginning and wish to stay involved in the future.

We applaud your efforts and stand ready to be of assistance. Our support is enthusiastic and unequivocal.

Sincerely,

Everett Tucker, III
President

ET:ca

2125 West 14th Street, Little Rock, Arkansas 72202 • P.O. Box 390, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203
Phone: (501) 374-1967, Fax: (501) 376-4728

U·A·L·R

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

April 9, 1998

Mr. Bill Schenk
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Dear Mr. Schenk:

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) has strongly supported the effort to make the Central High School site a place of significant historical and cultural education for all our nation. Very few events in this century, such as the one which took place at Central High School in Little Rock, have provided the focus to help shift the culture and policy of this nation. Just as the event at Central High School offered our nation an opportunity to confirm federalism and begin an important shift in racial attitudes, the developments surrounding this site offer to the future a profound historical perspective.

UALR has been a partner in the development of the Central High Visitor Center from the beginning. We have provided university grant funding as well as faculty and graduate student release time to assist in the development of the Center. Our faculty and graduate students in the public history program have served as important resources not only for the Center, but also in the development of important materials on personalities and related sites involved in and leading up to this seminal conflict.

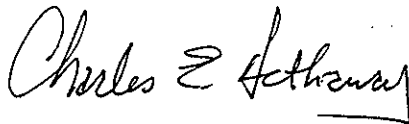
For example, the UALR public history program undertook, in conjunction with the alumni of Dunbar High School, the development of a traveling display of the history of Dunbar High School. This traveling exhibit tells the history of the only accredited "high school for colored boys and girls" in Arkansas. The exhibit recently received a national award.

Dr. Johanna M. Lewis of our public history program served as the director of the center through the initial phases of operation. The Central High Museum Board chose to hire one of the graduate students of the UALR public history program as the permanent executive director of the Center.

We endorse the effort to bring national attention to the Central High School event of 1957 by involving the National Park Service in as complete a manner as possible to create a unique educational opportunity for all the nation. While I cannot state in a specific manner at this time how UALR might be involved in a national park site development, we have demonstrated our commitment to this effort in the past, and we will continue this commitment.

We request that the National Park Service consider the University of Arkansas at Little Rock as a full partner in the development of the Central High School site. We stand ready to serve as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles E. Hathaway". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Charles E. Hathaway
Chancellor

xc: Rett Tucker
Johanna M. Lewis



"We've Got Heritage."

April 20, 1998

Bill Koning
Project Manager
Little Rock Central High Special Resource Study
12795 West Alameda Parkway
P. O. Box 25787
Denver, CO 80225

Dear Bill:

This is to follow up on the information which I gave by phone last week about the interpretive features area map and related resources sites which were included in your preliminary finding draft for the report which you are preparing for Senator Bumpers.

We recommend the following:

- * 3 Vacant Property - NW corner 14th and Park Streets

Include the entire block bounded by Park, 14th, 13th and Dennison Streets in your boundary. This would insure that when the Memorial Garden is developed it would not be located partly in and partly out of the National Historic Site. The west half of that block is owned by LRSD.

- * 3 Vacant Property - NE corner 14th and Park Streets

Extend the northern boundary to 13th Street. The owner of the vacant property also owns the rent house on the SE corner of 13th and Park. He would like to sell the vacant property and the rent house as a package deal.

- * 7 Ponder's Soda Fountain

Restore this site as a soda fountain. This would be historically correct and would be very attractive to visitors.

- * 14th Street from Park Street to Martin Luther King Drive

Include this arrival corridor in the National in the National Historic Site. It is important that the integrity of this arrival corridor be maintained. It includes Westside Junior High School which the neighborhood CDC is working to restore. Westside is very significant in terms of school desegregation in Little Rock. It offers a prime example of the closing of viable schools in the Central High Neighborhood in order to accomodate construction of new schools in West Little Rock built for the purpose of supporting white flight. This practice is still an issue in 1998.

Bill Koning, page 2

Under related resources we suggest for addition:

* Camp Robinson in North Little Rock

Federal troops were housed there in 1957.

* Carlotta Wall's childhood home near 15th and Valentine Streets

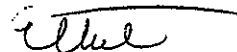
This house was bombed in 1957. It is still standing.

* Federal Courthouse on Capitol Avenue in Little Rock

Aaron v Cooper which established supremacy of federal law over state's rights was heard here plus other cases related to the 1957 Crisis.

We look forward to receiving your updated draft.

Sincerely,



Ethel N. Ambrose
Vice-President for Planning

cc: Cliff Riggs, President

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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NPS D-2 / August 1998