



# Reconnaissance Survey of Selected Civil Rights Sites in Phillips County, Arkansas

December 2019



This study has been prepared to explore specific resources and advise on whether these resources merit further consideration as a potential addition to the national park system. Publication or transmittal of this report should not be considered an endorsement or a commitment by the National Park Service to seek or support specific legislative authorization for the project or its implementation. This report was prepared by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. For more information contact:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This reconnaissance survey is a preliminary resource assessment of Centennial Baptist Church and Phillips County Courthouse near Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, and the site of the Hoop Spur Church in Elaine, Arkansas. The assessment is based on congressionally established criteria for inclusion in the national park system. This survey was requested in a July 23, 2018, letter to National Park Service Acting Director P. Daniel Smith from Arkansas's 1st District Representative Rick Crawford (see appendix A for letter and response). This survey provides a cursory review and analysis of available information to determine whether a special resource study is warranted.

Representative Crawford's letter named the Centennial Baptist Church and Hoop Spur Church, and asked that a reconnaissance survey include "other sites pertaining to the Civil Rights Movement in the Arkansas Delta." Due to constraints on reconnaissance surveys, this report includes the Phillips County Courthouse in analysis, but includes other sites in Phillips County only as suggestions for further research.

Centennial Baptist Church was led by Elias Camp "E. C." Morris from 1879 until shortly before his death in 1922. Morris was the president of the National Baptist Convention and a nationally known African American leader. The Centennial Baptist Church, built in 1905, is currently vacant and a national historic landmark. The Elaine Massacre of 1919, which erupted after a shootout at the Hoop Spur Church, wrought death and devastation and led to the murder conviction of 12 men in unfair trials at the Phillips County Courthouse. The US Supreme Court went on to rule on the appeal of some of those cases in *Moore v. Dempsey*, decided in 1923, a landmark *habeas corpus* ruling. The Hoop Spur Church is no longer standing and the site has not been conclusively determined. The Phillips County Courthouse is an active courthouse and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

This reconnaissance survey finds that the Centennial Baptist Church and the Phillips County Courthouse may meet the criteria for inclusion in the national park system if fully examined and recommends that a special resource study of those sites be authorized. The Hoop Spur Church location and other sites potentially connected to the Elaine Massacre are in need of more research before a special resource study would be appropriate.

Examination of the potential for other sites in Phillips County or the Arkansas Delta to meet the criteria for inclusion in the national park system could be examined in a special resource study or other reconnaissance survey, but without updated national historic landmark or national register documentation those sites are not likely to meet the criteria for national significance if studied at this time. This study strongly recommends further research be undertaken and recommends further avenues of inquiry and existing National Park Service assistance programs that could be useful to the resources considered in this reconnaissance survey.

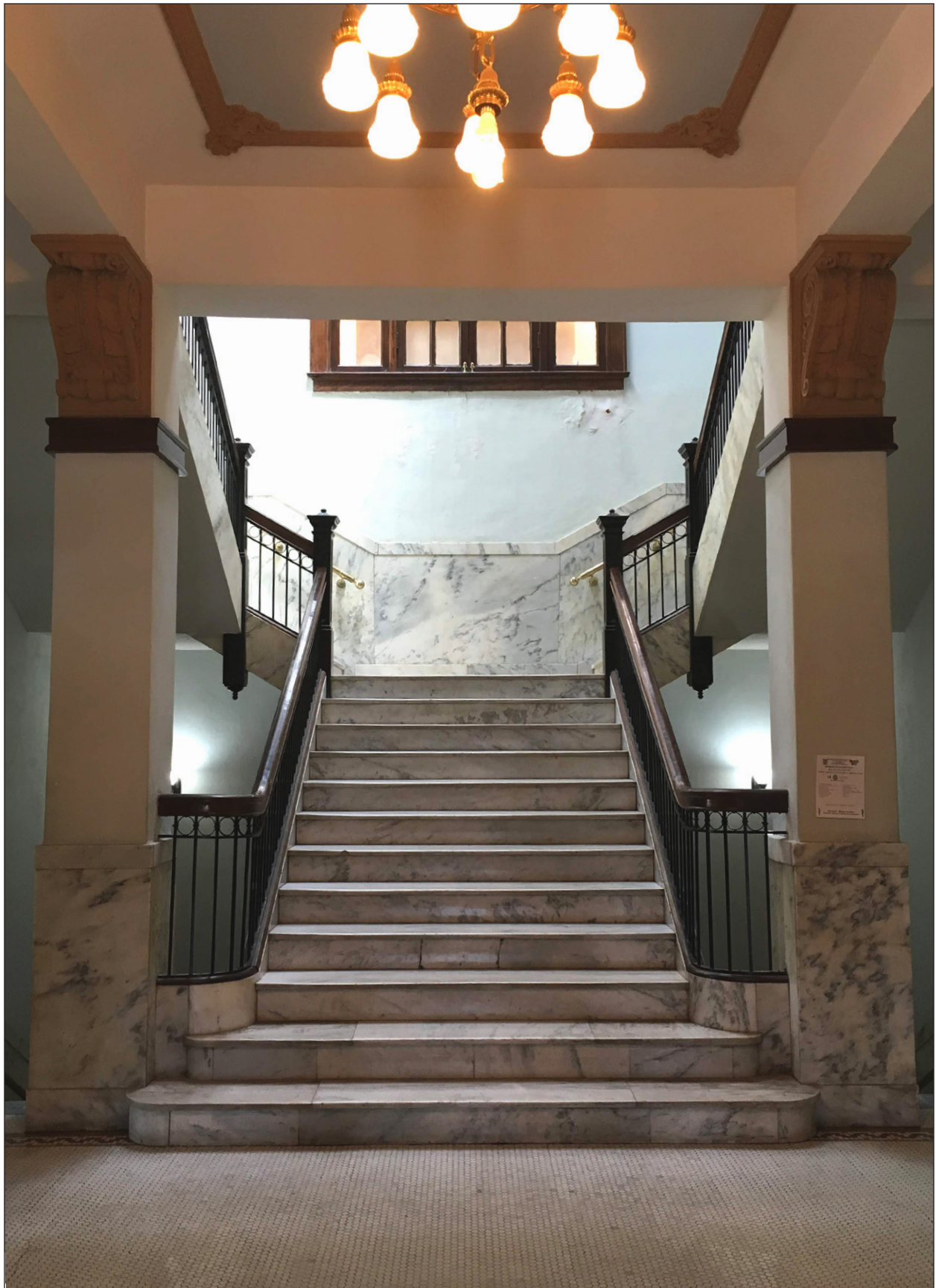


Centennial Baptist Church

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Phillips County Courthouse, Helena-West Helena, Arkansas

# INTRODUCTION

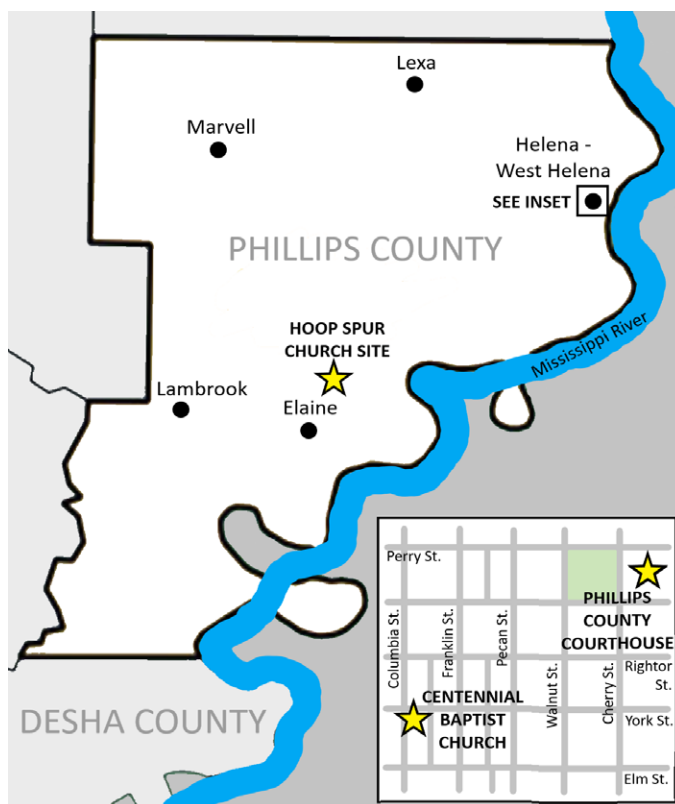
This reconnaissance survey is a preliminary resource assessment of the Centennial Baptist Church and Phillips County Courthouse in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, and the site of the Hoop Spur Church near Elaine, Arkansas. The assessment is based on congressionally established criteria for inclusion in the national park system. This survey was requested in a July 23, 2018, letter to National Park Service (NPS) Acting Director P. Daniel Smith from Arkansas's 1st District Representative Rick Crawford (see appendix A). This survey provides a cursory review and analysis of available information to determine whether a special resource study is warranted.

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## Reconnaissance Survey Process

While specific authorization from Congress would be necessary to conduct a special resource study (SRS) to provide definitive findings, the National Park Service is authorized to conduct preliminary resource assessments and gather data on potential study areas or sites. The term "reconnaissance survey" is used to describe this type of assessment. Its conclusions are not considered final or definitive, assessing only the likelihood that the resources analyzed would meet the established criteria. A reconnaissance survey examines the resources in a study area to provide a preliminary evaluation of their significance, suitability, the feasibility of protecting those resources as a park unit, and the need for the National Park Service to do so directly. If a study area appears potentially eligible for inclusion in the national park system, then the National Park Service may recommend that a special resource study be authorized by Congress.

Studies for potential new units of the national park system are called special resource studies. The SRS process is designed to provide definitive findings of a site's significance, suitability, feasibility, and the need for direct NPS management; and if those criteria are met, identify and evaluate potential resource protection strategies, boundaries, and management alternatives.



Phillips County Sites

## About the National Park System

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The NPS core values are a framework in which the National Park Service, both individually and collectively, accomplishes and pursues its mission. The NPS core values are:

- Shared stewardship: We share a commitment to resource stewardship with the global preservation community.
- Excellence: We strive continually to learn and improve so that we may achieve the highest ideals of public service.
- Integrity: We deal honestly and fairly with the public and one another.
- Tradition: We are proud of it, we learn from it, we are not bound by it.
- Respect: We embrace each other's differences so that we may enrich the well-being of everyone.

The National Park Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior. While numerous national park system units were created prior to 1916, it was not until August 25, 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act formally establishing the National Park Service.

The national park system continues to grow and comprises over 400 park units in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These units include, but are not limited to, national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House. The variety and diversity of park units throughout the nation require a strong commitment to resource stewardship and management to ensure both protection and enjoyment for future generations.

Units of the national park system are established by legislation passed by Congress and signed by the president, or are designated national monuments through presidential proclamation. Designation as a unit of the national park system assumes direct NPS management of a site or partial NPS management coupled with a partnering entity (or entities) within the established park boundaries. This designation entails NPS financial and personnel support of park management and the adherence to applicable laws and policies for NPS-owned properties and NPS actions.

## Criteria for Inclusion in the National Park System

The following are the criteria a site must meet to be recommended by the National Park Service for inclusion in the national park system (see appendix B, section 1.3 text).

**1. Significance.** Determinations of an area's national significance are made by NPS professionals in consultation with scholars, experts, and scientists following specific criteria. The National Park Service has adopted four criteria to evaluate the national significance of proposed areas. These criteria, listed in NPS *Management Policies 2006*, state that a resource will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following conditions:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment<sup>1</sup> or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the national historic landmark (NHL) criteria contained in 36 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 65.4 (see appendix C).

**2. Suitability.** A property is considered suitable if it represents a resource type that is not currently represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another agency or entity. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the type, quality, quantity, combination of resources present, and opportunities for public enjoyment.

In addition to resource conservation, the fundamental purpose of all parks is to provide for the enjoyment of park resources and values by the people of the United States. Public enjoyment of national park system units are preferably those forms of enjoyment that are "uniquely suited to the superlative natural and cultural resources found in the parks and that (1) foster an understanding of and appreciation for park resources and values, or (2) promote enjoyment through a direct association with, interaction with, or relation to park resources" (NPS 2006).

**3. Feasibility.** To be considered feasible, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long term protection of the resources and to accommodate public use. The area must have potential for efficient administration at a reasonable cost. Other important feasibility factors include, but are not limited to, land ownership, acquisition costs, current and potential use, access, level of local and general public support, and staff or development requirements.

**4. Direct NPS Management.** Even if a resource meets the criteria of national significance, suitability, and feasibility, it will not always be recommended that the resource be added to the national park system. There are many excellent examples of important natural and cultural resources managed by other federal agencies, other levels of government, and private entities. A proposed addition must require direct NPS

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<sup>1</sup> Given the context of historic sites under consideration that memorialize tragic and somber events, the study will interpret the term "public enjoyment" as "public enrichment."

management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector, and the evaluation of management options must show NPS management is the clearly superior alternative. Because a reconnaissance survey does not propose management alternatives, only a cursory discussion of need for direct NPS management will be presented here.

As noted above, the reconnaissance survey process allows for only a preliminary evaluation of the criteria for inclusion. Analyses provided in reconnaissance surveys do not determine whether a site is eligible for inclusion in the national park system, they merely assess the likelihood that a site would meet the criteria should a special resource study be undertaken.

## Resources Analyzed in this Survey

The Centennial Baptist Church and Hoop Spur Church Site Reconnaissance Survey examines the Centennial Baptist Church in Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, and the site of the Hoop Spur Church near Elaine, Arkansas, because they were specifically requested by Representative Crawford in his letter to the National Park Service. The study also includes the Phillips County Courthouse in preliminary analysis. The written request from Representative Crawford also asked that the assessment include “other sites pertaining to the civil rights movement in the Arkansas Delta.” Reconnaissance surveys have constraints that prevent the National Park Service from fulfilling this request—the section of the *United States Code* that enables reconnaissance surveys limits them to “individual areas” and they are also limited to an expenditure of \$25,000 and by the availability of staff time (54 USC 100507(b)(5)(5)).

The study summarizes the historic context of nationally important people and events related to the properties, describes the existing conditions, and identifies those entities involved in existing preservation or interpretation efforts. The criteria for inclusion of these areas in the national park system are preliminarily assessed. The survey concludes with recommendations regarding whether or not a special resource study is warranted, recommendations for further study, and recommendations for existing NPS programs that could benefit the resources and facilitate further study.

The 2008 NPS report, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* was prepared to assist in identifying and prioritizing those areas of history significant in illustrating the civil rights story. That report covered a period of significance for civil rights from 1776 to 1976, a span of 200 years. The Delta Cultural Center in Helena-West Helena identifies 27 counties as being part of the Arkansas Delta. Given the broad scope of time and geography, this request could include sites as varied as Freedom Park, the location of a “contraband” camp of Union-freed enslaved persons in Helena during the Civil War, and the World War II Japanese American confinement sites, Rohwer and Jerome. The broad scope and an unknown number of sites are too complex a research question for a reconnaissance survey.

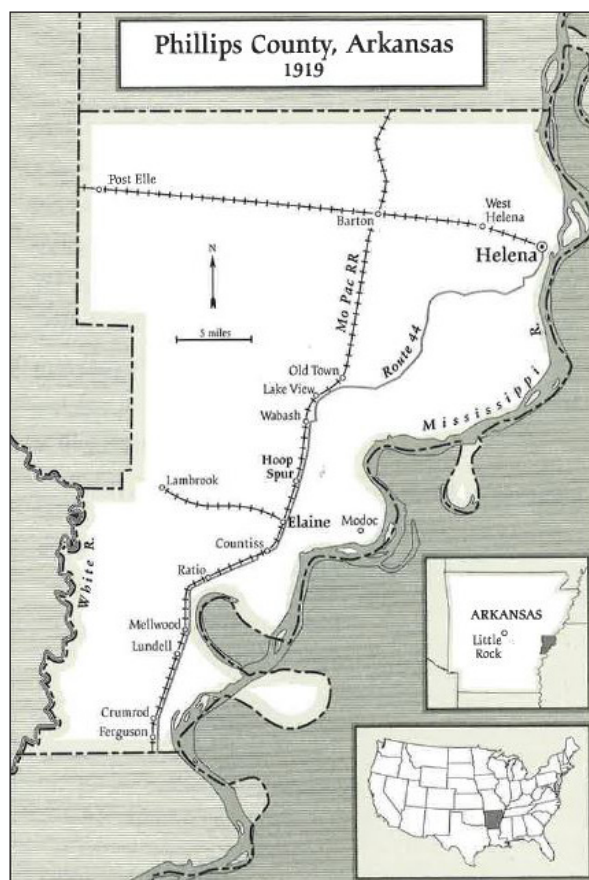
In addition to the two churches named in the letter from Representative Crawford, this study also includes a preliminary assessment of the Phillips County Courthouse. Other sites in Phillips County and the Arkansas Delta more broadly are in need of more basic identification, documentation, and evaluation, all of which would be facilitated by historic context study. This reconnaissance survey includes recommendations for further study of other sites, especially those in Phillips County that are related to the time period (1879–1925) and themes of the Centennial Baptist Church and the site of the Hoop Spur Church—the life and work of E. C. Morris and the Elaine Massacre and its legal consequences as suggestions for further study.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

This historic context summarizes the nationally important people and events connected with the Centennial Baptist Church, the Hoop Spur Church site, and the Phillips County Courthouse in Phillips County, Arkansas. The Centennial Baptist Church was led by Elias Camp “E. C.” Morris from 1879 until shortly before his death in 1922. The Elaine Massacre of 1919, which erupted after a shootout at the Hoop Spur Church, wrought death and devastation and led to the murder conviction of 12 men in unfair trials at the Phillips County Courthouse. The US Supreme Court went on to rule on the appeal of some of those cases in *Moore v. Dempsey*, decided in 1923. The defendants in those trials were finally released in 1925.

Phillips County is located along the Mississippi River, approximately 65 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee. Rich soils meant timbering and agriculture were important industries for the county. Transportation by river and later by rail were also important. In 1840, the Phillips County population was approximately 3,500, 25% of whom were enslaved. Just 20 years later, on the eve of the Civil War, the population had grown to 15,000, 60% of whom were enslaved.<sup>2</sup>

Phillips County provided three regiments of enlisted men to fight for the Confederacy at the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in July 1862, the bustling river town and county seat of Helena was occupied by Union forces for the rest of the war. Even so, Helena was the site of significant activity. In addition to a battle, skirmishes, and guerrilla efforts to dislodge Union forces, the city became a destination for escaped enslaved people after its occupation by Union troops and, after the Emancipation Proclamation, was a destination for freedmen<sup>4</sup>. Some able-bodied freedmen were recruited for the Union army, while others worked in Helena or on area farms. Thousands of freedmen lived in four main “contraband” camps in Helena.<sup>5</sup>



From Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation*.

2 Billy Steven Clift, “Phillips County.” The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=797>. Accessed February 21, 2019.

3 Ibid.

4 Steven Teske, “Helena-West Helena (Phillips County).” The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=950>. Accessed February 21, 2019.

5 Ryan Jordan, “Contraband Camps,” The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture, (accessed February 21, 2019). <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4>

Following the Civil War, many formerly enslaved people became tenant farmers working the land for shares of what they produced, an arrangement commonly called sharecropping. Described succinctly, sharecroppers “brought only their labor to the contract, receiving from the landlord their housing, food, clothing, tools of production, livestock, seed, and feed—all charged to a credit system that kept them in debt.”<sup>6</sup> The need for cheap labor grew in post-war Phillips County as land was drained and cleared for farming the rich alluvial soil.

Levees allowed for more timbering and agriculture in Phillips County, and Helena grew as a regional economic and transportation center. Land clearance was expensive, which consolidated land and wealth in the hands of the already wealthy, white upper class. While the number of acres used to grow cotton in Phillips County increased from 42,654 in 1880 to 92,944 in 1920, the percentage of farm owners decreased from 70.3% to 18.8% in that same period.<sup>7</sup> To work the land, farm owners turned to renters or sharecroppers, most of whom moved to Arkansas from other states.<sup>8</sup> Their cabins dotted the landscape, as did stands of timber and canebrakes, areas of dense river cane that grew along ditches and in swampy areas. Railroads provided better shipment of goods to market. The Missouri Pacific Railroad established a line running north-south in Phillips County, and along that line the city of Elaine was developed in the early 1900s and formally established in 1919.<sup>9</sup>



“Negro sharecropper’s shack. Near West Memphis, Arkansas” June 1936. Photographer: Carl Mydans. Library of Congress.

Following the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the 1883 overturning of much of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875, white control of southern states was restored and state “Jim Crow” laws once again allowed African Americans to be segregated, disenfranchised, and otherwise completely legally subordinate to white Americans.<sup>10</sup> Lynchings and mob violence, for which white perpetrators were not held to account, terrorized and suppressed the black population. Though in 1880 the population of Helena was 74% black, the bulk of wealth and power were controlled by whites.<sup>11</sup>

6 Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, 2.

7 Jeannie M. Wayne, “Low Villains and Wickedness in High Places: Race and Class in the Elaine Riots,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Autumn 1999), 294.

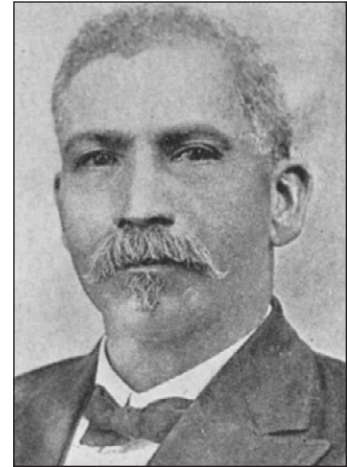
8 Wayne, 297 and Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation*, New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2008, 3–4.

9 Teske, Steven. “Elaine (Phillips County).” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6112> (accessed February 26, 2019).

10 National Park Service “1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey: Final,” November 2005, 5

11 Calvin White, “It should be More Than Just a Simple Shout: The Life of Elias Camp (“E.C.”) Morris,” *Race and Ethnicity in Arkansas: New Perspectives*, edited by John A. Kirk. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014, 99.

Elias Camp Morris (1855–1922) stopped in Helena in 1877 on his way to seek opportunity in the West. Helena would become his home for the rest of his life. Elias Camp Morris, known as “E. C. Morris,” was an African American born into slavery. Prior to his arrival in Helena, Morris received some formal theological instruction in Nashville and made a living as a shoemaker. He became an ordained Baptist minister and pastor of Centennial Baptist Church in 1879, leading a congregation of 23 members. With Centennial Baptist as his base, he promoted structural changes to African American Baptist churches, was an advocate for education, and became prominent in the National Baptist Convention, Republican politics, and social causes. When Elias Camp Morris passed away in 1922, Centennial Baptist Church had about 1,000 congregants and he was a nationally known figure.<sup>12</sup>



“E. C. Morris; [Head of the National Baptist Convention.]” Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library.

Morris became involved in religion and education outside of Helena soon after his ordination, being elected secretary and then president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention. In 1895 he was elected the first president of the newly formed National Baptist Convention, the advisory body for black Baptist associations nationwide.<sup>13</sup>

Morris envisioned black religion aiding in the establishment of black education and business and even serving as a machine to elect black officials. The pastor of Centennial Baptist understood that religious influence could extend beyond the pulpit into the public sphere to produce social change, which contributed to racial uplift.<sup>14</sup>

To better disseminate information and ideas, Morris advocated for the creation of a publishing arm of the National Baptist Convention. Prior to the establishment of the National Baptist Publishing House, black Baptist scholars had only the option of white-owned Baptist publishing. The establishment of a black publisher for Baptist materials had the impact of giving voice to more people and creating professional job opportunities for blacks at the press.<sup>15</sup> He was also the founding editor of Arkansas’s black Baptist Newspaper, the *Baptist Vanguard*.<sup>16</sup>

African American Baptist theology and ideas about the appropriate powers of denominational organizations was not monolithic. Morris advocated for formal education and licensure among preachers, supporting reasoned sermons over the charismatic liturgy that excited parishioners in the tradition of their enslaved ancestors.<sup>17</sup> To that end, he helped found the Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock.

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12 Christie McLaren and Holly Hope, “Centennial Baptist Church” National Historic Landmark Nomination, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. July 31, 2003, 14.

13 White.

14 White, 97–98.

15 White, 104. The National Baptist Publishing House was in Nashville, Tennessee.

16 Quinton Hosford Dixie, “The Business of Religion: Institutional Isomorphism and the Quest for Black Baptist Unity, 1880–1915,” PhD Dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1999.

17 White, 103

Morris preached independence and self-determination, and his sermons attracted a large following in the majority black city of Helena. Morris was interested in business as a vehicle for African American advancement, and though he was an opponent of segregation, he recognized that white refusal to provide services to blacks allowed black business opportunities.<sup>18</sup> He served as executive director of the Arkansas Negro State Business League and president of the Phillips County chapter.<sup>19</sup> Upon his return from a visit to the Tuskegee Institute in 1901, Morris called together more than 100 farmers to create the Phillips County Negro Farmers Conference, whose goals were published in the local newspaper.<sup>20</sup> Morris was well aware of the challenges facing black farmers in the area. Morris himself owned a small farm in rural Phillips County and he and his wife owned and managed several properties.<sup>21</sup> A small black middle class thrived in Helena, and professionals like clergymen, teachers, physicians, and lawyers were influential though they were only a small percentage of the black population.<sup>22</sup>

The growing Centennial Baptist congregation was in need of a larger home and one that reflected the success and influence of the congregation. Morris was inspired by gothic architecture he had seen on his travels and found an architect among the congregation's membership—Henry James Price, who had studied architecture at Howard University before moving to Helena in 1900.<sup>23</sup> Completed in 1905, the massive brick structure with square towers flanking a high central roof gable reflected the strength of the community. The church could hold a large congregation worshipping under a soaring ceiling and exerted an imposing presence near the core of the city.

As a strong leader in the community who believed in self-determination and black advancement, Morris entered the political arena. An enthusiastic Republican, he served as a delegate to the national convention several times, and though he never held public office, was well known and held in high esteem in political circles.<sup>24</sup> He preached about African American patriotism and encouraged service to the nation in war (at first the Spanish American War, and later, World War I), arguing that the service of African Americans to their country entitled them to respect and equal treatment.

In the several years preceding World War I, African Americans began migrating north in increasing numbers in search of employment opportunities and to leave the oppression of the South behind. The “Great Migration” was accelerated by northern business leaders in need of low-cost labor, especially as European immigration slowed at the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>25</sup> Industry relied on cheap labor, and when white workers organized for better wages, hours, and working conditions, business owners found that black workers could be brought in as strikebreakers or to undercut wages. This also served to create tension in the working class, tensions that kept them from uniting across racial lines and sometimes erupted in violence.<sup>26</sup> This was further exacerbated by the scarcity of jobs for returning World War I veterans as southern black migrants had filled many jobs.<sup>27</sup>

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18 Ibid., 106.

19 Ibid., 105–106.

20 “100 negroes organize the Phillips County Negro Farmers’ Conference.” (March 20, 1901) *The Helena Weekly World*, retrieved from [https://www.newspapers.com/clip/29668869/phillips\\_county\\_arkansas\\_negro\\_farmers](https://www.newspapers.com/clip/29668869/phillips_county_arkansas_negro_farmers).

21 White, 106.

22 William D. Baker, “Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta, 1870–1930,” Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, Arkansas, undated, 6.

23 McLaren, 20.

24 White, 107. Morris did serve as part of a special envoy mission to the Belgian Congo in 1908, selected by President Theodore Roosevelt.

25 McWhirter, 117.

26 Ibid., 119.

27 Ibid., 19.

Black soldiers who fought in World War I believed that their service to the country would, as E. C. Morris and other black leaders argued, bring about the true equality and freedom they were due.<sup>28</sup> The prospect of rising black economic and social standing inflamed fear, anxiety, and hatred in many whites, leading to further discrimination and sometimes violence, either by individuals or groups. Lynchings and “race riots”—white mobs targeting black communities rather than only specific individuals—were periodic occurrences throughout the nation, predating the Civil War, but increasing after emancipation.<sup>29</sup>

To present-day readers, the term “race riot” conjures the image of 1960s black protestors. However, as author Jan Voogd explains “NAACP annual reports from the years 1919 until 1923 use the phrase ‘race riot’ for events in which violent white mobs targeted black communities. Many newspapers used the phrase this way during those years.”<sup>30</sup> Race riots were shocking and violent, but never had they reached the seemingly epidemic levels they would in 1919, a season known as the “Red Summer.”<sup>31</sup>

The Red Summer’s race riots took place in large cities and small towns and were touched off by incidents ranging from labor disputes to allegations of a black person assaulting a white person. Each had their own circumstances, but all were characterized by white violence against black people and their property.<sup>32</sup> The larger riots took place in Washington, D.C.; Chicago, Illinois; Longview, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; and Charleston, South Carolina. Smaller riots broke out from Bisbee, Arizona, to Norfolk, Virginia. While historians inventory the number of events differently, an inclusive account records at least 35 riots.<sup>33</sup> The bloodiest event of that summer was the Elaine Massacre.

This brief survey cannot fully relate all the causes, events, outcomes, and reverberations of the Elaine Massacre. There is a sizable and growing body of research on the subject, but in all that is known there are differing versions of events and much remains unknown. Historian Jeannie M. Wayne, assessing the scholarship on the Elaine Massacre in 1999, concluded “Historians, struggling with a mass of rich but contradictory and even tainted evidence, have failed to arrive at a common narrative of events.”<sup>34</sup>

If in the northern cities work was scarce in part because of an influx of African American laborers from the South, in the South black labor was becoming scarce.<sup>35</sup> In Phillips County, the Helena Men’s Business League went so far as to demand that black laborers from Phillips County hired to build Camp Pike near Little Rock be fired and “encouraged” to return to Phillips County.<sup>36</sup> National stories of increasing labor unrest had been carried in the local newspaper, and white employers feared that organizing would take hold in their area.<sup>37</sup> News of the Red Summer race riots were carried in the local papers as well. Author James Weldon Johnson referred to it at the time as the “Red Summer” for the blood and violence of

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28 Ibid., 15.

29 Ann V. Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II*, ABC-CLIO, 2012, 1–2. Racial violence against other ethnic minorities, such as lynching of Mexican Americans and anti-Chinese race riots, are also distressingly common events in American history.

30 Jan Voogd, *Race Riots and Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*, New York, Peter Lang, 2008, 2.

31 For a longer summary of race riots and their underlying causes from 1896–1921, see National Park Service “1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey: Final,” November 2005, 5–18.

32 For a succinct discussion of the similarities and differences between lynchings and race riots, see “Red Summer Race Riots of 1919” in Walter Rucker and James Nathaniel Upton (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Race Riots, Volume 1&2*, Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 2007, 550.

33 A number based on an inclusive list of Red Summer events listed in McWhirter and Voogd. See also Karen Sieber, “Visualizing the Red Summer: A collection of primary source material about the race riots of 1919.” Senior Honors Thesis, American Studies, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, December 2015, 6-8. <https://visualizingtheredsummer.web.unc.edu>.

34 Wayne, 285.

35 McWhirter, 19.

36 Stockley, 28. This occurred in 1917.

37 Between January and May 1919, there were over a thousand labor actions nationally. (Whitaker 49) In 1917, two labor organizers who came to Phillips County were tarred and feathered, and two more were arrested and jailed for a year. (Whitaker 70).

the riots, but the term also evokes the contemporaneous Red Scare that was sweeping Europe and the United States with fears of communism.<sup>38</sup> In fact, communism was surmised to be a goal of the agitation for change among African Americans, echoed in newspapers and even by the US Post Office in an assessment of “radicalism and sedition” in the black press, which concluded that many of the publications advocated Bolshevism.<sup>39</sup>

African American farmers’ connection to the national news and writings of black leaders had probably never been greater. By 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP, had 310 chapters nationwide with over 90,000 members, and their Chicago-based magazine, *The Crisis*, had a circulation of 100,000 nationally.<sup>40</sup> Black periodicals like *The Crisis*, *Chicago Defender*, and *The Messenger* all had subscribers in Phillips County, a fact that raised white concern and fear of radical influence in the late 1910s.<sup>41</sup>

As a leading voice in the black community locally and nationally, E. C. Morris had long spoken out against mob violence. A collection of sermons published in 1901 includes several passages about the subject, observing that those who take up arms against criminals are not only criminals themselves, but destabilizing the fabric of law, order, and government. He also connected the violence against African Americans to mob violence more generally, observing “The same disregard for law and order which exists in the South when a Negro is involved, exists in the North when the miners or other laborers are involved.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, fear of organized labor was widespread nationally, but in the South, the fear of both class and racial upheaval was especially potent.

In 1919, prices for cotton were reaching heights never before seen. As noted above, the credit extended to sharecroppers was designed to avoid paying them fairly and keep them in debt so they would be forced to work the land the following year rather than move on.<sup>43</sup> This was an easy accounting trick when cotton was 7 cents per pound in 1914, but was incredulous as prices soared to more than 30 cents per pound in 1918, and were poised to top 40 cents in 1919.<sup>44</sup> Black sharecroppers sought the share they were due and began organizing to get it.

The Progressive Farmers and Household Union was organized in Arkansas in 1918 and had lodges in Hoop Spur, Ratio, Elaine, Old Town, and Mellwood in Phillips County.<sup>45</sup> Combining elements of a labor union and fraternal orders popular at the time, the union was in the process of engaging legal counsel to assist in their effort to get more transparent and equitable settlements from landlords. The union’s efforts to organize was not without precedent. In 1891, the Colored Farmer’s Alliance called a national strike, and about 25 farmers in adjacent Lee County, Arkansas, followed through with that call. White posses shot two black men and lynched nine others, an outcome covered in newspapers.<sup>46</sup>

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38 McWhirter, 13.

39 Whitaker, 50. A headline from the time was “Reds Try to Stir Negroes to Revolt.”

40 Equal Justice Initiative, “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror,” Third Edition. Montgomery, Alabama: Equal Justice Initiative, 2017, 53.

41 Whitaker, 71 and Taylor, 274–275.

42 E. C. Morris, D. D., “Sermons, Addresses and Reminiscences and Important Correspondence, With a Picture Gallery of Eminent Ministers and Scholars,” Nashville, TN, National Baptist Publishing Board, 1901, p. 81 and 97.

43 Planters were also equipped with legal tools under Arkansas law that advantaged them over sharecroppers (Whayne, 305).

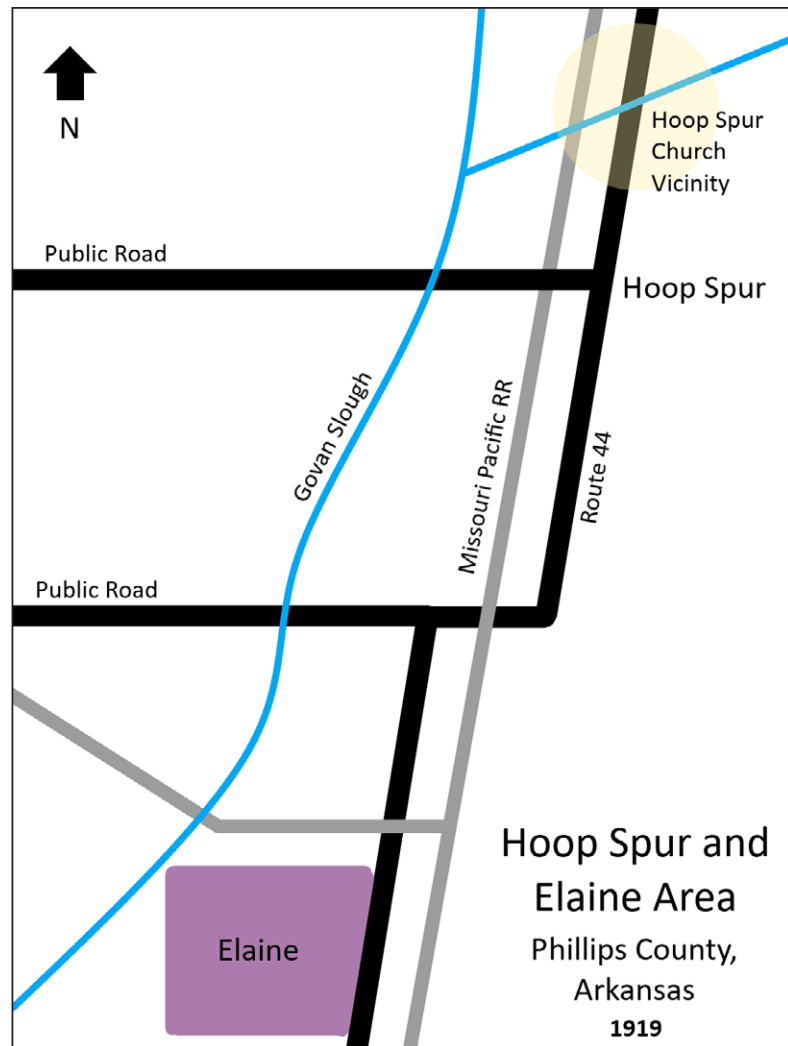
44 Whitaker, 8–9.

45 Whitaker, 10–14, Baker, 19. [https://www.arkansaspreservation.com/literature\\_133240/Minority\\_Settlement\\_in\\_the\\_Mississippi\\_River\\_Counties\\_of\\_the\\_Arkansas\\_Delta,1870-1930](https://www.arkansaspreservation.com/literature_133240/Minority_Settlement_in_the_Mississippi_River_Counties_of_the_Arkansas_Delta,1870-1930) (accessed June 25, 2019)

46 Whitaker, 15. For more information, see M. Langley Biebert, “Legacy of Resistance: Uncovering the History of Collective Action by Black Agricultural Workers in Central East Arkansas from the 1860s to the 1930s,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Autumn, 1998), pp. 73–99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789594>.

To some white people, the organizing appeared to be the beginnings of a nefarious plot; others saw it as a very real economic and social threat. As rumors of a black “insurrection” continued to build, some whites purchased shotguns and ammunition, stored in the Phillips County Courthouse, and set up a phone tree to activate posses in the event of an uprising. Private detectives reported, and word spread, that an uprising was planned for early October.<sup>47</sup>

The union held a meeting the night of September 30, 1919, at Hoop Spur Church, by all accounts a modest building near the intersection of a railroad spur with the Missouri Pacific Rail Line. Armed men stood guard outside. A car approached. There are differing accounts of what sparked the violence that night, but when it was over, some meeting participants were injured, a white security officer for the Missouri Pacific Railroad was killed, and a white deputy sheriff was gravely injured.



Union members left the Hoop Spur Church for their homes. Law enforcement was called. The phone tree was activated. By the morning of October 1, white posses from Helena and Elaine were in the Hoop Spur area, shooting to kill, and as shooting grew nearer, black families fled to the woods and canebrakes. The Phillips County sheriff wired the governor, requesting that he send troops and machine guns from Camp Pike—he and other whites believed that an “uprising” was underway. Upon hearing the news of the “uprising,” white men from farther away in Arkansas and across the river in Mississippi rushed to the scene, gunning down black farmers in their fields on their way south from Helena, many probably not knowing about the trouble at Hoop Spur the night before.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Whitaker, 78–79.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 83–99.

A second day of violence dawned on October 2 as posses began their hunt again, and more than 500 US Army troops from Camp Pike arrived with the governor himself. Some black families came out of hiding, believing the soldiers were there to rescue them from the white posses, but the troops believed they were there to put down a black insurrection. As soldiers swept the woods and one soldier was shot, US Army troops shot whoever they came upon.<sup>49</sup> Those African Americans not killed were arrested and detained in Elaine, many at the recently completed school. Violence broke out in other areas in southern Phillips and northern Desha Counties. Shooting was also reported on October 3.<sup>50</sup> In all, 22 killing fields can be mapped using information from witnesses and reports at the time of the massacre.<sup>51</sup> Five white men lost their lives.

As in other race riots, successful African Americans were a target of mob violence. The four Johnston brothers, two doctors and two war veterans, were on their way to Helena from a hunting trip when they heard of the riot and were advised not to drive through Elaine. They took the train instead, but when it stopped in Elaine, the mob boarded and hauled them off, restrained them, and loaded them into the car of Helena alderman O. R. Lilly. What happened next is a matter of dispute, but ended with the four brothers and Lilly shot dead. The bodies of the Johnston brothers were left by the roadside for days.<sup>52</sup> They had no known connection to the events in Elaine before they became victims.<sup>53</sup> As journalist and activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett put it, they “paid with their lives the penalty of being prosperous negroes in the neighborhood of the riot.”<sup>54</sup>

Despite several well-researched scholarly works on the Elaine Massacre, there remain many unknowns about the events, most strikingly the number of people who lost their lives and their final resting places. The most conservative estimates of black victims are over 100, and the generally accepted number is over 200.<sup>55</sup> The names of only 14 of the black victims are known.<sup>56</sup> It may be that some bodies were left or never found where they died in the woods and canebrakes. It may be that some bodies were recovered by family, friends, or neighbors and buried in graves whose markers have long since disappeared. It may be that some were buried in mass graves, or burned, or both. It may be that some were loaded onto trains and disposed of in a river or bayou. Research is ongoing into the final resting place of victims, but the whole story may never be known.

The degree to which land was lost by black landowners as a result of the massacre events and aftermath is not known, and the extent to which land ownership records exist is unclear.<sup>57</sup> While most African American farmers in Phillips County were likely tenants working land for shares, some (like Ed Ware) rented property outright and some (like E. C. Morris) owned property.<sup>58</sup> Oral histories collected by the Elaine Legacy Center convey the loss of privately owned land in family histories, but to date documentary research has not yet substantiated these claims or how prevalent land theft may have been.

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49 Ibid., 109–113.

50 Stockley, 78.

51 Whitaker, 123–126.

52 Gwendolyn Shelton, “David Augustine Elihue Johnston (1878?–1919).”

53 The brothers had happened to leave town on September 30, which aroused suspicion and accusations that they were arming insurrectionists. Whitaker, 114.

54 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *The Arkansas Race Riot*, Chicago, 1920, 25.

55 Whitaker, 125.

56 Whitaker, 126.

57 In conversation with Mary Olson of the Elaine Legacy Center on April 10, 2019, she related that their research had uncovered no land records for land in question; an e-mail from the Phillips County Circuit Clerk’s Office on May 20, 2019, said records begin in 1820. It is unclear if those records are complete. This is an avenue for future scholarly research.

58 Whitaker, 16; White, 106. Black farm ownership increased 40% between 1910 and 1920 (Taylor, 269) though just 8.4%, or 92, black farmers owned their farms according to US Census data (Whayne, 297).

Whatever their relationship to the land they farmed, many of those victims who did not lose their lives lost the crops they had labored so hard to grow, their personal possessions, or both.<sup>59</sup>

The fate of the Hoop Spur Church is not known. William Wardlow, after his arrest, stated to Ida B. Wells-Barnett that “when we were under arrest, the white people went and burned the church down to keep from showing up what they had done.”<sup>60</sup> Whatever the fate of the church, it is no longer standing and its actual location is uncertain. What became of the congregation that worshipped there is not known.

The fate of many of those arrested during the massacre, almost all black, was decided in the coming days. As the governor left Phillips County, he sanctioned a Committee of Seven composed of large landowners in Helena to decide who should be prosecuted. This committee also promoted a version of events in the press from a decidedly white, landholding perspective.<sup>61</sup> No white posse members were arrested for their roles in the massacre. The only white men arrested in connection with the Elaine Massacre worked at the law office the union sharecroppers were employing on their behalf.<sup>62</sup> Some of those imprisoned were released, some were charged and pled guilty, some were charged and granted speedy, unfair trials. Cameron McWhirter summarized the mishandled legal proceedings this way:

All the blacks were assigned white defense attorneys from Phillips County. Not one lawyer filed a motion for continuance, even though they had only days to prepare a defense against charges as serious as murder. No lawyers asked for a change of venue. No lawyers asked that all-white juries be disqualified. Thirty-six men pleaded guilty to lesser charges, but the rest who stood trial were all found guilty. With at least two cases, jurors deliberated for no more than six minutes before reaching a verdict. In high stakes murder trials, the defense called no witnesses.<sup>63</sup>

Ida B. Wells-Barnett interviewed the men held at the Phillips County jail, many of whom reported being tortured to confess or provide information.<sup>64</sup> Twelve men, referred to as the Elaine 12, were tried at the Phillips County Courthouse in Helena and sentenced to die—the proceedings had taken less than two weeks.<sup>65</sup>

The day following the outbreak of violence near Elaine, Morris reassured the white population of Helena that they had nothing to fear from African Americans.<sup>66</sup> Prominent black Arkansas leaders were making it known in the press that they condemned violence, and some, including Morris, condemned the “uprising.”<sup>67</sup>



African American men taken prisoner during the Elaine Massacre by U.S. Army troops sent from Camp Pike; 1919. From the Encyclopedia of Arkansas via the Arkansas State Archives

59 Ida B. Wells-Barnett estimated that \$1 million worth of cotton was lost by those killed and those imprisoned after the riot. Wells-Barnett, 20.

60 Wells-Barnett, 16.

61 Stockley, 72–77, Woodruff, 91–93.

62 Whitaker, 168.

63 McWhirter, 227.

64 Wells-Barnett.

65 Richard C. Cortner, *A Mob Intent on Death: The NAACP and the Arkansas Riot Cases*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988, 18.

66 Cortner, 45.

67 Cortner, 48.



The 12 Elaine Massacre defendants. From the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, via the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System.

Morris later wrote that he “never believed that the Negro at Elaine had planned to murder the white planters and take their lands, as many whites had feared.”<sup>68</sup>

He disputed the official version of events promoted by the Committee of Seven in the white press in his correspondence with the NAACP.<sup>69</sup> In November 1919, Morris was appointed to the interracial Commission on Race Relations convened by the governor to study race relations in Arkansas, a commission that recommended an appeal by the Elaine 12 to the state supreme

court.<sup>70</sup> Morris, navigating a very delicate situation, “acted as a unifying force between the races during the Elaine riots, encouraging cooperation.”<sup>71</sup>

Soon after their convictions, efforts to appeal on behalf of the Elaine 12 were underway. The NAACP and African American Little Rock attorney Scipio Africanus Jones were integral to this process, which is too complex to summarize here.<sup>72</sup> Ultimately, half of the Elaine 12, known as the *Ware* defendants, were freed by the Arkansas Supreme Court. The appeal of the *Moore* defendants, the other half of the Elaine 12, was heard by the US Supreme Court.<sup>73</sup>

In the case *Moore v. Dempsey*, the majority found that “the proceedings in the State Court, although a trial in form, were only a form, and that the appellants were hurried to conviction under the pressure of a mob without any regard for their rights and without according to them due process of law.”<sup>74</sup> The decision was “a milestone in the modern interpretation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in relation to the conduct of state criminal trials.”<sup>75</sup> Though it did not open the floodgates for relief, the case established an important precedent that “state rulings could be challenged in federal court to see if defendants had been denied their constitutional rights.”<sup>76</sup> This broad concept of *habeas corpus* expressed by court decisions starting with *Moore v. Dempsey* and through the court decisions of the 1960s was subsequently curtailed by federal law.<sup>77</sup> The last of the Elaine 12 were finally released in 1925.<sup>78</sup>

After the death of E. C. Morris in 1922, the Centennial Baptist congregation came under new leadership and continued to worship in the 1905 church. No longer the home church of the National Baptist Convention president, the church faded from the national stage but remained a force in the community for generations.

68 McLaren, 19.

69 Whayne,

70 Cortner, 48

71 McLaren, 19.

72 Cortner, 163–164.

73 For book-length discussions of the cases, see Richard C. Cortner and Grif Stockley.

74 United States Supreme Court, “*Moore v. Dempsey* (1923).” No. 199, Argued: January 9, 1923, Decided: February 19, 1923. <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/261/86.html> (Accessed March 6, 2019).

75 The ruling in *Moore v. Dempsey* reversed the court’s earlier ruling in *Frank v. Mangum*. Cortner, 184–185.

76 John Burnett, “Modern Implications of *Moore v. Dempsey* Elaine Race Massacre: Red Summer in Arkansas” A digital exhibit by UA Little Rock Center for Arkansas History and Culture. Released 2019.

<https://ualrexhibits.org/elaine/modern-implications-of-moore-v-dempsey/> (accessed July 18, 2019). Sarah Riva, “*Moore v. Dempsey*: A Landmark for Constitutional Rights.” Elaine Race Massacre: Red Summer in Arkansas” A digital exhibit by UA Little Rock Center for Arkansas History and Culture. Released 2019. <https://ualrexhibits.org/elaine/100-years-ago/judicial-approach/moore-v-dempsey/> (accessed July 18, 2019).

77 By the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. Whitaker, 323.

78 Cortner, 183.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

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Centennial Baptist Church, on the southeast corner of York and Columbia Streets in Helena-West Helena, occupies approximately 0.5 acre of land owned by the Centennial Church Foundation.<sup>79</sup> A late example of the Gothic Revival style, the large brick church is presently unoccupied and is in a deteriorated condition. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program holds a conservation easement on the exterior of the church, donated in 1996. By the 1990s, the congregation's active membership had declined to under 100.<sup>80</sup> The last worship service at the church was held in 1998.<sup>81</sup>



Centennial Baptist Church

There has been some stabilization work performed over the years, and steel buttresses are visible on the east face of the building. Many of the church's window and door openings are covered by plywood to secure the building. Holes in the roof are visible from the exterior. Centennial Baptist Church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 and was designated a national historic landmark in 2003. The church was named one of the state's most endangered places by the nonprofit preservation organization Preserve Arkansas in 2006 and 2018.

Centennial Baptist Church is in a relatively quiet section of town—neighboring properties are residential, and across Columbia Street is New Fort Curtis, a three-quarter-scale reconstruction of a Civil War-era earthen fort, which is an open air park without a consistent staff presence. A wayside at the site interprets the church.

The Phillips County Courthouse is on the southeast corner of Perry and Cherry Streets in Helena-West Helena, and is opposite Court Square Park. The classical revival courthouse has a jail attached to the rear of the building where prisoners were held awaiting trial in 1919 that has since been removed. The building houses court functions and county offices.

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79 Warranty Deed, Phillips County, Arkansas, Deed Book 219 Page 2288, filed April 10, 2019.

80 Debbie Elliot, "A Black Church's Dilemma: Preserve A Building, Or Our Identity?" National Public Radio, January 12, 2014. <https://www.npr.org/2014/01/12/260458956/a-black-churchs-dilemma-preserve-a-building-or-our-identity> (accessed March 6, 2019).

81 Marian Smith Holmes, "Endangered Site: Centennial Baptist Church." Smithsonian Magazine, March 2009. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/endangered-site-centennial-baptist-church-54064637/> (accessed July 2, 2019).



Left to right: A potential site of the Hoop Spur Church, north of Elaine, Arkansas; photograph of a church identified as the Hoop Spur Church in the *Arkansas Democrat*.

Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, is located along the Mississippi River about 65 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee. The cities of Helena and West Helena consolidated in 2006. The population of the city was recorded at over 12,000 in the 2010 census. The Helena portion of the city is a street grid layout characterized by a central business district surrounded by neighborhoods of primarily single-family dwellings. Court Square Park, adjacent to the Phillips County Courthouse to the west, is home to a pavilion and several historic markers. On the north side of the park, the Elaine Massacre Memorial is currently under construction by the nonprofit Elaine Massacre Memorial Committee. The memorial is set to be dedicated on September 29, 2019.

The Hoop Spur Church is no longer standing, having reportedly been burned during or shortly after the events of the Elaine Massacre. The Hoop Spur Church would reportedly have been located north of Elaine in the vicinity of Hoop Spur, where the road that is now Arkansas State Highway 44 crosses the Govan Slough. The site where it once stood is not conclusively known. While there is most likely a former site, there are also several others indicated by oral histories. No remains of the church have been identified and no known archeological research or geophysical surveys have yet been undertaken to do so. It is not known what denomination the Hoop Spur Church congregants were, who the faith leader was in 1919, or exactly what the church looked like. A photograph of a building purported to be the Hoop Spur Church was published in the *Arkansas Democrat* after the massacre, but there are reasons to doubt that it is in fact the Hoop Spur Church.<sup>82</sup>

It is unclear whether any physical remains of the church exist, both because of the nature of the construction in the flood-prone area on piers and the likelihood that the site of the church has been under cultivation for many years. It is likely that the site of the church is privately owned. At the time of this report, the potential sites of the Hoop Spur Church have never been archeologically investigated or evaluated.

<sup>82</sup> Several accounts have the church being burned on October 1 or 2 to destroy evidence of a firefight. (Wells-Barnett, 16; Whitaker, 120, 259–260).

Elaine is in southern Phillips County about 26 miles south of Helena-West Helena. The city's population was recorded as 636 in the 2010 census. Phillips County was recorded as home to over 21,000 people in 2010, though the 2018 estimate is that just over 18,000 reside in the county.<sup>83</sup> Elaine's Main Street is characterized by one-story brick commercial structures, many of which are vacant, and surrounding neighborhoods by single-family dwellings. Two vacant lots on Main Street in Elaine are planned to be developed as Richard Wright Park, an open space to honor the author who lived in Elaine for a time as a child, and whose experiences are reflected in his memoir *Black Boy*. Dedication is planned for September 30, 2019.

It is possible that ongoing and future research may identify other Elaine Massacre sites with the necessary significance and historic integrity to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a national historic landmark. The killing fields around Elaine where many lost their lives, or structures and buildings in Elaine and south Phillips County that may have played a role in the massacre, have not been documented or evaluated.<sup>84</sup> Some buildings that played a documented role in the events, such as the school building where those detained were held, no longer exist. Potential mass burial sites are the subject of ongoing research but none have been conclusively identified. Some of the buildings in Elaine were present at the time of the massacre. The former Lee Grocery Store, on the northwest corner of Main Street and Highway 44, is one of the few remaining buildings that was extant at the time of the massacre. Research is needed into what role it or other buildings in Elaine played in the Elaine Massacre events.

Southern Phillips County remains a rural area, though the character of the landscape has changed along with the agricultural economy over the last 100 years. With the exception of stands on the banks of Swan Lake, Old Town Lake, and along the Mississippi and White Rivers, wooded areas have all but disappeared in the vicinity of Elaine. Canebrakes, once common in the Delta landscape, have disappeared as well. Land under cultivation has been maximized, and cotton is no longer the dominant crop. Much of the farmland around Elaine, already flat as the floodplain of the Mississippi, has been leveled to optimize water retention and drainage. Agriculture today is highly mechanized and requires fewer workers. Sharecropper's cabins have disappeared from the landscape.

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<sup>83</sup> US Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018. Published April 2019, [factfinder.census.gov](https://factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>84</sup> The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, the state's SHPO, visited Elaine in March 2019. It was the first time survey work had been done by the SHPO in Elaine. The survey documented buildings in the downtown core of Elaine and determined that the downtown did not possess the necessary integrity for a historic district. The Lee Grocery Store at the northwest corner of Highway 44 and Main Street, was determined eligible for individual listing. No properties were examined for their connection to the Elaine Massacre. Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, "Arkansas Architectural Resources Survey Forms: Elaine, Arkansas," March 2019.



Elaine Legacy Center, Elaine, Arkansas.

The Missouri Pacific Railroad line from Elaine north to Lexa is a completed section of Delta Heritage Trail State Park, a bike trail that will be 85 miles long when complete. The trailhead in Elaine is across from the main intersection and features interpretive panels about Elaine's history, including the Elaine Massacre.

The Elaine Legacy Center, a branch of the nonprofit organization, Waves of Prayer, was founded in 2017 to research, preserve, and share the story of the Elaine Massacre. The Lee Grocery Store is owned by Waves of Prayer, the parent organization of the Elaine Legacy Center, which plans to create a museum and welcome center there. The Elaine Legacy Center hosts lectures and workshops and plans to open a museum, but does not have regular visitor hours and services at this time.

The Delta Cultural Center in Helena is a museum that interprets the heritage of the 27-county Delta region in Arkansas through exhibits, educational programs, annual events, and guided tours. It is part of the State of Arkansas's Department of Arkansas Heritage. There are plans to have dedicated exhibits about the Elaine Massacre in the near future.



Left to right: Elaine Massacre Memorial in progress, Helena-West Helena; Delta Heritage Trail State Park trailhead in Helena; The Delta Cultural Center in Helena-West Helena.

## STUDY CRITERIA AND ANALYSIS

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As discussed in the introduction, there are criteria set forth in law and policy that the National Park Service applies in determining whether to recommend an area as a potential new unit of the national park system in a special resource study. A reconnaissance survey undertakes only a preliminary analysis of the criteria for inclusion. Conclusions in this report will summarize the potential or likelihood that the resources would meet the established criteria. The criteria are national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for NPS management. (See appendix B for the full text of the Criteria for Inclusion from *NPS Management Policies 2006*.)

### National Significance

An area is considered nationally significant if it is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource, possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage, has superlative opportunities for public enjoyment<sup>85</sup> or for scientific study, and retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

In applying these criteria to cultural resources, a cultural resource is considered “nationally significant” if it qualifies for designation as a national historic landmark. National historic landmarks are cultural properties designated by the Secretary of the Interior as possessing national significance under at least one of six criteria, and are acknowledged as among the nation's most significant historic places. They must also retain a high degree of historic integrity, which is composed of key characteristics of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

### Centennial Baptist Church

Centennial Baptist Church was designated a national historic landmark in July 2003 for its connection to the life and work of E. C. Morris under criterion 2, properties that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States. Morris continued to actively lead his Helena congregation throughout his career while pursuing national leadership and the founding of new institutions. The building is the only remaining structure associated with his life and work. His home at 401 Columbia Street in Helena was demolished in 1977. A building named for him in Nashville, Tennessee, was constructed after his death.<sup>86</sup> He is buried in Dixon Cemetery in Helena-West Helena. The church retains a high degree of historic integrity in spite of its deteriorated condition. Because the Centennial Baptist Church has been designated a national historic landmark, it meets the criteria for national significance. Further evaluation could find that the church is nationally significant under criterion 1, properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of US history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.

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<sup>85</sup> Given the context of historic sites under consideration that memorialize tragic and somber events, the study will interpret the term “public enjoyment” as “public enrichment.”

<sup>86</sup> McLaren, 20–21.

## Hoop Spur Church Site

The Hoop Spur Church site has not yet been conclusively identified and thus has never been evaluated for its historic significance or integrity to make a determination of whether the site of the church could meet either NRHP criteria or national historic landmark criteria. While the role of the church in the events of the massacre is well documented, and the larger event is of national importance, the Hoop Spur Church site cannot be considered to have historic integrity at this time. If research identifies the site conclusively, then it will have integrity of location and possibly some integrity of setting, but the other aspects of historic integrity are unlikely to be found to be present in the absence of the structure itself or any archeological remains. A photograph published in the *Arkansas Democrat* said to be of the Hoop Spur Church shows a modest wood building raised from the ground on piers. If this was the church, or if the construction method of the church was similar, piers and nails may remain, though agricultural use of the site may have scattered those remains. Research may yield important information about location and possible remains. Without more information, or even the conclusive identification of the Hoop Spur Church site, it is unlikely to meet the criteria for national significance.

There is an exception in NHL criteria for the site of a building or structure no longer standing. NHL exception 3 states that the site of a building “would qualify if the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation’s history and the association is consequential” (see appendix C). This exception is rarely met, and more research, documentation, and context would be necessary to make a case for the site of the Hoop Spur Church to qualify.

## Phillips County Courthouse

The US Supreme Court holding in *Moore v. Dempsey* that due process of law should be afforded to the accused was an influential ruling and could be considered a nationally important civil rights court case. Whether any site could be considered nationally significant for its connection to the court case warrants further research and documentation. The Phillips County Courthouse, constructed in 1914, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance for its architecture and importance in local politics and governance. The nomination form, completed in 1977, does not mention the trial.<sup>87</sup> The courtroom where the trial took place is still there, though it has had some cosmetic modifications over the years. The jury room remains as well. The jail attached to the back of the structure where the Elaine 12 were held awaiting trial has since been removed. The documentation for the Phillips County Courthouse could be updated to consider its significance in the context of *Moore v. Dempsey*. It is possible that the courthouse would be found to be nationally significant for its association with the case. Engagement with subject matter experts as part of a special resource study process would provide additional information.

## Need for Site Identification, Documentation, Evaluation, and Further Context Study

Sites other than those listed above are not well enough understood to be analyzed in this reconnaissance survey, and the identification, documentation, and evaluation needed to do so are outside the scope of this study and outside the scope of a special resource study. This section will describe those needs as well as the need for further context study to understand the potential significance of other sites.

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<sup>87</sup> Taylor, Sandra. Phillips County Courthouse. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, Arkansas. National Register #77000265. Listed July 15, 1977.

Individual sites are in need of identification, documentation, and evaluation. Sites related to the Elaine Massacre, including the killing fields and possible burial sites, have never been evaluated for their historic significance or integrity. Sites in Elaine present at the time of the massacre, such as the former Lee Grocery Store, should be studied for their potential role in the events. There are likely to be sites related to the events of the massacre that have not yet been identified. This site identification and documentation research should be initiated by entities outside the National Park Service.

As described in “Existing Conditions,” the landscape of southern Phillips County has experienced changes in the last 100 years, though the landscape remains rural. Consideration of the landscape-level integrity of the Elaine area or southern Phillips County as one might a battlefield, or an evocative landscape such as that at Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in eastern Maryland, has not been undertaken. The killing fields of the massacre stretched over about 50 miles of southern Phillips and northern Desha Counties.<sup>88</sup>

National historic landmarks are often identified through theme studies. Theme studies provide a national historic context for specific topics in US history or prehistory so that national significance may be judged related properties. Theme studies are an effective way of identifying and nominating properties because they also provide a comparative analysis of properties, which is required in NHL documentation.

The NPS study *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* was created to assist in identifying and prioritizing significant areas of history, and illustrating and identifying broad themes in the civil rights story, as well as the events, persons, and places that represent those themes, and assesses the degree to which related sites are represented and recognized.<sup>89</sup> One of the themes is criminal injustice, which is a broad theme that included lynching. *Civic Rights in America* identifies national historic landmarks related to the theme of criminal injustice. None of the landmarks listed at the time of publication are related to racial violence.

Many of the race riots from this period have been credited for playing a role in the birth of the civil rights movement.<sup>90</sup> While much important scholarly work has been done about the history and context of many race riots from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, little of that work has focused on the physical remains and landscapes of those events. Sites from the Red Summer of 1919, or of racial violence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, have never been evaluated as a group. An NHL theme study investigating the sites and landscapes that remain from race riots in their wider national context would be critical in identifying nationally significant sites that represent this important and troubling period of US history.

The Hoop Spur Church site is also reflective of agricultural history and labor history for its connection to tenant farming and the struggle for fair compensation. The NHL Theme Study *American Labor History Theme Study*, completed in 2003, does not cover agricultural labor, recommending instead that the theme studies *The Farmer’s Frontier* (1959), *The Cattleman’s Empire* (1959), and *Agriculture and the Farmer’s Frontier* (1963) be updated. These updates have yet to be undertaken. The Elaine Massacre’s place in the history of black labor organizing could be a rich vein for further research.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Whitaker, 126.

<sup>89</sup> National Park Service, “Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significance Sites,” National Historic Landmarks Program, NPS, US Department of the Interior, 2008. Further study of the post-reconstruction, pre-World War II time period or the topic of racially motivated violence were not among the document’s recommendations.

<sup>90</sup> Harper Barnes, *Never Been a Time: The 1917 Race Riot That Sparked the Civil Rights Movement*, New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2008, the 1908 Springfield, Illinois race riot is credited as the impetus for the formation of the NAACP. The archeological remains of homes burned during that riot are the subject of an NPS reconnaissance survey.

<sup>91</sup> See Biegert and Steven Anthony, *The Elaine Riot of 1919: Race, Class, and Labor in the Arkansas Delta*, PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, 2019. <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/2040>.

## Conclusion

Centennial Baptist Church is nationally significant because of its previous designation as a national historic landmark. Though the condition of the building has deteriorated since its designation, it maintains a high degree of integrity. The Hoop Spur Church site, while associated with a nationally important event, is unlikely to be found to meet national significance criteria at this time because its location is unknown and there are no known remains of the structure. Potential for a resource to be identified that is directly associated with the Elaine Massacre and retains a high level of integrity should be the subject of further study. The Phillips County Courthouse has potential to be found to be nationally significant for its association with *Moore v. Dempsey* if further research and documentation is undertaken.

## Suitability

To qualify as a potential addition to the national park system, an area that is nationally significant must also meet the criterion for suitability. NPS *Management Policies 2006* state that:

An area is considered suitable for addition to the National Park System if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment<sup>92</sup> by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the National Park System or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas (NPS *Management Policies 2006*, section 1.3.2).

Centennial Baptist Church meets the criteria for national significance because it has been designated a national historic landmark. This reconnaissance survey provides a preliminary evaluation of the Centennial Baptist Church's suitability for inclusion in the national park system by a comparative analysis of similarly themed sites managed by the National Park Service and others.

The Hoop Spur Church site has not been conclusively identified and thus is unlikely to be found to be a nationally significant resource based on currently available information. A preliminary inventory of related sites has been compiled to illustrate the state of preservation and commemoration of sites associated with race riots.

The Phillips County Courthouse warrants further research into potential national significance; therefore, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct NPS management will be preliminarily assessed. A brief summary of comparable sites appears below.

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<sup>92</sup> See Biegert and Steven Anthony, *The Elaine Riot of 1919: Race, Class, and Labor in the Arkansas Delta*, PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, 2019. <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/2040>.

## Centennial Baptist Church: Comparable Sites

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis through the comparison of the proposed area to other similar resources.

In considering enjoyment in the context of national parks, *NPS Management Policies 2006* states that preferred forms of enjoyment are those that are uniquely suited to the superlative natural and cultural resources found in the parks and that (1) foster an understanding of and appreciation for park resources and values, or (2) promote enjoyment through a direct association with, interaction with, or relation to park resources.<sup>93</sup> Given the context of historic sites under consideration that memorialize tragic and somber events, the study will interpret the term “public enjoyment” as “public enrichment.”

**Centennial Baptist Church: Comparable Sites.** Centennial Baptist Church is nationally significant for its association with the life and work of E. C. Morris. Morris was a prominent figure in the Baptist church at a time when churches serving African Americans were not just religious institutions but the center of social, educational, economic, and political life—“a Black Christian Reconstruction that filled the void created by the collapse of political Reconstruction.”<sup>94</sup> Comparable sites are those of African American religious leaders whose importance extended beyond spiritual life, or those of African American civic leaders and intellectuals who had a national impact in the late 19th or 20th centuries.<sup>95</sup>

**Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park, Atlanta, Georgia.** Ebenezer Baptist Church was Dr. King’s spiritual home and the church where he followed his grandfather and father to become ordained and serve as co-pastor preaching social change grounded in Christian faith. The church on Auburn Avenue was completed in 1922. The National Park Service does not own the historic church, but it manages, maintains, and interprets the property with a lease agreement with Ebenezer Baptist Church.

**Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.** The mother church of the nation’s first African American denomination was founded by Rev. Richard Allen in 1794. The church attempted to provide for the social, political, and economic needs of its congregants who were not well served by the white municipal government.<sup>96</sup> The current church building was constructed between 1888 and 1890 and is designated a national historic landmark, its significance is tied to its association with Rev. Allen. The church contains the crypt of Allen and a museum to his life and work that is open to the public.

**Nash House Museum, Buffalo, New York.** Rev. J. Edward Nash Sr. was the pastor of the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church from 1892 to 1953 and was instrumental in establishing branches of the Urban League and the NAACP in Buffalo. Nash was well acquainted with African American leaders of his time and used his influence as a religious leader to further the economic and social needs of the African American community in Buffalo at a time of growth. His former home and office are preserved and open to the public.

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<sup>93</sup> National Park Service *Management Policies 2006* 1.5 Appropriate Use of the Parks.

<sup>94</sup> Dixie, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Some comparable historic figures, such as educator William J. Simmons and founder of the National Baptist Publishing Board Rev. Dr. R. H. Boyd, do not have historic sites associated with their lives and work. Some, like Ida B. Wells-Barnett, theologian and author Howard Thurman, and Chicago Defender publisher Robert S. Abbott, have sites associated with their lives and work listed in the NRHP or designated national historic landmarks but that are not open to the public.

<sup>96</sup> Marcia M. Greenlee, “Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church,” National Historic Landmark Nomination. The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation, Washington, DC, July 1973.

**Booker T. Washington National Monument, Hardy, Virginia.** Booker T. Washington was an educator, orator, and prominent African American leader in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Booker T. Washington National Monument commemorates the life, accomplishments, and contributions of Washington; preserves, protects, and interprets the site of his birth, enslaved childhood, and emancipation; and serves as an inspiration to present and future generations of Americans. Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site in Alabama preserves and interprets an important part of the life and work of its founder, Booker T. Washington.

**W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite, Great Barrington, Massachusetts.** African American intellectual, author, and civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois lived at a home in Great Barrington for the first five years of his life. He went on to a long career as a leader for civil rights and a founder of the NAACP. The former site of W.E.B. Du Bois's home is a national historic landmark and visitors can experience a self-guided interpretive trail. The site is managed cooperatively by four nonprofit and educational organizations.

**Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.** Educator and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune was active in the early 20th century. Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site preserves and interprets the life, legacy, and home of Mary McLeod Bethune and her pioneering work in establishing the National Council of Negro Women. The site also preserves and manages the National Archives for Black Women's History, a living repository that allows for the continued interpretation of the history and influence of African American women in America. The Mary McLeod Bethune Home on the Bethune-Cookman University campus in Daytona Beach, Florida, is a historic site open to the public.

**Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, D.C.** Cedar Hill was the home of abolitionist, orator, and writer Frederick Douglass from 1877 until his death in 1895. The purpose of the national historic site is to inspire and educate the public through the preservation and interpretation of the home, life, and legacy of Frederick Douglass through his Cedar Hill estate in Washington, D.C.

### **Hoop Spur Church Site: Comparable Sites**

This preliminary inventory identifies sites comparable to the Hoop Spur Church site in subjects of late 19th and early 20th century race riots and US Supreme Court cases dealing with African American civil rights. The Hoop Spur Church site is unidentified and thus is unlikely to be found to be a nationally significant resource based on currently available information; therefore, the likelihood for it to meet the suitability criteria will not be analyzed.

Though the race riots and lynchings have been chronicled in books and GIS web projects, no comprehensive study on what resources remain and what their historic integrity might be have been done.<sup>97</sup> The following sites are locations with historic resources from late 19th and early 20th century race riots:

**Douglas County Courthouse, Omaha, Nebraska.** The courthouse, constructed in 1912, was the scene of the brutal mob lynching of Will Brown in September 1919 before a crowd of thousands. Two other men were killed; the mayor was hanged, but survived. The rioters broke windows and set fires causing an estimated \$1 million worth of damage to the courthouse. The building stands today, still in use as a courthouse. There are no plaques or markers indicating the events that took place there, but as of this report, there are plans to install a memorial in the courthouse in the near future.

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<sup>97</sup> For web resources, see Monroe Work Today (<http://www.monroeworktoday.org>) and Visualizing the Red Summer (<https://visualizingtheredsummer.com/>). For written works, see Works Consulted.

**1908 Springfield Race Riot Archeological Remains, Springfield, Illinois.** During the investigations for a rail bed expansion, archeologists discovered the burned foundations of five homes destroyed in the 1908 Springfield, Illinois, race riot, which was a galvanizing event for the formation of the NAACP. Temporary interpretive signs are on site, and there are other interpretive markers in town about the 1908 events. Conceptual plans for a memorial commemorating the 1908 race riot in Springfield have been developed for the site. The site was recently studied by the National Park Service in a reconnaissance survey, and archeological work remains ongoing at the site.<sup>98</sup>

**Site of Carswell Grove Baptist Church, Perkins, Georgia.** The congregation near Millen, Georgia, was established in 1867 and the church built about 1870. In April 1919, in the first conflict of the Red Summer, the church was burned. A new church was constructed on the site later that year. The rebuilt church and cemetery were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 at the local level of significance for its association with African American history and its architecture. The nomination mentions that the previous church burned, but does not mention the circumstances.<sup>99</sup> The rebuilt church was destroyed by arson in 2014. A historic marker was placed on the site in 2018.

**1921 Race Riot Sites in Tulsa, Oklahoma.** The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot resulted in the entire neighborhood of Greenwood, a prosperous black neighborhood nicknamed “Black Wall Street” being burned to the ground. There are some sites that played a role in the riots that have historic integrity in Greenwood and elsewhere in the city.<sup>100</sup> Efforts to list resources related to the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot and subsequent rebuilding in the National Register of Historic Places are currently underway.

There are markers commemorating racially motivated mob violence from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though they do not necessarily mark exact locations or historic resources. The 1866 Memphis Massacre Marker in Army-Navy Park, which briefly describes the race riot in Memphis, Tennessee, in which a white mob “killed an estimated 46 black people; raped several black women; and committed numerous robberies, assaults, and arsons. A congressional investigative committee reported that 4 churches, 12 schools and 91 other dwellings were burned.” Outrage following the massacre helped to ensure the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment. The marker was placed in 2016 by the NAACP and the National Park Service. At commemorative events in July 2017, “sacred site” markers were unveiled at key sites from the 1917 East St. Louis, Illinois, Race Riot.<sup>101</sup> There are several markers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, commemorating the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot at Standpipe Hill and in the Greenwood area memorializing businesses that were destroyed in the riot. A marker interprets the site of Rosewood, Florida, destroyed in the 1923 Rosewood Massacre. One house from the town remains and was important in the events and is currently in private ownership.

### **Phillips County Courthouse: Comparable Sites**

Part of the national importance of the Elaine Massacre was the resultant US Supreme Court decision *Moore v. Dempsey*. There are several sites that preserve and interpret sites associated with important US Supreme Court decisions on African American civil rights.

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98 National Park Service, “Springfield Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey”, US Department of the Interior, August 2019.

99 Leslie N. Sharp, “Carswell Grove Baptist Church and Cemetery” National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, January 22, 1996.

100 National Park Service, *1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey: Final*, 109–118.

101 Bob Pieper, “Centennial anniversary remembers victims of East St. Louis Race Riot,” Metro East Chronicle, July 11, 2017. <http://chronicleillinois.com/news/metro-east-news/centennial-anniversary-remembers-victims-east-st-louis-race-riot/> (Accessed April 29, 2019).

**Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Topeka, Kansas.** The national historic site in the historic Monroe School has a purpose, in part, to preserve, protect, and interpret the places that contributed materially to the landmark US Supreme Court decision that brought an end to segregation in public education and interpret the integral role of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in the civil rights movement.

**Gateway Arch National Park, St. Louis, Missouri.** The Old Courthouse, part of the national park, is where Dred and Harriet Scott sued for their freedom from slavery in 1846. This historic case resulted in the 1857 US Supreme Court decision in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that determined that no “people of color,” enslaved or free, could become citizens of the United States. Part of the park’s purpose is to preserve the architecturally significant Old Courthouse as the site of the Dred Scott case, which divided North and South over the extension of slavery into the Western Territories and was a leading cause of the American Civil War.

**Pittsylvania County Courthouse, Chatham, Virginia.** This courthouse is where black jurors were denied the right to serve as grand or petit jurors<sup>102</sup>, a case that became the 1880 US Supreme Court ruling *Ex Parte Virginia*, which held that the Fourteenth Amendment authorized Congress to require that states not exclude African Americans from juries. This national historic landmark is the only site noted in *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* as embodying the theme of “criminal injustice” besides Japanese American confinement sites.<sup>103</sup> The building still houses county court functions and is open to the public.

**US Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.** The Old Senate Chamber at the capitol was the home of the Supreme Court from 1860 to 1935. This was where the arguments for *Moore v. Dempsey* were likely heard. The chamber is now reserved for ceremonial functions and is often on the US Capitol tour, though specific cases heard there are likely not addressed in detail.

## Preliminary Analysis

The Centennial Baptist Church, in representing the life and work of E. C. Morris, is a singular place—no other building or site represents his life and work with a high degree of integrity. Historic sites representing other African American luminaries both inside and outside the national park system are preserved and interpreted for public enrichment. In comparison to the sites of prominent African Americans representing the intersection of black religious leaders and social, economic, and or political life, the examples of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church at Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park represent leaders whose lives and work made an impact, either before or after E. C. Morris—neither represents the advancements and challenges of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Better represented among sites preserved and interpreted for the public are sites associated with educators, orators, and civil rights activists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who represent some broadly similar achievements such as founding of educational institutions, publishing, and being leaders respected by both the black and white communities. The NPS System Plan, completed in January 2017, calls out African American history and social organization history as “being underrepresented, in need of greater emphasis or redundancy, or missing in the present system.”<sup>104</sup>

102 Brent Tarter, “*Ex Parte Virginia* (1880),” *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, July 25, 2018. [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Ex\\_Parte\\_Virginia\\_1880](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Ex_Parte_Virginia_1880) (accessed May 13, 2019).

103 National Park Service, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*, 39.

104 National Park Service, *System Plan: One Hundred Years*, US Department of the Interior, January 2017. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/files/NationalParkServiceSystemPlan2017.pdf>.

The Hoop Spur Church location is unknown and thus it is unlikely to be found to be a nationally significant resource based on currently available information; therefore, the likelihood for it to meet the suitability criteria will not be analyzed in this reconnaissance survey.

The Phillips County Courthouse, in representing a landmark US Supreme Court case, is in rare company with sites that preserve resources related to cases in which equal treatment under the law for African Americans was addressed. Two of the sites compared in this study are in the national park system. The site that represents another case from the 20th century, *Brown v. Board of Education*, is a civil rights movement ruling on desegregation of public education; it does not address criminal allegations and the rights of the accused. The two 19th century cases interpreted at associated historic sites do not address this topic either. The Old Senate Chamber is available to tour but the nature of its use and location likely precludes the in-depth interpretation of any one case. The Phillips County Courthouse may be found to be suitable because it is likely not duplicative of sites presently preserving and interpreting the story of consequential US Supreme Court decisions about African American civil rights. Engagement with subject matter experts as part of a special resource study process to further investigate comparable sites is recommended.

## Conclusion

Based on an inventory of sites protecting similar resources inside and outside the national park system and a preliminary analysis of suitability, the resources and themes of the Centennial Baptist Church may be found suitable by a comparative analysis of similarly themed sites managed by the National Park Service and others in a special resource study.

The Hoop Spur Church site is unlikely to be found to meet national significance criteria at this time because its location is unknown and there are no known remains of the structure. Therefore, the Hoop Spur Church site's likelihood to meet suitability criteria was not analyzed. However, themes of racial violence are underrepresented among resources preserved and interpreted for public understanding. The preliminary inventory of sites related to late 19th and early 20th century race riots illustrates that sites preserving resources relating to those events and providing public access and education are very rare. The Equal Justice Initiative, in their report *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, summarizes their research into existing memorials and monuments:

Very few public commemorations of African Americans' suffering during the post-slavery era exist today. Formal remembrances of national racial history tend to celebrate the civil rights movement's victories, focusing on individual achievements and success stories rather than reflecting on the deeply rooted, violent resistance that upheld the racial caste system for so long. Honoring civil rights activists and embracing their successes is appropriate and due, but when they are not accompanied by meaningful engagement with the difficult history of systematic violence perpetrated against black Americans for decades after slavery, such celebrations risk painting an incomplete and distorted picture.<sup>105</sup>

The Phillips County Courthouse may be found to be suitable in a special resource study. Engagement with subject matter experts as part of a special resource study process to further investigate comparable sites is recommended.

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<sup>105</sup> Equal Justice Initiative, 66.

## Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area found to be nationally significant and suitable must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and to accommodate public use. It must have the potential for efficient administration at a reasonable cost. Important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, staff and development requirements, access, existing degradation or threats to the resources, the socioeconomic impacts of designation, and public support. The evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected constraints on funding and personnel. (See appendix B for the full text of the feasibility criteria.) Because reconnaissance surveys do not develop specific proposals for management, feasibility can only be discussed generally. Because reconnaissance surveys do not include a public comment process, potential levels of public support cannot be assessed.

The Centennial Baptist Church is nationally significant and may be found to be suitable if fully analyzed. Therefore, this reconnaissance survey will provide a preliminary analysis of the feasibility of including it in the national park system.

The Hoop Spur Church site is not likely to be found to be nationally significant at this time because its exact location or whether anything remains of the building are unknown. Therefore, this reconnaissance survey will not analyze its suitability or feasibility for inclusion in the national park system.

The Phillips County Courthouse warrants further research into potential national significance and suitability. Therefore, this reconnaissance survey will provide a preliminary analysis of the feasibility of including it in the national park system.

### Centennial Baptist Church

Centennial Baptist Church is a massive brick building on an approximately 0.5-acre parcel in the old Helena section of Helena-West Helena, Arkansas. Its entrance facade faces Columbia Street and side entrances face York Street. The parcel is currently owned by the Centennial Church Foundation, and the facade preservation easement is held by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, a state agency. The building is unoccupied and has not been in use for several years. Entrances are boarded up to prevent unauthorized entry.



Centennial Baptist Church, Columbia Street elevation

The structural integrity of the church has degraded to the point where the church cannot safely be entered or used. Steel supports bolster the exterior walls on the east face of the building, and the roof has several holes and is sagging. The greatest threat to the structure is continued degradation. Architect Tommy Jameson, who designed the structural supports for the church, estimated that it would cost \$2 million to restore it, an estimate that has undoubtedly increased since it was made in 2014.<sup>106</sup> The church was named one of the state's most endangered places by the nonprofit preservation organization Preserve Arkansas in 2006 and 2018.

The potential for public enjoyment exists because the exterior still has a relatively high level of integrity. The interior includes a space used by E. C. Morris as his office.<sup>107</sup> The site also represents a nationally significant person in American history connected to topics underrepresented in the national park system. African American history tourism exists in the region and there is the potential that Centennial Baptist Church, if restored, could attract those visitors. Centennial Baptist Church is located along a major thoroughfare and the exterior is very accessible to the public. It is in a relatively quiet section of town—neighboring properties are residential, and across Columbia Street is New Fort Curtis, a three-quarter-scale reconstruction of a Civil War-era earthen fort, which is an open air park without a consistent staff presence. A wayside at the site interprets the church. There is street parking in Helena-West Helena and public parking at New Fort Curtis.

Centennial Baptist Church was previously owned by the E. C. Morris Foundation. In 2006, the E. C. Morris Foundation was awarded a \$300,000 Save America's Treasures Grant to strengthen the roof structure and address exterior deterioration.<sup>108</sup> The partnership between the E. C. Morris Foundation and other preservation entities in Helena soured before the matching funds could be raised and the grant monies were never disbursed.<sup>109</sup> The Centennial Church Foundation formally acquired title to the church in April 2019, and it is possible new partnerships could be forged to seek grant funding for much-needed stabilization and repair. At the time of this report, the Centennial Church Foundation is

a new organization, having filed as a nonprofit corporation with the Arkansas Secretary of State in April 2018, and it is unclear what their capacity for fundraising and management of the church building will be. Extensive renovation would be necessary to make the building safe and accessible.



Centennial Baptist Church, York Street elevation

<sup>106</sup> Elliot.

<sup>107</sup> McLaren, 6.

<sup>108</sup> US Department of the Interior. "Interior Department and Partners Announce \$7.6 Million in Save America's Treasures Grants." News Release, December 12, 2006. [https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/06\\_News\\_Releases/061212.html](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/archive/news/archive/06_News_Releases/061212.html) (accessed March 6, 2019).

<sup>109</sup> Elliot.

## Phillips County Courthouse

The Phillips County Courthouse is a public building housing county offices and court functions. It is in good structural condition and is easily accessible to the public. Given its current use, the most important unknown feasibility questions are the level of public support and potential impacts of designation. It is not unprecedented that a historic site within the boundaries of a national park continues its current use: the eponymous building of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site continues to be a functioning school, and the Ebenezer Baptist Church at Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park continues to serve its congregation.

## Conclusion

For Centennial Baptist Church, major issues are the likely high costs associated with preservation, the identity and capacity of potential partners, and the uncertainty of public support for an NPS role at the site. Given the likely sizable financial commitment needed to restore the site, the National Park Service could not undertake the restoration, operation, and maintenance of the building without partner organizations. Because a reconnaissance survey is cursory and brief, public input is not invited as it would be in a special resource study; therefore, public support for NPS involvement at the site cannot be assessed. Further study could expand inquiry in these areas. This reconnaissance survey concludes that the feasibility criterion should be further assessed in a special resource study, which would evaluate the magnitude of the restoration effort needed, possible partners, and interest in NPS involvement.

This reconnaissance survey did not analyze the feasibility of the Hoop Spur Church site.

For the Phillips County Courthouse, major issues are the level of public support and the impacts of any potential designation. This reconnaissance survey concludes that the feasibility criterion could be assessed in a special resource study if national significance and suitability criteria are also met.

## Direct National Park Service Management

The final criterion for potential new national park system units is the need for direct NPS management. To be recommended as a unit of the national park system, an area must require direct NPS management, and NPS management must be clearly superior to other possible management options. *NPS Management Policies 2006* states:

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive National Park System status. (see appendix B)

The Centennial Baptist Church is nationally significant and may be found suitable if fully analyzed. The feasibility criterion may be met, though further research in a special resource study is needed. This study will include a preliminary analysis of the need for direct NPS management.

There is very little current management of the Centennial Baptist Church—it is secured from unauthorized entry, but is not secured from the elements and continues to deteriorate. A recent change in ownership from the E. C. Morris Foundation to the Centennial Church Foundation signals possibilities for new projects and partnerships, but in the medium and long term, a full analysis may conclude that NPS management would be the clearly superior alternative. There are immediate repairs needed to prevent further deterioration of the Centennial Baptist Church—the current owners and local and regional organizations are best positioned to act quickly to preserve the building.

The Hoop Spur Church site has not been conclusively identified and thus is unlikely to be found to be a nationally significant resource based on currently available information. The suitability and feasibility of including the site in the national park system was not analyzed. Therefore, this reconnaissance survey will not analyze the need for direct NPS management.

The Phillips County Courthouse is a public building housing county offices and court functions. There are plaques about the building's construction but none about the consequential cases heard there following the Elaine Massacre. There are no known threats to the historic integrity of the building and it is accessible to the public, so there may not be a clear need for NPS management. There is no interpretive experience about the cases heard there and their later appeals to the US Supreme Court and that ruling's importance. Whether there is a role for the National Park Service in interpretation at the site could be explored in a special resource study.

## Conclusion

The Centennial Baptist Church may have a need for direct NPS management if fully analyzed in a special resource study.

This reconnaissance survey did not analyze the need for direct NPS management for the Hoop Spur Church site.

The Phillips County Courthouse may not have a need for direct NPS management but interpretive opportunities in partnership with the National Park Service could be examined in a special resource study.



Road in south Phillips County, Arkansas, at sunset.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Reconnaissance surveys are preliminary resource assessments. The conclusions are not considered final or definitive, assessing only the likelihood that the resources analyzed would meet the established criteria for inclusion in the national park system.

Centennial Baptist Church meets the criteria for national significance and may meet the criteria for suitability if fully analyzed. The feasibility criterion could be met, but a special resource study is needed to investigate the cost of restoration and operation of the church building, opportunities for partnerships, and public support for NPS involvement. Direct NPS management may be clearly superior to other management options. This reconnaissance recommends further study of Centennial Baptist Church.

The Hoop Spur Church site requires research initiated by entities outside the National Park Service to assess its location and whether there are any physical remains of the building. At this time, without the necessary research and documentation, the Hoop Spur Church site remains unknown and thus is unlikely to be found to be nationally significant. Research by historians and archeologists is needed to document the connection of any resources to the events of the Elaine Massacre. Further research in an NHL theme study would be appropriate to understanding what sites and resources remain from late 19th and early 20th century racial violence more broadly. A research undertaking would be outside the scope of a special resource study. A special resource study, if undertaken at this time, would be unlikely to have the information needed to reach definitive conclusions about the Hoop Spur Church site or any other site connected to the events of the Elaine Massacre. Given that a special resource study is not likely to have positive findings on all criteria based on currently available information, this reconnaissance survey does not recommend a special resource study of the Hoop Spur Church or resources connected to the events of the Elaine Massacre at this time. Research and documentation of potential sites and an NHL theme study are recommended.

The Phillips County Courthouse requires further research, but the scope of a special resource study could encompass evaluation of its significance in connection with *Moore v. Dempsey*. Ideally, NHL documentation would be undertaken. The Phillips County Courthouse may be found to be suitable because it is likely not duplicative of sites presently preserving and interpreting the story of consequential US Supreme Court decisions about African American civil rights; engagement with subject matter experts as part of a special resource study process is recommended. The Phillips County Courthouse may be found to be feasible to protect and administer if fully analyzed, but it may be that the structure itself has a need for NPS management. Whether there is a role for the National Park Service in interpreting the story of the trials that led to *Moore v. Dempsey* is best addressed in a special resource study.

Congress declared in the National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970 that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation (see appendix B). The criteria for inclusion in the national park system are not designed to evaluate commemorative

works like statues and physical monuments unless the commemorative works themselves have achieved historical significance. Consideration of the importance of modern commemorative sites from a purely commemorative standpoint in the absence of nationally significant historic resources is not within the purview of the National Park Service.

Other designations that entail National Park Service involvement but not ownership are affiliated area or national commemorative site.<sup>110</sup> Such a designation for Centennial Baptist Church, which is most immediately in need of stabilization and preservation and is not open to the public nor likely to be in the near future, would not be appropriate at this time. Such a designation for the Hoop Spur Church site, which has no identified location or resources at the time of this report, would not be appropriate at this time. Such a designation for the Phillips County Courthouse, which has not been evaluated for its national significance, is not appropriate at this time.

## **Recommendation: Special Resource Study**

This reconnaissance survey recommends a special resource study further investigate the Centennial Baptist Church and the Phillips County Courthouse. The Hoop Spur Church site and other sites connected to the Elaine Massacre are in need of more documentary research before a special resource study would be appropriate. Examination of the potential for other sites in Phillips County or the Arkansas Delta to meet the criteria for inclusion in the national park system could be examined in a special resource study or other reconnaissance survey; however, without updated NHL or NRHP documentation those sites are not likely to meet the criteria for national significance if studied at this time. This study strongly recommends further research be undertaken.

## **Recommendation: Further Research**

As described in “Need for Site Identification, Documentation, Evaluation, and Further Context Study” above, there are needs for further study that should be undertaken before sites other than the Centennial Baptist Church and Phillips County Courthouse can be fully evaluated in a special resource study for their potential to meet the criteria for inclusion in the national park system. This research should be initiated by entities outside the National Park Service.

In particular, further analysis is needed to determine the existence of any resources that may have an association with the Elaine Massacre and whether they could be considered nationally significant. Like the Hoop Spur Church site, other sites related to the Elaine Massacre, including the killing fields and possible burial sites, have never been evaluated for their historical significance or integrity. If further research and documentation is undertaken, evaluation of the killing fields, potential burial sites of massacre victims, and buildings and structures in southern Phillips County and northern Desha County possibly connected to the massacre should be surveyed. Research is ongoing on potential burial sites.

Sites in Elaine present at the time of the massacre should be studied for their potential role in the events. The former Lee Grocery Store, on the northwest corner of Main Street and Highway 44, is one of the few remaining buildings that was present at the time of the massacre and is visible in photos from the events. Other sites may be identified using historic photographs or primary sources. Research is needed into what role it or other buildings in Elaine played in the Elaine Massacre events.

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<sup>110</sup> See Appendix B for affiliated area criteria. National commemorative site is a designation bestowed on a case-by-case basis by Congress and does not have criteria.

As described in “Existing Conditions,” the landscape of southern Phillips County has experienced changes in the last 100 years, though the landscape remains rural. Consideration of the integrity of the historic cultural landscape in the Elaine area or southern Phillips County as one might a battlefield, or an evocative landscape like that at Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in eastern Maryland, has not been undertaken. The killing fields of the massacre stretched over about 50 miles of southern Phillips and northern Desha Counties.<sup>111</sup>

As noted in “National Significance,” sites associated with *Moore v. Dempsey* have not been studied to determine if any sites that remain are nationally significant for their relationship to the case. The Phillips County Courthouse has the potential to be found nationally significant for that connection. In addition, the Hargraves-Solomon Building in Helena-West Helena is related to the case. It served as offices for the appointed white lawyers in the trials, though the lawyers who took the case through appeals worked elsewhere. It is a contributing building to the NRHP-listed Cherry Street Historic District.<sup>112</sup> Two houses where black defense attorney Scipio Jones lived in Little Rock remain: 1911 Pulaski Street, where he lived during his work on the Elaine appeals, and his more stylish later home at 1872 Cross Street, built in 1928. The Cross Street home is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and on Preserve Arkansas’s 2019 list of most endangered historic properties in Arkansas.<sup>113</sup> There may be other sites yet to be identified that are associated with the case—further research is needed.

## Recommendation: Existing NPS Programs

Finally, some existing NPS programs could be useful to the resources considered in this reconnaissance survey. Centennial Baptist Church is a national historic landmark, and as such, has access to technical assistance from NPS staff. The Save America’s Treasures grant program provides preservation and/or conservation assistance to nationally significant historic properties and collections. Grants are awarded through a competitive process and require a dollar-for-dollar, nonfederal match, which can be cash or documented in-kind. It is likely that if matching monies and in-kind donations could be identified that Centennial Baptist Church could once again compete successfully for these funds.

The NPS African American Civil Rights Grant Program documents, interprets, and preserves sites and stories related to the African American struggle to gain equal rights as citizens in the 20th century. This competitive grant program provides grants to states, tribes, local governments (including Certified Local Governments), and nonprofits for a broad range of planning, development, and research projects for historic sites. Through this program, the National Park Service has awarded over \$12 million in funding for 51 projects in 24 states. The program has two categories: physical preservation projects and history projects. Grants fund a broad range of planning, development, and research projects for historic sites including: survey, inventory, documentation, interpretation, education, architectural services, historic structure reports, preservation plans, and “bricks and mortar” repair and must be associated with the African American civil rights movement of the 20th century. Previously awarded grants include state, county, and city level civil rights site identification surveys. An agency or organization could apply for African American Civil Rights Grant funding to identify sites pertaining to the civil rights movement in the Arkansas Delta or to identify sites associated with *Moore v. Dempsey*.

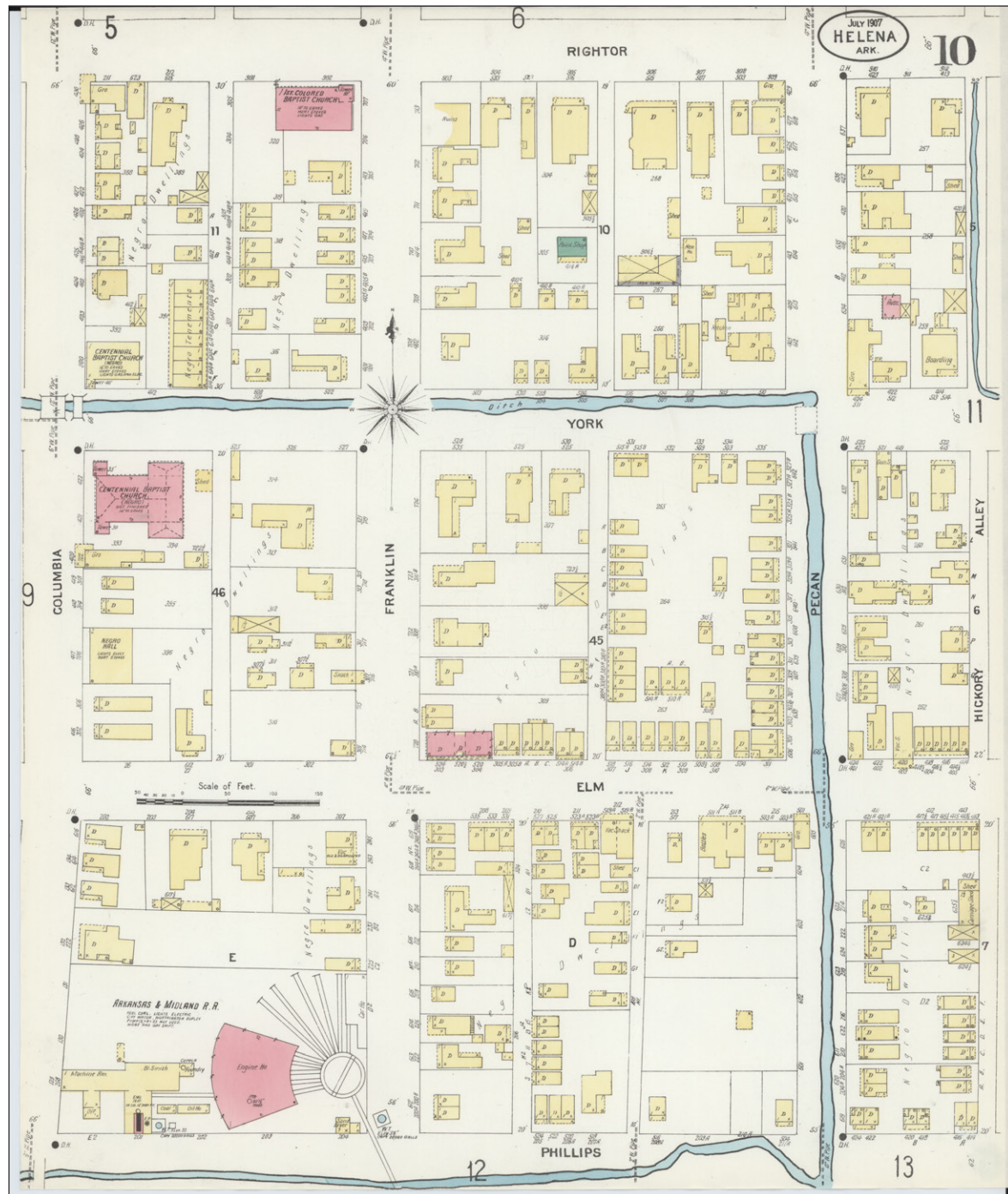
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<sup>111</sup> Whitaker, 126.

<sup>112</sup> National Register of Historic Places, “Cherry Street Historic District, Helena, Phillips County, Arkansas”, National Register #26143097.

<sup>113</sup> Cheryl Griffith Nichols, “Scipio A. Jones House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, National Register #99000545, Listed May 28, 1999.

The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation through grants of technical assistance. Technical assistance could facilitate the creation of interpretive installations and programs along the existing Delta Heritage Trail or elsewhere in the community. Project applicants may be state and local agencies, tribes, nonprofit organizations, or citizen groups. National Parks and other federal agencies may apply in partnership with other local organizations.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Helena showing Centennial Baptist Church, Arkansas, July 1907.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A: Reconnaissance Survey Request Letter and Response

<p><b>RICK CRAWFORD</b> 1ST DISTRICT, ARKANSAS</p> <p>COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE CHAIRMAN OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON FARM COMMODITIES AND RISK MANAGEMENT</p> <p>COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE</p>	<p><b>Congress of the United States</b> House of Representatives 2-122 Rayburn Building Washington, DC 20515</p> <p>July 23, 2018</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> WASHINGTON, DC 2422 RAYBURN HOB WASHINGTON, DC 20515 PHONE: 202-225-4076 FAX: 202-225-5602</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> JONESBORO 2400 EAST HIGHLAND SUITE 300 JONESBORO, AR 72401 PHONE: 870-203-0540 FAX: 870-203-0542</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CABOT 112 SOUTH FIRST STREET CABOT, AR 72003 PHONE: 501-843-3043 FAX: 501-843-4955</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> MOUNTAIN HOME 1001 HIGHWAY 62 EAST SUITE 9 MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72653 PHONE: 870-424-2075 FAX: 870-424-3149</p> <p>WWW.CRAWFORD.HOUSE.GOV</p>
<p>Dan Smith Acting Director National Park Service 1849 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20240</p> <p>Acting Director Smith,</p> <p>I write to request that the National Park Service conduct a reconnaissance survey of Centennial Baptist Church, the Hoops Spur Church, and other sites pertaining to the Civil Rights Movement in the Arkansas Delta to determine their significance and suitability as a National Historic Park.</p> <p>The Arkansas Delta was host to slavery, reconstruction, sharecropping, and ultimately the Civil Rights movement. Several sites in Phillips County in Arkansas encompass various episodes of that wider history. The Hoops Spur Church in Elaine was witness to the beginning of one of the worst incidents of racial violence in American history, and the terror of the Jim Crow era. Another church, Centennial Baptist in Helena, was pastored by Reverend E.C. Morris, and played a critical role in local, state, national and international affairs of Black Baptists, Social Justice, and the progression of African Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.</p> <p>The church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 2003. Hoops Spur Church and the Elaine Massacre have never come to prominence, except in local media, despite its place in American history.</p> <p>Phillips County residents view both churches, and other sites in the area, as community symbols and vital pieces of local history. The interpretive story that could be told through both churches and other sites in the area has national importance.</p> <p>With new tourism in the Mississippi Delta, and increasing interest and awareness of the history of the Civil Rights Movement, now is an appropriate time to explore opening a National Historic Park in the Arkansas Delta. I hope you will give all due consideration to this request. For any additional information, please contact Jay Campbell in my office at (202) 225-4076. I look forward to your reply.</p> <p>Sincerely,  Rick Crawford MEMBER OF CONGRESS</p>		



## United States Department of the Interior

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

AUG 09 2018

The Honorable Rick Crawford  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Crawford:

Thank you for your letter of July 23, 2018, requesting that the National Park Service (NPS) conduct a reconnaissance survey of Centennial Baptist Church, the Hoops Spur Church, and other sites pertaining to the Civil Rights movement in the Arkansas Delta.

I am pleased to inform you that the NPS will conduct the requested reconnaissance survey. The survey will determine if Centennial Baptist Church and the Hoops Spur Church merit further consideration as a potential unit of the National Park System through a Congressionally-authorized special resource study. Given that expenditures for such reconnaissance surveys by law may not exceed \$25,000, the survey may not be able to evaluate all sites pertaining to the Civil Rights movement in the Arkansas Delta region; however, it will incorporate other related sites to the extent feasible. A summary report on the survey findings will be prepared and sent to your office once the transmittal review process is complete.

Given existing workloads, the reconnaissance survey will likely not begin until late fall/winter 2018. The length of time for any survey project is dependent on the complexity of the site(s) and available staff resources.

Thank you for your continued interest in, and support for, the NPS. The NPS Midwest Regional Office will provide the overall direction of the study team assigned to the project. Please contact Mr. Tokey Boswell, Chief, Planning and Compliance Division, should you have further questions regarding the reconnaissance survey process. Mr. Boswell can be reached via email at [Tokey\\_Boswell@nps.gov](mailto:Tokey_Boswell@nps.gov) or at 402-661-1534.

Sincerely,

P. Daniel Smith  
Deputy Director  
Exercising the Authority of the Director

cc: Regional Director, Midwest Region

## Appendix B: Criteria for Inclusion

### National Park Service Management Policies 2006

#### 1.3 Criteria for Inclusion

Congress declared in the national park system General Authorities Act of 1970 that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation. The National Park Service is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress. Several laws outline criteria for units of the national park system and for additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trails System.

To receive a favorable recommendation from the Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources.

##### 1.3.1 National Significance

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is nationally significant. An area will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following criteria:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the national historic landmarks criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65 (*Code of Federal Regulations*).

### 1.3.2 Suitability

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

### 1.3.3 Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the Service considers a variety of factors for a study area, such as the following:

- size
- boundary configurations
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- landownership patterns
- public enjoyment potential
- costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- access
- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- staffing requirements
- local planning and zoning
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

An overall evaluation of feasibility will be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values.

#### **1.3.4 Direct NPS Management**

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities, and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status.

Studies will evaluate an appropriate range of management alternatives and will identify which alternative or combination of alternatives would, in the professional judgment of the Director, be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment. Alternatives for NPS management will not be developed for study areas that fail to meet any one of the four criteria for inclusion listed in section 1.3.

In cases where a study area's resources meet criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the Service may instead recommend an alternative status, such as "affiliated area." To be eligible for affiliated area status, the area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the Service and the nonfederal management entity. Designation as a "heritage area" is another option that may be recommended. Heritage areas have a nationally important, distinctive assemblage of resources that is best managed for conservation, recreation, education, and continued use through partnerships among public and private entities at the local or regional level. Either of these two alternatives (and others as well) would recognize an area's importance to the nation without requiring or implying management by the National Park Service.

## Appendix C: National Historic Landmark Criteria

36 CFR § 65.4 National Historic Landmark criteria.

The criteria applied to evaluate properties for possible designation as national historic landmarks or possible determination of eligibility for national historic landmark designation are listed below. These criteria shall be used by the National Park Service in the preparation, review, and evaluation of national historic landmark studies. They shall be used by the Advisory Board in reviewing national historic landmark studies and preparing recommendations to the Secretary. Properties shall be designated national historic landmark only if they are nationally significant. Although assessments of national significance should reflect both public perceptions and professional judgments, the evaluations of properties being considered for landmark designation are undertaken by professionals, including historians, architectural historians, archeologists, and anthropologists familiar with the broad range of the nation's resources and historical themes. The criteria applied by these specialists to potential landmarks do not define significance nor set a rigid standard for quality. Rather, the criteria establish the qualitative framework in which a comparative professional analysis of national significance can occur. The final decision on whether a property possesses national significance is made by the Secretary on the basis of documentation including the comments and recommendations of the public who participate in the designation process.

(a) Specific Criteria of National Significance: The quality of national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- (1) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or
- (2) That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
- (3) That represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
- (4) That embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) That are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or

(6) That have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

(b) Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not eligible for designation. Such properties, however, will qualify if they fall within the following categories:

(1) A religious property deriving its primary national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

(2) A building or structure removed from its original location but which is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit, or for association with persons or events of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or

(3) A site of a building or structure no longer standing but the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or

(4) A birthplace, grave or burial if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building, or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists; or

(5) A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event; or

(6) A reconstructed building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived; or

(7) A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance; or

(8) A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance.

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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 historic 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 US administration.

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# Reconnaissance Survey of Selected Civil Rights Sites in Phillips County, Arkansas

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