

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: George Berry Washington Memorial

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: State Highway 149

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Earle

vicinity: X

state: AR county: Crittenden code: AR 035 zip code: 72331

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
<u>3</u>	_____	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Clayton H. Slater
Signature of certifying official

6-21-97
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
5. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

_____ removed from the National Register _____

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: FUNERARY

Sub: Graves/burials

Current: FUNERARY

Sub: Graves/burials

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Neoclassical

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation STONE/Marble roof N/A
 walls Marble sculpture other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: National.

Applicable National Register Criteria: B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): C

Areas of Significance: AGRICULTURE
ART

Period(s) of Significance: 1900-1928

Significant Dates: 1928

Significant Person(s): Washington, George Berry

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
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Acreege of Property: Less than one

Table with 6 columns: UTM References, Zone Easting, Northing, Zone Easting, Northing. Rows A, B, C, D with numerical values and underlines.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The funerary statue and associated resources whose boundaries form a circle with a radius of 50 feet centered on the main statue located on the mound known as the Berry Cemetery.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Mark Christ, Public Information Officer/AHPP Staff

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 06/09/94

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR Zip: 72201

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Summary

The George Berry Washington Memorial consists of a large funerary monument set within a rectangular area surrounded by a low concrete wall. It features two elaborate 36-inch columns connected by a decorative threshold that forms an entryway to the grave site, all of which sits atop a low mound.

Elaboration

The George Berry Washington Memorial, located north of Earle on Highway 149, consists of a funerary monument within a low-walled area and features two elaborate 36-inch columns forming an entryway to the grave site, which sits atop a low mound.

The monument is a figure of a female angel, approximately five feet tall, standing atop a monolithic marble base, which in turn stands on a pair of marble blocks of graduated sizes, both of which collectively rise to a height of about 6 feet. The robed figure's proper right hand is extended forward at the waist with its palm upward and holding a flower. Its proper left hand is resting atop a garlanded tree stump.

The front of the base features a masonic symbol and is inscribed "REV. GEORGE B. WASHINGTON/DEC. 25, 1864/AUG. 30, 1928/HALLELUJAH! TIS DONE./I BELIEVE IN THE SON./I AM SAVED BY THE BLOOD/OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE." There is a blank oval form in the center of the base that may have contained a photograph at some point.

A small marble slab inscribed "FATHER AND HUSBAND" lies flush with the ground in front of the monument.

The columns that create an entryway are located about 12 feet to the southeast of the monument and flank two eight-foot-wide steps that lead to the grave site; the top step is inscribed G.B. WASHINGTON. The columns feature a wide cap with a dentil course running around the cap's bottom. They curve slightly inward and are carved with leaf and garland designs; each also features a prominent letter "W". They flow away from each other with a curving leaf design that ends in a rectangular section that is carved with geometric shapes. These entry ways then lead into a low stone wall that surrounds the entire grave site, an area about 25 feet square.

The George Berry Washington Memorial is located atop a one-meter-tall mound in a cultivated

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field outside Earle. (Archeological testing at the site revealed no evidence that the mound has any but a natural origin.) It is overgrown with weeds, but remains in fair condition.

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Summary

Criteria B and C, local significance
(Criteria Consideration C)

The George Berry Washington Memorial, located north of Earle on Highway 149, is the sole extant historic resource associated with George Berry Washington, a successful African-American landowner, farmer, businessman, and preacher. It is also the sole example in Earle and all of Crittenden County of a sculptural funerary monument.

Elaboration

George Washington, Jr., was likely born into slavery, the son of George Washington and Hanna Washington, on December 25, 1864.¹ His parents were both born in Kentucky and were possibly the slaves of James G. Berry, one of Crittenden County's largest landowners who moved to Arkansas from Kentucky as early as 1833.

Little is known about his early years, though census data lists his occupation as "laborer" in 1870 and 1880. In May 1883, Washington -- who now went by the name George Berry Washington -- married 18-year-old Ella Rostelle. They had a daughter, Elizabeth, in 1886 and a second daughter, Irene, in 1891. In 1897, Washington married a second time (no information survives concerning the fate of his first wife); his new bride was 25-year-old Lula Wright of Tennessee.

George Berry Washington began his rise to becoming the owner of one of the largest landowners in Crittenden County with the November 1893 purchase 40 acres in Section 15 of Township 8 North, Range 6 East, for \$200. In 1898, he acquired an additional 70 acres, and also operated a cotton gin. By 1900 he had increased his landholdings to a total of 176.63 acres worth \$1,140. In addition, he owned 15 cattle, 10 horses and mules, 10 hogs, a pair of carriages or wagons, and a gold or silver watch. "Washington's growing status as a landholder was becoming evident, as of the 2,008 farms in Crittenden County at that time, only 102 were equal to or larger in size

¹ There is some confusion over Washington's birth date. The Ninth U.S. Census for 1870 lists a son for George Washington as being a 12-year-old born in Mississippi; the 1880 census included a George Washington, Jr., age 20, born in Arkansas. The December 25, 1864, date was listed on his 1883 marriage license. (Klinger, Timothy C., et al, Berry Cemetery and George Washington Berry (research report). 1983, pp. 168-171.)

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than his own."²

By the turn of the century, Washington and his family lived where the Tyronza River meets Gibson Bayou in an area that became know as the "Main Place" and where the George Berry Washington Memorial is now located. His holdings at the "Main Place" eventually contained a total of 518.20 acres.

By 1905, Washington owned 477.30 acres worth \$2,760 and had personal belongings valued at \$1,490. By 1911, he owned 923.53 acres worth \$10,690. "The size of Washington's land holdings (at the time of the 1910 Census) placed him in the very top level of the county's landowners as only eight other farms equalled or exceeded his in size that year."³

Two years of bad weather in 1912-13 forced Washington place all of his land up for collateral for a \$12,000 loan in 1914; however, good crops in 1915 allowed him to increase his total acreage to 1,006.08 and purchase a pianoforte for his living room. In 1917, Washington's personal assets totaled \$2,710 and he purchased an automobile.

Washington paid off his 1914 loan in 1921 and increased his total holdings to 1,042.71 acres worth \$17,780; he bought a second car in 1925. His land acquisitions peaked in 1927 at a total of 1,145.08 acres valued at \$20,900.

Washington's major holdings, in addition to the 518.20-acre "Main Place," were the Chatfield Plantation with 146.18 acres, the 160-acre Marrison Place, the 20-acre Harding Place, and another 160 acres at the Dunning Place.⁴

Washington managed part of his vast holdings through the share-cropping system, with 12 chattel mortgages in 1923. It is likely that he also employed from 60 to 100 other hands to farm other sections of his property. "Even though no records exist from his farming operation, the presence of such a sizeable work force alone would indicate the extent of his farm's economic activity."⁵

² Klinger, p. 174.

³ Klinger, p. 176.

⁴ LeeDecker, Charles H., Iroquois Research Institute report to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District, Feb. 26, 1980.

⁵ Klinger, p. 180.

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The Washington Plantation featured a rather modest one-story frame house for the family, a commissary store, and a cotton gin that reportedly exploded in the 1920s, causing two deaths, as well as numerous outbuildings, tenant houses, and related structures. None of these are currently extant, however.

George Berry Washington's status as a large property owner was mirrored not only in his extensive personal belongings, but also in his social activities. He became a member of the local Prince Hall Freemasonry chapter and bought land in 1902 with two other individuals and Tyronza Lodge No. 197 in Norvell, the black residential area north of Earle, possibly as a lodge site. The extent of Washington's Masonic activities is unknown, but a masonic emblem embellishes the front of his funereal monument.

He was also active in several local churches. He served as a preacher at St. Peter's Baptist Church, located a few miles north of the "Main Place," and at the Spring Hill Church three miles east of his home. He also was known to engage in preaching sessions to farm hands gathered at his home. Washington deeded five acres in 1919 for the Gibson Bayou Cemetery and Pentecostal Church Association. The title "Rev." also appears on his monument.

Early on the afternoon of August 30, 1928, Washington became ill and collapsed. By 3 p.m., he was dead of "acute gastritis." He was buried September 2, 1928 on a mound at the "Main Place" where "his wife could keep watch on him" from their family home.

Elizabeth Washington attempted to continue the farming operations in 1929, but the advent of the Great Depression that year forced Lula Washington and her stepdaughters to borrow nearly \$28,000. They defaulted on the loan and, on March 7, 1932, Prudential Insurance Company of America sold the "Main Place" at auction to satisfy the 1929 note. "With the sale of these lands, the George Berry Washington farming enterprise ceased to exist."⁶

George Berry Washington rose from humble beginnings as a laborer and the son of slaves to become one of the most successful landowners and farmers in Crittenden County. As the last extant historic resource associated with this remarkable businessman, the George Berry Washington Memorial is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B.

The George Berry Washington Memorial is also eligible under Criterion C as the best example

⁶ Klinger, p. 183.

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in Earle and, in fact, all of Crittenden County of a sculptural grave marker. A state-wide survey of outdoor sculpture conducted by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program revealed only four sculptures in the entire county and the George Berry Washington Memorial was the sole example in the county of sculptural funerary art. Its graceful angel, clasping a single flower in its hand, also inspired noted Delta artist Carroll Cloar, an Earle native, to produce a painting titled "Angel in a Thorn Patch."

The George Berry Washington Memorial meets the requirements of Criterion Exception C, regarding birthplaces and graves, by virtue of its status as the last standing structure of any kind associated with Washington, a man with outstanding importance within his local area, and his myriad activities in and around the "Main Place."

It should also be noted that, while this nomination does not address Criterion D, the George Washington Berry Memorial is located on a site that was an occupation locus during the Late Archaic, Woodland and Mississippian Periods; it also contains evidence of Parkin Phase occupation. Future archeological investigation would probably supply sufficient evidence to justify the nomination of a larger area surrounding this sites for its prehistoric cultural significance.

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Bibliography

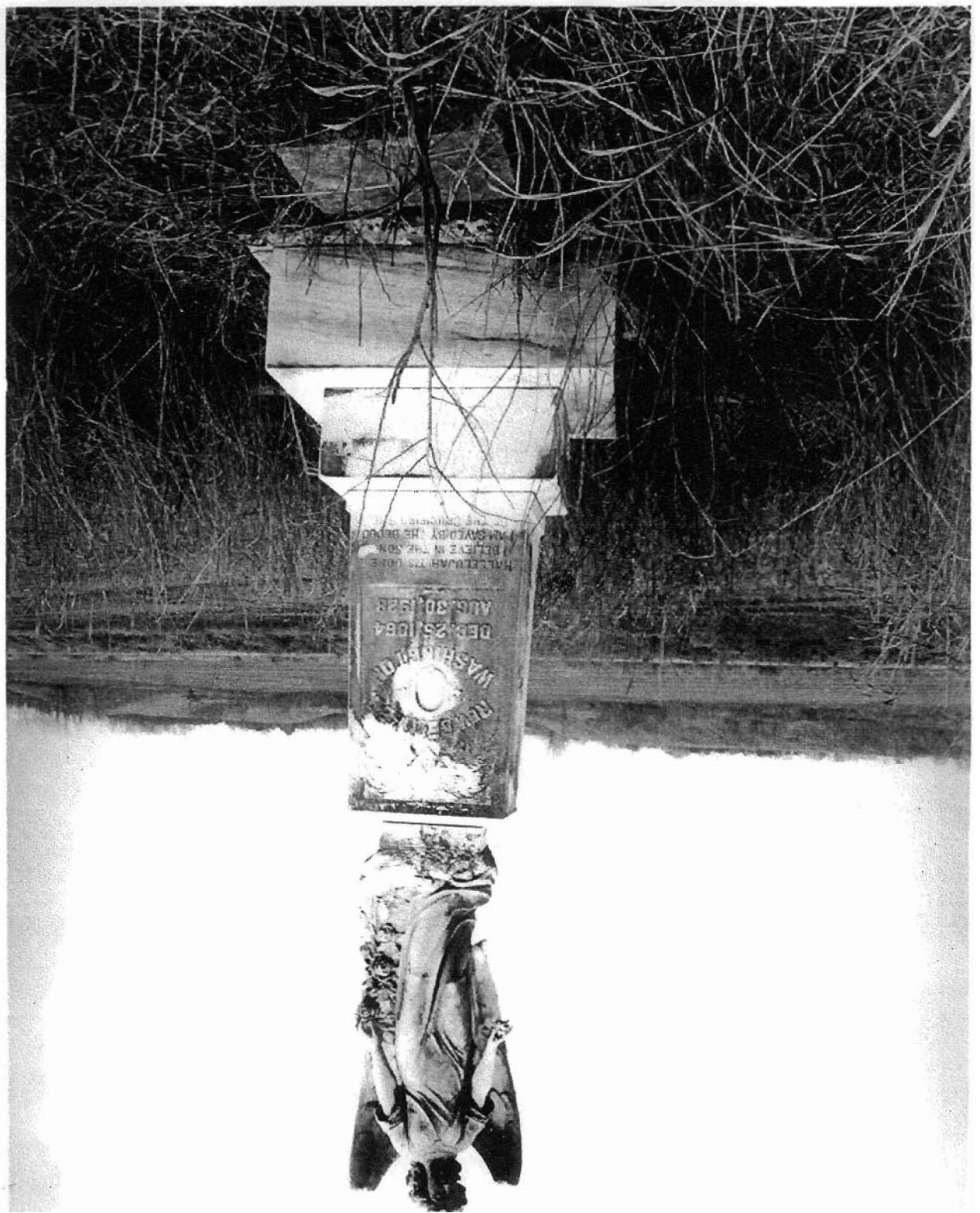
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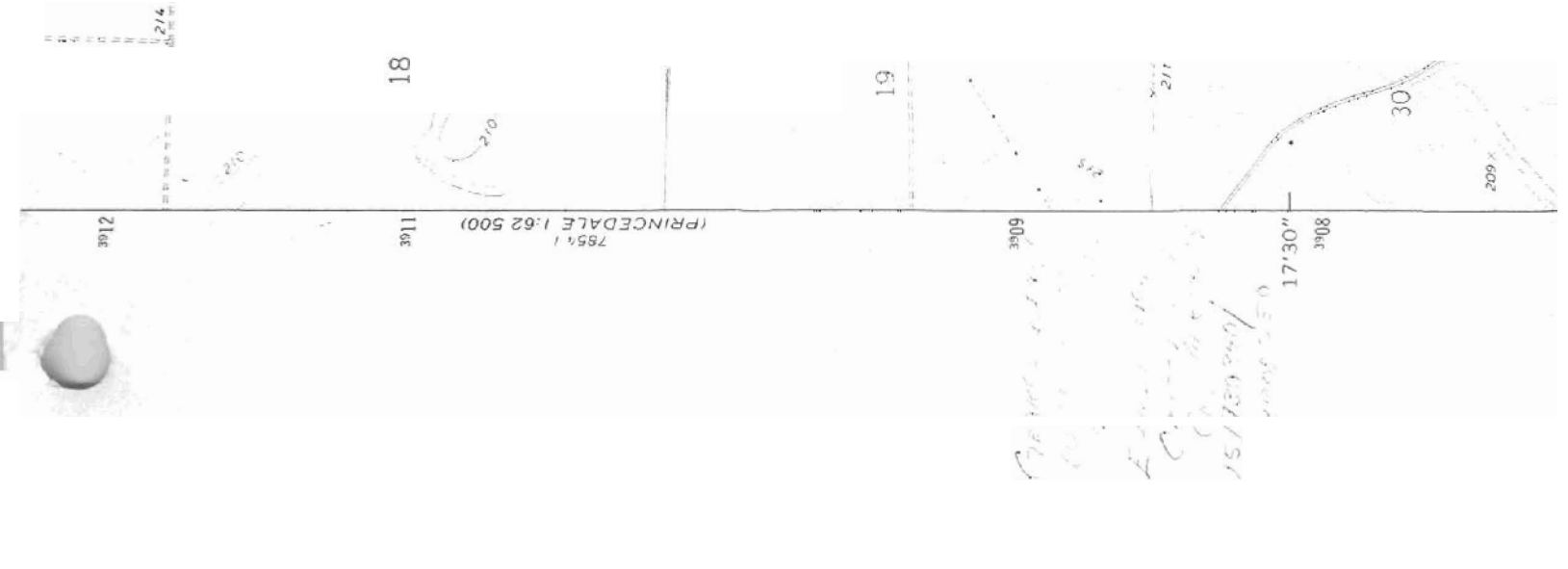




REV. GEORGE WASHINGTON

DEC. 25, 1864
AUG. 30, 1928

HALLELUJAH! 'TIS DONE
I BELIEVE IN THE SON
I AM SAVED BY THE BLOOD
OF THE CRUCIFIED ONE



Gibson River
 Lewis Lake
 Cane 202 Lake
 15/12/39 map
 17:30"