

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NR LISTED

MAY 28 1999

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**AHPP**

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**1. Name of Property**

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Historic Name: Bush-Dubisson House

Other Name/Site Number: Alpha House/PU9826

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**2. Location**

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Street & Number: 1500 South Ringo Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Little Rock

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR

County: Pulaski

Code: 119

Zip Code: 72202

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Bush-Dubisson House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historically Black Properties in Little Rock's Dunbar School Neighborhood

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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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Bush-Dubisson House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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**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

Bush-Dubisson House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic: DOMESTIC  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sub: Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current: SOCIAL  
COMMERCE/TRADE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sub: Meeting Hall  
Sub: Professional  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification:

Prairie School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Other/Tile  
walls Brick other \_\_\_\_\_  
Stucco

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

SUMMARY

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

ELABORATION

The Bush-Dubisson House exhibits all of the classic characteristics of the Prairie style: a low-pitched, hipped roof with widely overhanging, boxed eaves; two stories, with one-story porches; details that emphasize the horizontal lines of the house; and large, square porch columns.

The massing of the house is asymmetrical. The main (east) facade is dominated by a nearly square two-story, hipped-roofed section that comprises the main block of the house. On the south side is a smaller two-story, hipped-roofed wing that is set back about half the depth of the main section. Projecting off the rear (west) of the main section is another two-story, hipped-roofed wing. Tile is the roofing material used on all of these two-story portions of the house.

A flat-roofed, one-story porch spans the front of the main block of the house while a flat-roofed, one-story sunroom occupies the space between the main block and the south wing. The primary entrance to the house is from the front porch; a secondary entrance opens into the sunroom. The one-story porch and sunroom, along with a low wall encircling a terrace that connects them, serve to reinforce the horizontal emphasis of the home's design. Additional one-story sections, one clad in stucco and another that is brick-veneered, are situated at the northwest corner of the house, between the main block and the rear wing. These sections, containing the breakfast room and kitchen, might be mistaken for additions but are original to the house.

The Bush-Dubisson House does not have the horizontal bands of casement windows that often are a prominent component of the Prairie style, but groups of three windows are found on the second story directly above the front porch, on the south side of the sunroom, and on the first floor at the rear of the main block's north facade. The sunroom windows are metal jalousies (replacements, perhaps for the casements that would be expected in a 1920s sunroom), and there are casement windows in what originally was a second-story sleeping porch at the rear of the house. Otherwise, all of the windows in the Bush-Dubisson House have double-hung sashes in a six-over-one configuration.

Most of the Bush-Dubisson House is veneered in brick, but stucco is used on the one-story section that encloses the breakfast room and on the second story of the rear wing. A single brick chimney, serving a fireplace in the living room, rises through the roofline on the north side of the house near the front corner.

The house has two exterior stairways, one on the north side that was added when the house became a duplex (at the same time, the original interior staircase was removed) and another in the rear that was part of a renovation that adapted the house to its current use as the headquarters of a fraternity on the first floor and rental office space on the second. The back porch also was altered during the renovation, when extensive water damage at the rear of the house had to be repaired. Otherwise, the exterior of the Bush-Dubisson House is largely unchanged.

A concrete slab in the back yard is all that remains of a two-story, stucco-clad garage that was built to accommodate two cars on the ground

Bush-Dubisson House  
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floor with servant's quarters above.

The Prairie-style design of the exterior does not continue inside of the house, where there are few embellishments. The floors in all of the main rooms are oak, but the painted woodwork is quite plain. The living and dining rooms have cove ceilings, and a brick fireplace is centered on the north wall of the living room. Pairs of French doors separate the living room from the sunroom and the dining room. The sunroom's floor is tile, and the room is said to have originally contained a fountain.

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**8. Statement of Significance**  
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applicable National Register Criteria: B and C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage/Black  
Architecture  
Commerce  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1925-1952

Significant Dates: 1925

Significant Person(s): Daniel J. Dubisson  
Aldridge E. Bush

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Wiggins, S. E. (builder)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

## SUMMARY

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

## ELABORATION

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

The house at 1500 Ringo was the second in the block built for A. E. Bush. The first one, a smaller Craftsman-style design, was the work of the architectural firm of Thompson and Harding. It was constructed about 1919 at 1516 Ringo and is listed in the National Register as the Bush House [NR 11/22/82]. The four houses on the west side of the 1500 block of Ringo Street often are said to comprise the "Bush Block" because all of them were built originally for members of the Bush family.

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

It was while the Dubissons lived at 1500 Ringo that the house became known as "the hub of social events in that area," as well as the "ideal" residence that young African Americans wished they could have—or at least

could visit. Its architectural style and the quality of its construction materials set it apart from all of its neighbors, as did its expansive lawn—which was maintained during the Dubisson era by a "yardman" who lived above the two-car garage. At a time when even famous African Americans were barred from Little Rock's best downtown hotels, the Bush-Dubisson House provided overnight accommodations for Marian Anderson and other notables.

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

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Bush, Alice Saville. Widow of A. E. Bush's nephew. Little Rock, Arkansas. Interview, 3 June 1998.

*Insurance Maps of Little Rock, Arkansas*. Vol. I. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1939.

Lee, Geraldine Dubisson. Untitled paper on the life of Daniel Joy Dubisson, 1992.

Little Rock City Directories: 1925 through 1958.

Sykes, Curtis H. Historian and member of Alpha Phi Alpha. Little Rock, Arkansas. Interview, 19 June 1998.

Woods, E. M. *Blue Book of Little Rock and Argenta, Arkansas*. Little Rock: Central Printing Co., 1907.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.



Bush-Dubisson House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

- 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:

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

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	—	_____	_____	B
C	—	_____	_____	D

Verbal Boundary Description:

North 10 feet of lots 10 and all lots 11 and 12, Block 281, Original City of Little Rock

Boundary Justification:

The legal description of the Bush-Dubisson House property has remained unchanged since the house was built, making these boundaries appropriate for use in this nomination.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title:                     Cheryl Griffith Nichols/Consultant

Bush-Dubisson House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

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Organization: N/A

Date: August 5, 1998

Street & Number: 1721 S. Gaines St.

Telephone: 501-375-2686

City or Town: Little Rock

State: AR

ZIP: 72206