

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Trades Hall of National Training School for Women and Girls
other name/site number: Nannie Helen Burroughs School

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2. Location

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street & number: 601 50th St., N. E.

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Washington

vicinity: N/A

state: DC county: _____ code: 001 zip code: 20019

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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6. Function or Use
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Historic: Education

Sub: School

Current : Religion

Sub: national headquarters

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
stripped Renaissance

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Slag
walls Brick other _____

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

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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: national

Applicable National Register Criteria: _____

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: Education, intermediate and secondary
Development of equal educational opportunities
Vocational training

Period(s) of Significance: 1928-1971

Significant Dates: 1928

Significant Person(s): Burroughs, Nannie Helen

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder: Thomas M. Medford

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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:

- _ State historic preservation office
_ Other state agency
_X Federal agency
_ Local government
_ University
_ Other -- Specify Repository: National Archives, Library of Congress

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: 6 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Table with 4 columns: A, B, C, D. Values include 18, 332620, 4306810 and blank lines.

See continuation sheet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

Trades Hall

Page # 1

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The Trades Hall was built in 1927-1928 and dedicated on 16 December 1928.¹⁵ Mary McLeod Bethune was the featured speaker at the dedication ceremony.¹⁶ It replaced the original classroom building which was destroyed by fire on 26 May 1926. Burroughs envisioned the building as a model for other schools. It contained twelve classrooms, three offices, an assembly area, and a print shop. The third floor of the structure was never completed, however the walls for the third floor were constructed to sill level in anticipation of adding the third floor at a later date. This never happened. The building served its original purpose until construction of the new classroom and administration building in 1971. It is presently used as the headquarters of the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

The building is a symmetrical rectangle of light colored brick with simple, renaissance inspired brick trim. The main entrance is on the second floor in the wider, taller center bay and is marked by brick quoins. This use of quoins is interesting; it clearly indicates that the second floor is the primary floor, but inverts the order of the Renaissance prototype which would always place the heavier elements of rustication on the base, not the upper floor. A string course of vertical brick stretchers divides the two floors and two rows of brick headers mark where the architrave would be of a crowning entablature. The single pane sash windows have brick sills and crowns. All of the elevations have odd numbers of bays and prominence given to the center bay. The center bay of the rear elevation demarcates the stair hall with windows at half floor level and gable rising above the roof line.

To achieve the design of the second floor as the main floor, the building had to be set into the crown of the hill upon which it is situated. This appears to be the original site plan as a Permit to Excavate was issued on 29 October 1927. This building was quite different from the other buildings of the school, which from evidence of early photographs were similar in form, style, and materials to vernacular domestic buildings. The Trades Hall is clearly a public building with overt associations to the classical tradition of public buildings in Washington, D.C. and the rest of the nation.

In 1987 a concrete and steel portico with stairs and ramps, for handicapped accessibility, was added to the front elevation. It is clearly an addition that could not be confused for part of the original fabric of the building, which does not alter so much as block.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 1

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Trades Hall was the main classroom building of the National Training School for Women and Girls, founded by Nannie Helen Burroughs in 1909. The Nannie Helen Burroughs School uniquely brought together a combination of educational opportunities for young black women and girls. The school offered academic training equivalent to the upper grades of high school and community college classes, religious instruction, training in domestic arts and vocations. It also had a boarding facility. The Nannie Helen Burroughs School was the first in American history to offer all these opportunities within a single school. It was the first educational institution that has ever gained national scope and prominence almost wholly on Negro contributions and under Negro management.¹ Unlike other late nineteenth and early twentieth century schools for black students such as the Tuskegee Institute, the curriculum of the National Training School emphasized a strong scholastic and religious background as well as a practical education in manual skills. The national importance of the school during the 1920's and 1930's is demonstrated by support from such luminaries as Oscar De Priest, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Herbert Hoover.² Within the context of the National Historic Landmarks program thematic framework, The National Training School for Women and Girls has national significance under theme: XXVII. Education, (B) Intermediate and Secondary 5. Development of Equal Education Opportunities (F) Vocational Training. The national significance of Nannie Helen Burroughs and the Trades Hall will be recognized in a new exhibit, "From Parlor to Politics", opening at the Smithsonian Institution in June 1990. The chair and desk that Burroughs used at the National Training School is part of this exhibit which focuses on women in the progressive era.

Although similar to the Tuskegee Institute, the Burroughs School did not just train students in home economics, it also offered programs in the trades and in missionary work. Furthermore, the Burroughs School was supported by many small contributions from the black community, and not as Tuskegee by philanthropists, many of whom were white.

In response to the national demand for workers who had had the benefit of a vocational education, Burroughs provided academic training for black women and also provided training in various vocational fields. The school printed a newspaper, operated a laundry, as well as a practice school for adult domestic service workers. It was also the homebase for the National Association of Wage Earners, an organization established by Burroughs in the 1920's to promote the interests of black wage earners.

The significance of the school extended not only from its efforts to train black women to respond to the labor needs of urbanized and industrialized America, and the employment opportunities it provided to potential domestics, but also from its

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 2

operation of a commercial laundry. With the growth of the commercial laundry industry, Burroughs' graduates were firmly in place to fill any number of positions in this newly-developed business.

Born in Orange, Virginia, in 1878, Burroughs attended the M Street High School in Washington, D.C. Although she had hoped to teach domestic arts in the District of Columbia public school system after graduation, she did not receive a teaching appointment.³ In 1900, Burroughs accepted a position as editorial secretary and book keeper to the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. While living there, Burroughs founded the Women's Industrial Service Club, which provided her with an opportunity to teach. The club offered night classes through which students, mostly women who had day jobs, learned the basics of office work and domestic sciences. Burroughs' involvement with the womens' club movement is not surprising, as the club movement in general stressed the importance of education for women.⁴ Her experience in Louisville served as a training ground for her later work at the National Training School.

During the period 1900-1909, Burroughs was especially active in the Baptist Church. She used her position, first as corresponding secretary for the Women's National Convention auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, and later as its president, to build the network which supplied most of the funds for establishing and operating the National Training School. Her prominence within the Women's Convention also gave Burroughs the opportunity to lobby for creation of the girls' school and for its location in the District of Columbia.

Burroughs first proposed creation of the National Training School to the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention in 1901. However, the Convention did not act on Burroughs' proposal until 1907, when it purchased a six acre parcel in the Lincoln Heights section of the District of Columbia to be used as a school campus.

Burroughs spent the next two years raising funds for the school. She did this through a series of speaking tours. Burroughs, who was widely known for her oratorical skills, was almost solely responsible for raising the funds necessary to open and operate the school. With the exception of a few large one-time donations (such as that given by the black female Richmond, Virginia banker Maggie L. Walker) and a few small donations made by white philanthropic organizations, the majority of funds were received as small donations made by a broad support base of black women and children. The small donations continued to be the main source of the National Training School's funds throughout the school's history. As historian Evelyn Brooks wrote: "For almost two decades black women, many without education themselves, had contributed regularly small amounts of money enclosed in barely literate letters of support. By giving 'pantry parties' collecting redeemable soap wrappers, and continually devising imaginative money-making ventures, black women across the nation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 3

worked to for the furtherance of their school."⁵ Burroughs' fund raising efforts were aimed at blacks, as "to her, the goal of economic self-reliance was the only guarantee for racial uplift and independence."⁶

The National Training School for Women and Girls held its first session in the fall of 1909. The curriculum focused on academic, professional, and religious education. This tripartite division of courses was epitomized in Burroughs' own reference to the school as "the school of the three B's -- Bible, Bath and Broom."⁷ Burroughs held a strong belief that academic subjects were as important to a student's as training for trade or profession. Furthermore, she believed that a religious education was necessary for right living. Her philosophy on education thus differed radically from that of the most prominent black male educator of the day, Booker T. Washington. Her philosophy of education also demonstrated her refusal to accept the limitations placed upon her by the unenlightened, racist, and sexist society which prevailed in the United States during the early part of the twentieth century. Burroughs was noted as well for her strong belief in the power of women and pride in her race. As Barnett remarked:

"Her attacks on male chauvinism and racism were seminal to the social activity and shibboleths of the 1960's and 1970's, and thus make her the more unique in terms of her own milieu."⁸

Due in part to Burroughs' background with Baptist Foreign Mission Board, The National Training School offered training program for missionaries and sunday school teachers. In 1909 the missionary training program was actively supported by the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, an organization made up northeastern and midwestern white women. During this period, the National Training School had fifteen students in the missionary program, five of whom were preparing for foreign work. In 1913, the missionary department, also called the Christian Social Service department, was further enhanced by access to the Baptist settlement house in DC known as the Centre. Burroughs was one of the chief administrators for the Centre, and she reported that it served as a "sociological experiment station" for her students. During the winter of 1914-1915, the Centre's soup kitchen fed 1,200 people, donated clothing, represented juvenile delinquents in court, offered classes as well as recreational activities.⁹

Despite her interests in missionary efforts, Burroughs was chiefly concerned with the solving the practical training problems of the many unemployed and unskilled American black women. She also "endeavored to give greater respectability and dignity to the vocations represented by the vast majority of black working women."¹⁰ By 1920, most of the diplomas the National Training School awarded were for the trades programs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 4

=====

The school operated as a private boarding school. Students enrolled not only from across the United States, but also from Canada, Africa, Haiti, and Puerto Rico. All students attended classes during the day. Although work was an important part of the students' experience at the school, work on campus was viewed as an obligation to the school and therefore, students were not compensated for their services. If a student needed income, she was allowed to work, usually by taking in piece work, after completing her first month at the school. Burroughs wanted her students to consider the jobs for which they were trained as skilled professions. This was especially important in light of the economic role which many black women played in their families during the first quarter of the twentieth century.¹¹ According to Barnett, "during the training school's first year of operation, approximately 54.7 percent of black women ten years of age and over were gainfully employed, as opposed to only 19.6 percent of comparable white women."¹²

The mission of the school changed over time. The original aims of the school were enumerated by a former student, who noted that:

"The school gives personal attention to the entire life of the girls--health manners, character and mind. Its training is designed to make the students clear of vision, alert in action, modest in deportment, skillful of hand, and industrious in life. Young women are trained to preside over and maintain well-ordered homes. The fiber of sturdy, moral, industrious, and intellectual womanhood is built in an atmosphere conducive to the development of the highest ideals."¹³

In the mid-1920's, Burroughs began training her students in trades which were not considered to be "women's work" such as shoe repair and dry cleaning. In 1929, the curriculum was again expanded to include a junior college teacher training course. That year, the school's name was changed to the National Trade and Professional School for Women and Girls. According to a 1930 school catalog, in addition to standard academic subjects students could learn social services, home making, domestic sciences and arts, dressmaking, handicrafts, power machine operation, public speaking, music, printing, and physical education.¹⁴

The school closed briefly in 1953, although it continued to hold an annual summer institute to train church women.¹⁵ In 1964, the school was renamed as the Nannie Helen Burroughs School. Today, it serves the Lincoln Heights neighborhood as a private elementary school.

From 1909 until her death in 1961, Burroughs served as president of the National Training School. However, she was constantly in demand as a speaker and was involved in numerous organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 5

NAACP, and the Association for the study of Negro Life and History. During the 1920's, she was president of the National Association of Wage Earners.¹⁶ In 1931, President Hoover appointed her to chair the National Committee on Negro Housing.¹⁷ During the Depression, she founded the Northeast Self-Help Cooperative (later renamed Cooperative Industries, Inc.).

In 1934, Burroughs began publishing The Worker, a quarterly focusing on missionary work. It is still published annually by the Nannie Helen Burroughs School. In addition, Burroughs wrote for several newspapers, especially the Afro-American and the Pittsburgh Courier.

The Trades Hall of the National Training School is the most appropriate building to represent the school and the work of Nannie Helen Burroughs. It is the only remaining building from the National Training School's most active period. The buildings in Louisville associated with her life and work are less appropriate because Burroughs' nine years in that city were a transitional period in her life. Burroughs lived on the campus of the National Training School, however, for fifty-two years, from 1909 until her death in May of 1961. Her house no longer exists, although one room of it has been recreated in the classroom and administration building of the Nannie Helen Burroughs School.

¹Sadie Iola Daniel, Women Builders (Washington, 1970) p. 122-123.

²Evelyn Brooks Barnett, "Nannie Burroughs and the Education of Black Women," in The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. (Port Washington, NY, 1978) p. 106. Nannie Helen Burroughs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³Barbara Sicherman, et. al., eds., Notable American Women: The Modern Era, Vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA, 1980) p. 126.

⁴Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York, 1984), p. 102.

⁵Evelyn Brooks., "The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920." Dissertation (Rochester, NY, 1984), p. 299.

⁶Barnett, p. 105.

⁷Daniel, p. 122

⁸Barnett, p. 108

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Trades Hall

Page # 6

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⁹Brooks, p. 207-208

¹⁰Brooks, p. 269.

¹¹Giddings, p. 103-104.

¹²Barnett, p. 99.

¹³Daniel, p. 122.

¹⁴Daniel, p. 122; 1930 National Trade and Professional School Catalog, National Trade and Professional School Scrapbooks, Nannie Helen Burroughs School, Washington, DC.

¹⁵National Training School Scrapbooks, Nannie Helen Burroughs School Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁶Rayford Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds., Dictionary of American Negro Biography (New York, 1982)

¹⁷ "Capital Woman Heads Home Body" Washington Star, 15 April 1931, D8.

¹⁸Daniel, p. 130.

¹⁹Trades Hall Dedication Program, Burroughs Papers.

²⁰Daniel, p. 130.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9

Trade Hall

Page # 1

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