

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: Marion Colored High School

other name/site number: Phelix School / CT0088

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2. Location

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street & number: W. of AR Hwy 77

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Sunset

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Crittenden code: AR 035 zip code: 72364

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta, 1870-1930

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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I, 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.

Cathryn A. Slater
Signature of certifying official

2-8-95
Date

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

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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

=====

6. Function or Use

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Historic: Education

Sub: School

Current : Education

Sub: School

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

N/A

Other Description: Plain Traditional

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Asphalt
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: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Education
Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period(s) of Significance: 1924-1945

Significant Dates: c. 1937

Significant Person(s): N/A

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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Summary

The Marion Colored High School is a single-story, U-shaped structure that was constructed in 1924 with the wing projections added later. The original section is constructed of load-bearing brick, while the wing additions are of frame construction with a matching brick veneer. With the exception of some window alterations, the building does not appear to have been altered since the historic additions. The interior is largely original and features high-mounted awning windows for ventilation. Located on Arkansas Highway 77 in Sunset, Crittenden County, the Marion Colored High School is the only structure included within the boundaries of this nomination.

Elaboration

Located on Arkansas Highway 77 in Sunset, Crittenden County, the Marion Colored High School was constructed in 1924 as a single-story, brick-constructed school from money provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Later, but prior to 1940, frame wings with a matching red-orange brick veneer were added to each side and extended to the rear, forming a U-shape. Both the main section and the additions rest upon a continuous poured concrete foundation. The main section of the school is covered by a flat-decked hip roof, and, while the wing projections also have a flat-deck section where they connect with the main section roof, the visible portion of the roof that projects to the rear is covered with conventional hipped roof. This conglomeration, including the front gabled dormer, is sheathed with red composition shingles. The original section contained two interior brick chimneys and the wings provided two additional brick chimneys.

The front, or eastern, elevation is defined by a central hipped-roof entrance porch and a gabled dormer projecting from the main roof slope directly above. The porch is supported by two brick columns and two matching brick pilasters. The floor and stoop are made of poured concrete, and a short brick wall connects each column to the pilaster on the two sides. Underneath, a double-leaf entrance with a five-pane transom is placed to the south. The doors are wood panelled with the upper half glazed with a divided light. Apparently, a matching entrance was originally located to the north. Currently, a pair of small one-over-one windows is situated within infilled brick; however, these windows could have been added during the historic period. The gabled dormer features a boxed eave with returns and a central Palladian louvered wood vent. Matching composition shingles cover the face and sides of the dormer. A group of six one-over-one windows fenestrate the wall area to either side of the entrance porch, though the windows are substantially shorter than the original openings and could have been added when the school was remodeled in 1955. The gap above the windows is filled with white-painted wood to match the color of the window frames. The front elevation of the two wing projections are blank.

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The north elevation of the school consists of the north wall of the wing projection, which is fenestrated by three pairs of one-over-one windows to the east, a recessed entrance, and two pairs of one-over-one windows to the west. Like the windows on the main section, the wing projection windows are shorter than the original openings. The recessed entrance contains double-leaf, eight-pane French doors with a ten-pane transom that is now boarded over.

The rear, or western, elevations of both wing projections are blank. The southern wall of the northern wing is fenestrated by two pairs of one-over-one windows with a single one-over-one window in the center. Unlike the front and northern elevations, these windows, though of the same size, fit the brick openings. The rear, or western, elevation of the main section was originally symmetrically arranged with a central single-leaf entrance with transom, a large window group on each side, and a pair of windows to the north and south respectively of the large window groups. All of these windows have the large openings, and the paired windows are simply boarded over. The two large groups have had the shorter one-over-one windows installed, and the group to the south contains a full allotment of five, while the northern group consists of only three with the balance filled in with the familiar white-painted wood. The northern wall of the southern wing is not fenestrated.

The southern elevation is composed of fourteen one-over-one windows and a recessed entrance that is identical to and opposite of its northern counterpart. All of the window openings are sized for the shorter windows, and all are in pairs with the exception of two single windows that are positioned between the pairs at eastern and western ends respectively (leaving two pairs to the west of the recessed entrance).

The interior of the building is largely unaltered. Features include beaded-board wainscoting, original slate blackboards, and a prolific use of high-mounted twelve-pane awning windows for ventilation.

Currently, the Marion Colored High School is used only for special activities by the adjacent nonhistoric elementary school which is not included within the boundaries of this nomination.

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Summary

The Marion Colored High School is being nominated under Criterion A with local significance as an amendment to the *Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta, 1870 - 1930* multiple property nomination.

Elaboration

The town of Sunset is located less than a half mile north of Marion and is situated largely between Arkansas Highway 77 and Interstate 55. Incorporated in 1970, Sunset is an African-American community that was once referred to as the Sunset Subdivision of Marion. Although it is not known how the community acquired its name, the present town of 571 people originated primarily as a residential area that grew in response to the segregated school facilities located there by the Marion School District.

In 1924, the nominated property was constructed from money provided from the Julius Rosenwald fund as the first school at Sunset for black students. The school term was divided into a two month summer session and seven month winter session and accommodated students through the eighth grade. Although the formation of a black high school was discussed for several years, little became of the idea. According to Louis Lane, Jr., in the mid-1930's, the school principal, George Weddle, was able to raise the school curriculum to include the ninth and tenth grades. In 1937, Weddle's successor, Walter McMillan, approached the Marion School Board to request another teacher, which was apparently the final delay in acquiring high school status. The board denied his request due to a stated lack of funds. Undeterred, McMillan countered with an offer to pay for the teacher and charge students for tuition if the board would grant the request to form a high school. The Marion School Board acquiesced upon the condition that McMillan raise \$1,000 to cover the teacher's salary for two years. McMillan then asked Louis Lane, Sr., who knew the people of the community well, to help solicit contributions from the people in denominations generally ranging from twenty-five cents to a dollar. With the aid of a letter from McMillan stating the goal of the fund drive, Lane was able to raise \$800 toward the high school. With this money, their goal was quickly realized, and the new high school was created.

The tuition to attend the new high school was set at eight dollars a year and admission was open to all students. In addition to Arkansas children, black students from Mississippi, Tennessee, and Missouri took advantage of this opportunity and received a degree from the Marion Colored High School. The first class graduated in 1938. Students were charged tuition until 1943.

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With the influx of new students, the school building was enlarged by the addition of two wings sometime prior to 1940. In 1955, the school district added 5.5 acres and constructed a grammar school. At this time, the original school was remodeled for its role as high school only. The building program also included an agriculture building and a gymnasium that was constructed in 1958 (this structure burned in 1964 and was replaced).

The school was renamed in honor of James Sebastian Phelix after his death. Phelix was a prominent Sunset resident who came to Arkansas from Louisiana and once owned about 400 acres of land near Waverly. He was active in Masonry and served as grand master of Negro Masons of Arkansas from 1922 to 1938. Phelix also established the Phelix Undertaking Company at Sunset in 1946.

The Marion Colored High School is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with both the Rosenwald Fund and the efforts to attain higher education for African Americans in Crittenden County. As such, it is being nominated as an amendment to the *Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta, 1870 - 1930* multiple property nomination.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Information submitted by Roberta Jackson and Louis Lane, Jr., May, 1994.

Woolfolk, Margaret. *A History of Crittenden County, Arkansas*. Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press Inc., 1991.

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

☐ 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

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>754720</u>	<u>3900980</u>	B	___	___	___
C	___	___	___	D	___	___	___

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of a line formed by, yet fifteen feet from the northern elevation of the school and the western edge of AR Hwy. 77, proceed west along said line to its intersection with a line formed by, yet fifteen feet from, the western, or rear, elevation of the school; thence proceed south along said line to its intersection with a line formed by, yet fifteen feet from, the southern elevation of the school; thence proceed east along said line to its intersection with the western edge of AR Hwy. 77; thence proceed northwesterly along the edge of the highway to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, Architectural Historian

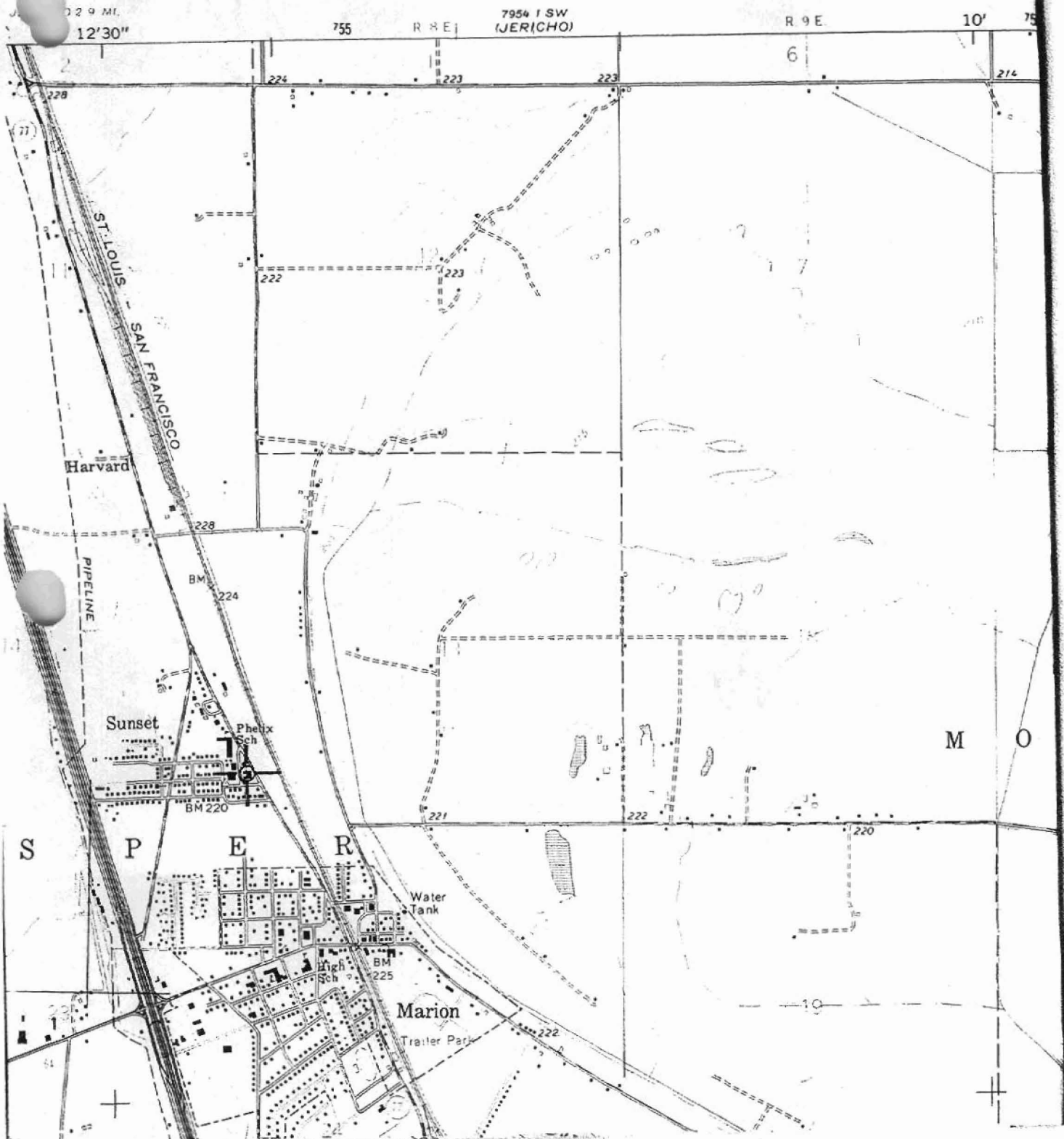
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: February 8, 1995

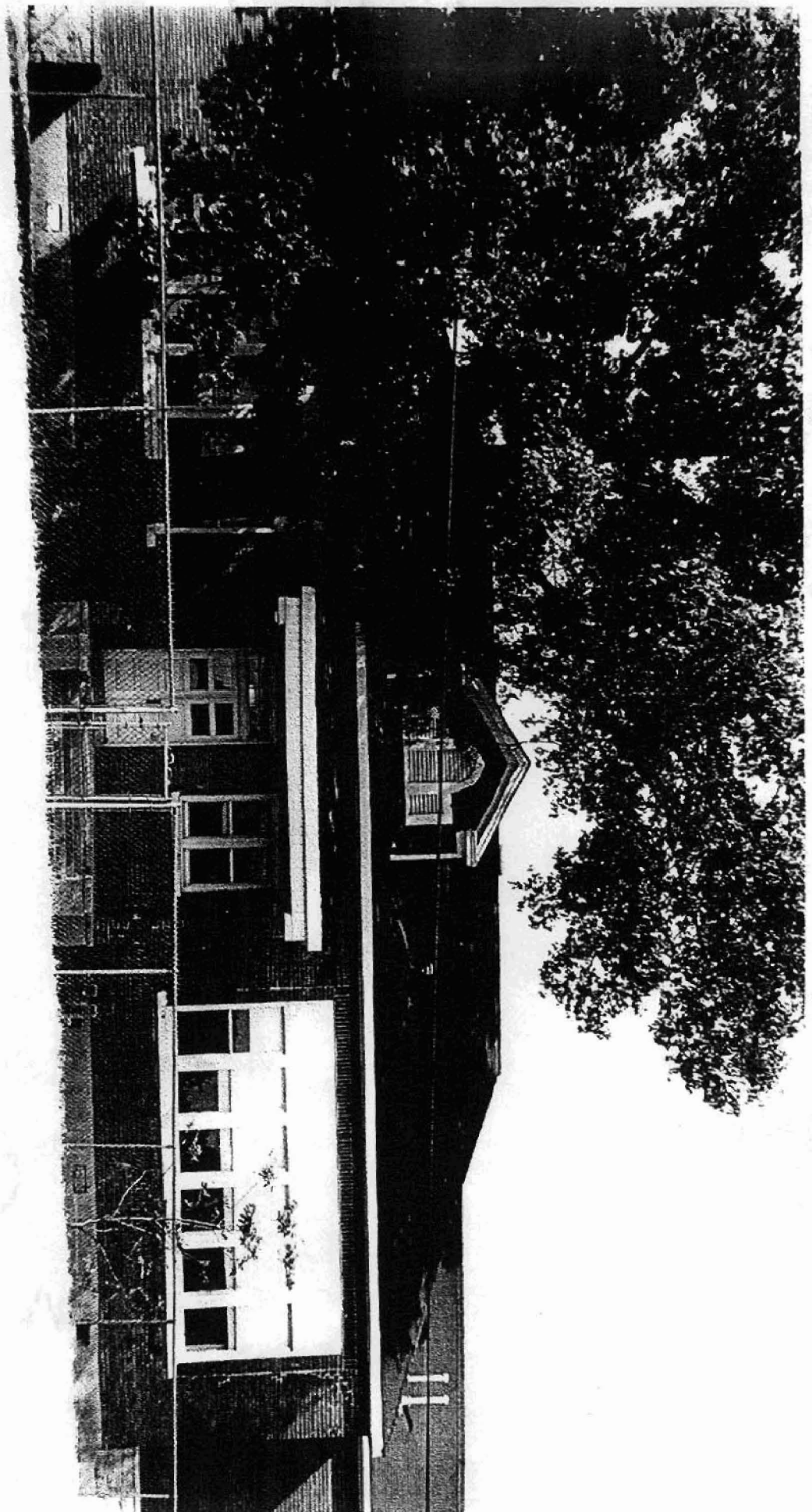
Street & Number: 323 Center, 1600 Tower Bldg. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

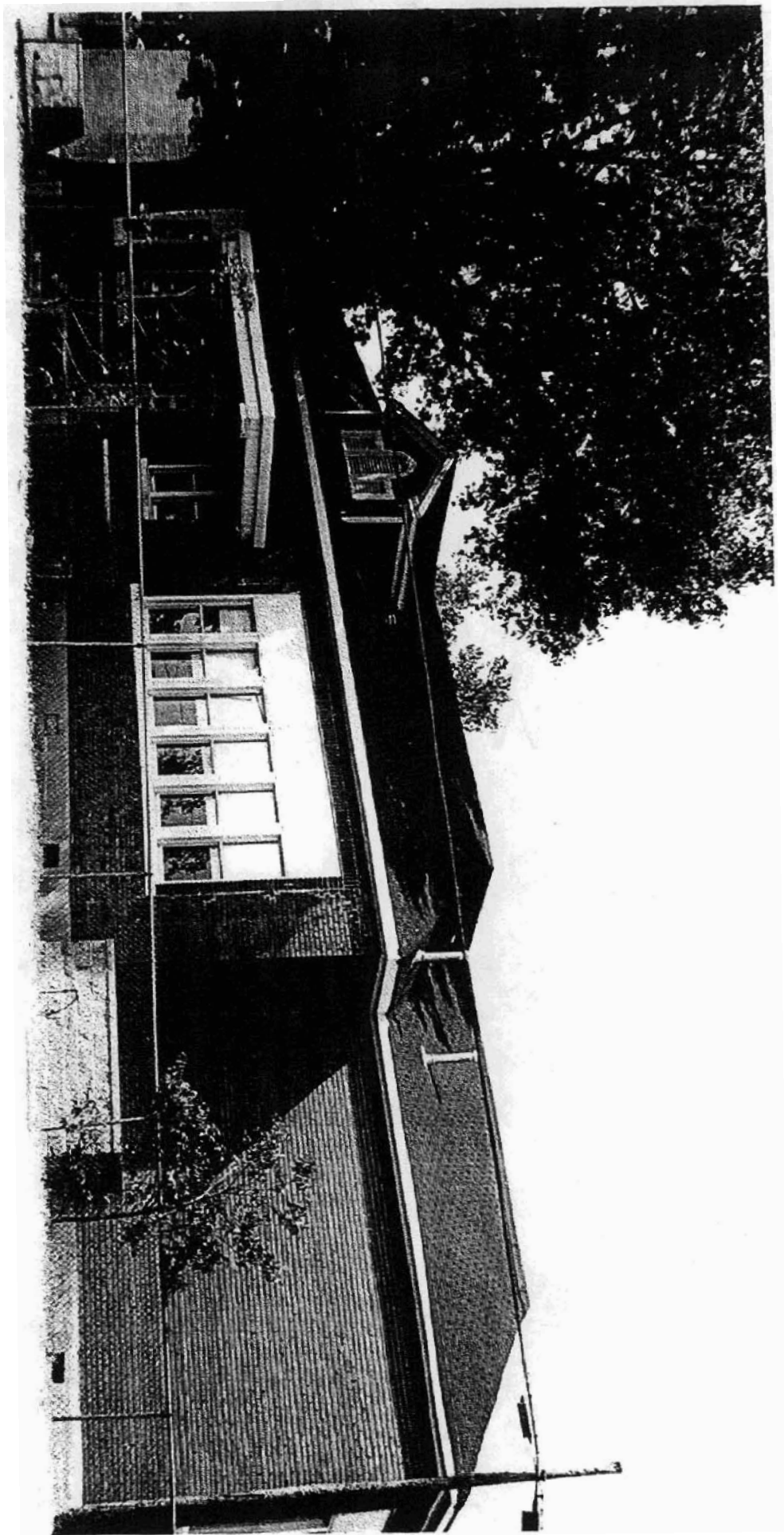
City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

Marion Colored High School
Sunset, Crittenden Co., Arkansas

UTM: 15/754720/3900980







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