

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Parker Sr., Dr. John Walter House

other names/site number JE0287

**2. Location**

street & number 1405 South Alabama Street  not for publication

city or town Pine Bluff  vicinity

state Arkansas code AR County Jefferson code 069 zip code 71601

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr. House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
walls BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
other WOOD

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr. House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Eligible National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Levels of Significance** (local, state, national)

Local

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black

SOCIAL HISTORY

HEALTH/MEDICINE

**Period of Significance**

1910-1953

**Significant Dates**

1909-10 (House was built)

1917 (Garage was built)

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr.

**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr. House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Age of Property 0.34 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>592054</u>	<u>3786261</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Wendy S. Perkins, National Register Historian  
Organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 5 June 2003  
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street Telephone 501-324-9874  
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Laura A. Castoro  
street & number 1320 S. Poplar St. telephone 870-850-7587  
city or town Pine Bluff state AR zip code 71601

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

## SUMMARY

The John Walter Parker, Sr., House was originally constructed as a one-story, one-bedroom brick bungalow with Queen Anne Style in 1909-1910. A local brick company, A.B. & T. Co., supplied the brick used in the construction of the home. The house sits on a continuous brick foundation and features a complex roof, which may be described as a cross-gable surrounding a pyramidal hipped roofline. In 1920 a bedroom was added to the house on the north and east corner in expectation of children. Care was taken at the time to use matching brick, maintain the roofline, and use details of the original windows. A back porch was added to the rear of the residence, adjacent to the added bedroom at about this time. Anecdotal information makes the house one of the first brick homes built and owned by an African-American in Pine Bluff, and may be the oldest still standing. A brick one-car detached garage was constructed on the property in 1917.

## ELABORATION

### West Elevation

The front façade, facing west, is approximately thirty-two feet wide. This elevation is defined by a shed-like covered wrap-around porch supported by five wooden Doric columns. The porch features a beadboard ceiling and wood plank floor. South of the porch is a gable roof three sided bay consisting of three full length one-over-one double hung arch wooden windows. The north side of the bay is weatherboard while the rest of the elevation is red brick. The arched window lintels are flushed to the wall white painted brick and the window sills are white painted cast concrete that extend slightly out from the building. A single paned awning window for the attic fenestrates the wood-shingled gable end. Moving north along the west façade is a carved wooden front door with oval beveled lead glass topped with a transom, all original to the house. An original multi-paned stained-glass window is next to the door. The elevation then angles at a 45° and is fenestrated by a same style arched window. The elevation then angles again at a 45° making the wall face north and is fenestrated by a same style arched window. The wall then angles 90° to face west and contains a wooden door with a stationary window and topped with a transom.

### North Elevation

Moving east along the north elevation, two same style arched windows are located under a wood-shingled gable with an air vent in the gable end. A short version of the arched windows is next to what was originally the rear of the building. In 1920, a back bedroom was added. This addition features same style and color brick and two full length same style arched windows. This elevation, including the porch is approximately fifty-five feet long.

### East Elevation

The addition of the second bedroom gives this elevation a double-gable appearance. The walls are weatherboard and the gable ends are wood shingled. One full length one-over-one double hung window fenestrates the left side of the south end of the first gable. A four-paned wooden door is located in between the gables. Two concrete steps and a metal rail lead up to the door. Located under the second gable is an enclosed back porch. It was constructed, and apparently enclosed, when the second bedroom was added. Three side-by-side one-over-one double hung windows fenestrate south of the back door. This elevation is approximately thirty-two feet in length.

### South Elevation

The south elevation is all original brick. It is approximately fifty feet long. The side of the weatherboard back porch is located at east end. Moving east to west along the south elevation, one full-length and one short version of the same style arched window fenestrate the wall. A wood-shingled gable roof bay extends out from the house. An air vent is located in the gable end. Three full-length same style arched windows fenestrate each side of the bay. However, the window facing due south is boarded up. West of the bay is one full-length same style arched window.

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr. House

Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior

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### Garage

A rectangular, detached, solid brick single-car garage sits on the property at the rear of the house. This structure has window openings on the north and south walls, with an opening for a garage door (missing) on the front, west wall. The hipped roof contains several layers of asphalt shingle covering.

United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### SUMMARY

The Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr., House is being nominated to the National register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion B** for its association with Dr. John Walter Parker, one of the most prominent African-American businessmen in Pine Bluff from his arrival in 1905 until his death in 1954. The house is also being nominated under **Criterion C** as an excellent example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Queen Anne cottage.

### ELABORATION

John Walter (JW) Parker was born in Chappell Hill, Texas, on 19 April 1879. He grew up in Brenham, Texas. He was the third child born to former slaves, Sidney and Mattie A. Parker. Mattie was born on 5 May 1851 in Calvert, Texas. There is no birth information for Sidney. Sidney and Mattie had a total of five children, including, Lizzie (Elizabeth) Parker born 1 August 1870; Edward Parker born 10 May 1871; Frankie A. Parker born on 29 June 1882; and Sidney Parker born 11 July 1884. Mattie died on 1 December 1888 and Sidney died on 5 December 1897.<sup>1</sup>

JW had many jobs growing up in Brenham, Texas. These jobs included work as a cotton picker and as a worker at the Bank of Giddings and Giddings in Brenham. In June 1897, JW completed the English Course at City High School in Brenham. He received two letters of recommendation. One letter was from the Superintendent of City High School, and the other letter was from Mr. Giddings of Giddings and Giddings Bank. As a son to former slaves, JW understood early, through his parents' urgings and his own observations, that an education was the best avenue for a free man to pursue. According to family lore, one day while JW was working in the cotton fields as a boy, he saw a man in a suit, tie and shirt passing by on a buckboard. JW told his father, "That's what I want, a job where I can wear a clean shirt every day."<sup>2</sup>

JW left Brenham in 1897 to attend Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, a traditionally black college. He graduated in 1901. He received two more letters of recommendation, one from HC Morgan, a professor at Fisk University, and the other from Reverend JG Merrill D.D., the Dean of Fisk University, both dated June 1900. After completion of his undergraduate degree, JW applied and was accepted at Northwestern University's Tufts College to work toward a degree in dentistry in Evanston, Illinois.

During his undergraduate and dental degree college years, JW put himself through school by working as a dining car waiter on the US passenger rail service. According to JW's eldest son, Dr. JW Parker, Jr., JW often spoke of his life on the railroad. One of the more colorful incidents involved a train he was serving one winter, about 1900. Ten miles away from Billings, Montana, robbers attacked the train and stole the engine, leaving the passengers stranded. JW and another black man borrowed heavy coats from passengers in order to walk the tracks back to Billings in sub-zero weather to alert the authorities of the robbery and stranded passengers. Another Parker family member remembers JW stating that the other black man lost an ear to frostbite.<sup>3</sup>

Upon his graduation, JW looked for a promising location to set up his dental practice. He met a black doctor from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who encouraged him to move to Pine Bluff where, "a person of color could have a promising career."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Birth, marriage and death dates taken from the Parker Family Holy Bible, which is in the possession of Laura Parker Castoro.

<sup>2</sup> Parker family interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Pine Bluff offered many features that would appeal to a northern black businessman looking at a southern state. Among these appealing features was Pine Bluff had a 'colored' Post Master, Fred Havis, and a 'colored' millionaire, Wiley Jones. Jones, who died shortly before JW's arrival, owned several businesses including the Main Street trolley/streetcar system, a horse racetrack, and a gentlemen's saloon.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the passenger and mercantile riverboat businesses on the Arkansas River and the railroads offered good jobs for blacks. Both forms of transportation brought an ever-changing variety of people to town. Last, but of greater social importance in later years, was the presence of Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal (AM&N) College, a traditionally black college established in 1875. Originally called Branch Normal, the 'colored school' operated as a junior college from 1894 to 1929.<sup>6</sup>

In 1905, JW opened the first African-American dental practice on Main Street in the Havis Building (named after Post Master Fred Havis), less than a block from the courthouse. As early as 1910, JW was listed in a local journal as a prominent 'colored' professional and businessman of Pine Bluff.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after, JW moved his offices to 218 1/2 State Street.<sup>8</sup> In 1933, a fire destroyed JW's dental office among other businesses in the 200 block of State Street. He then moved his offices to 329 1/2 Main Street. Ira Gershwin, the proprietor of JW's new office, lost all his other tenants when the white tenants moved out in protest of a Negro renting space there. Even in those days, there were whites who stood up to pressures from racists. JW's office remained there until his death in 1954. Afterward, the space and the practice were taken up by his son, Dr. David E. Parker, DDS.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout JW's career, his reputation as a first-class dentist who did particularly fine denture work gained him a loyal following. One patient came regularly from Chicago for his dental work.<sup>10</sup> The profession of dentistry gave JW a great deal of freedom in an era of pernicious segregation. He said it was important for a Negro man to have a livelihood that did not rely on the largess of whites. Even so, over the many years of his practice he had some white patients, including the ringmaster of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus when it passed through Pine Bluff in the early 1950s. Apparently, the ringmaster had broken dentures.<sup>11</sup>

In 1920, JW married Anna Mae Robinson of Pine Bluff. They were married on 5 February 1920, in St. Louis, Missouri, where she was living. JW and Anna Mae had three children. John Walter Parker, Jr., was born on 6 June 1921. He is currently a physician and surgeon in New York City. David Edward Parker was born on 11 October 1924 and died on 3 August 1961. He followed his father into dentistry and ran the Pine Bluff practice until his death. Raymond Everett Parker was born on 5 June 1927 and died in July 1972. He was a biologist in Los Angeles, California.

As was his dream, JW always dressed immaculately in a suit, bow tie, and a clean shirt that he changed at midday when he went home at 1:00pm for dinner, in an age before air conditioning. During his later years, JW was frequently spotted wearing a diamond stickpin, diamond ring, and a fedora slightly tilted to one side.

<sup>5</sup> "Colored Section" in *Henderson's Illustrated Industrial Souvenir* (1906).

Information taken from "Overview of Institution" website, <http://arkedu.state.ar.us/pdf/uapb.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> "Colored Section" in *Henderson's Illustrated Industrial Souvenir* (1906).

<sup>8</sup> "Colored Section" in *Henderson's Illustrated Industrial Souvenir* (1906).

<sup>9</sup> Parker family interviews.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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Right after JW established his practice in 1905, he acquired several pieces of property in Pine Bluff. One such property was in the fourteen hundred block of Alabama Street. This is where he chose to build his residence. The house was completed sometime between 1909 and 1910. Constructed by local black craftsmen, the house was probably built with local brick from one of Pine Bluff's brickyards at that time. The house at 1405 Alabama Street originally had a barn for a carriage and horse named Buster.<sup>12</sup> A brick garage was added in 1917 when JW bought a Stutz Touring Car, the only Stutz registered in Arkansas in 1918.<sup>13</sup>

JW's home became a social salon, entertaining a broad spectrum of nationally and internationally known people. In a segregated era in which African-Americans could not stay in public hotels or eat in the best restaurants, JW and Anne Mae provided hospitality to out of town guests. For example, when the internationally famous orator, William Pickins, came to town to speak at AM&N College he stayed with the Parkers. An advocate for the rights of Negroes, Pickins drew a crowd of both black and whites when he spoke in Pine Bluff during the 1930s.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to his profession, JW was an active member in several professional organizations. He was president of the Arkansas Medical, Dental, & Pharmaceutical Association. He was also president of the Black Business and Professional Men's Association. JW was secretary of the Jefferson County Republican Committee and a delegate to the National Convention. In 1933, he was instrumental in bringing The Boy Scouts of America to the Negro community in Pine Bluff. He contributed his time and finances to promote scouting in Pine Bluff and was awarded the Silver Beaver for his efforts.<sup>15</sup> JW was also instrumental in bringing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to Pine Bluff. Meetings were held in his home, where neighbors patrolled the exterior for protection against segregationists.<sup>16</sup> A lifelong member of the congregation, he was a long-time president of the Board of Trustees of St. John's A.M.E. Church. JW initiated college scholarships for students at the historical black A.M.&N. College, now known as the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. In addition to the above-mentioned organizations, JW was a lifelong member of the National Medical Dental Association, The Boule, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a charter member of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Club, and a 33<sup>rd</sup> degree Mason.<sup>17</sup>

Laura Ann Parker Castoro recalls her grandfather with this memory...

"My strongest memory of my grandfather is of a kind elderly man who spent most of his days in his pajamas, propped up in the front bedroom of his home at 1405 Alabama St. in Pine Bluff. My dad had bought a TV to entertain him the summer of 1954. I was five, and visiting my grandparents while my dad, along with my mother and two brothers, remained in Fort Hood, Texas, where my father was a captain in the Army. To entertain myself, I was allowed to tinkle on the keys of the upright player piano in the living room. Looking back on that, and knowing now that my grandfather was dying of congestive heart failure, I am amazed that he permitted such racket. But he could always see past present difficulties to the larger picture of a better future. He died that July. I didn't know until I was nine that in his will he had left money to buy a piano for me, when I was ready. He heard music in my banging and thought he might have a prodigy on his hands. Alas, no. After years of lessons, I never became more than a passable pianist. But that kind of belief in the possibilities of life sprang from the life force of the man, and continued to his dying breath."

<sup>12</sup> Sterling Branton interview.

<sup>13</sup> 1918 car license in Parker Family possession.

<sup>14</sup> Parker family interviews.

<sup>15</sup> Information from the Pine Bluff Historical Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Parker family interviews.

<sup>17</sup> Information from the Pine Bluff Historical Museum and Parker family interviews.

Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr. House

Name of Property

Jefferson County, AR

County and State

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr., House is being nominated to the National register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion B** for its association with Dr. John Walter Parker, one of the most prominent African-American businessmen in Pine Bluff from his arrival in 1905 until his death in 1954. The house is also being nominated under **Criterion C** as an excellent example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Queen Anne cottage.

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arkansas Motor Vehicle License, "Good until December, 1918" for Stutz touring car owned by Dr. John Walter Parker, Sr.

"Colored Section" in *Henderson's Illustrated Industrial Souvenir* (1906).

"Deed of Gift", prepared by Jimmy D. Dill, Attorney at Law, Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Elkins, Connie. *Pine Bluff, Arkansas - A Visual History*.

"History of UAPB", located at <http://www.UAPB.edu>.

Indirect: Index to Deeds and Mortgages, Jefferson County, Arkansas. 1905.

Parker Family Bible.

*Pine Bluff, Arkansas, Souvenir: Historic Facts, Industrial, Commercial and Social Interests, Growth and Prosperity*. 1909.

Pine Bluff Historical Museum. *Prominent Local Professional and Businessmen*

Polk's Southern Directory Company. *Pine Bluff Directory: Business Guide*. 1910.

Polk's Southern Directory Company. *Pine Bluff Directory: Street and Avenue Guide*. 1910.

"Summary Appraisal of The Property Located at 1405 Alabama St, Pine Bluff, AR 71601" as of 03-08-2002 by Rice Appraisal Service, P.O. Box 7212, Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71611.

### Interviews

Mr. Sterling Branton

Dr. John W. Parker, Jr.

Mrs. Laura Ann Parker Castoro

Mrs. Mary Dell Parker Johnson

Mrs. Anna Mae Robinson Parker (deceased)

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning 90' South of the Northwest corner of Block 52, thence East 120', thence South 124', thence West 120', thence North to the point of beginning, all in Block 52, Dexter Harding Addition.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

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



