

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Griggs Business and Practical Arts College
Other names/site number Griggs Business College; J.M. Gregory Home
Name of related multiple property listing N/A
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: 492 Vance Avenue
City or town: Memphis State: Tennessee County: Shelby
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A Zip: 38126

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 forth 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official: **Date**

Title: **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**
Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

 Signature of the Keeper

 Date of Action

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 the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

EDUCATION/college

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Brick, Concrete, Metal, Asphalt

Narrative Description

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is located at 492 Vance Avenue in Memphis. It was once a Contributing building in the Vance-Pontotoc Historic District (NR Listed 3/19/190, Delisted 3/18/1987). It is surrounded primarily by residential and commercial buildings. The College is situated upon a roughly half-acre tract of land, all of which is historically associated with the College during its Period of Significance. It was originally constructed in 1858. Other contributing resources on the property include the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College Sign, erected ca. 1949. The College is a two story, rectangular, Italianate, brick building set upon a concrete foundation and capped with a flat, asphalt shingle roof. Prominent architectural details include the dentils, pilasters, and arched doorway. There have been several alterations over the years. The upper portion of the entrance was enclosed and replaced with glass and steel frame doors prior to the 1980s, which themselves have been replaced with a modern wood door. Sanborn maps indicate that a two-story, L-shaped projection was located on the north elevation of the house until a second, two-story addition was constructed on the same elevation sometime between 1907-1950. This addition gave the building its current rectangular shape. Many of these changes occurred either during the property's Period of Significance or facilitated the use of the property as the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College campus.

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GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE, CONTRIBUTING (1858)

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is sited at the corner of Vance Avenue and South Danny Thomas Avenue. A painted masonry retaining wall spans the front of the property and flanks the three flights of stairs that lead to the building. A freestanding Art Moderne neon sign that reads “Griggs” vertically and “Business College” underneath horizontally is located near the road.

Exterior

Façade (South Elevation)

Originally constructed in 1858, Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is a two-story, three bay, painted brick building with Italianate embellishment. The building rests upon a concrete foundation and is capped by a primarily flat roof located behind a parapet with dentilated cornice. A centered, quoined, slightly projecting central block frames the second bay on both stories of the façade. The first-floor entrance is filled with a single leaf, metal door set below a bricked arch supported by brick pilasters. The entrance is flanked on either side by steel, fifteen-light casement windows. A brick string course spans the entire façade of the first floor, less the second bay, providing a sill for the two first-floor casement windows. A steel, five-light casement window is located directly above the entrance on the second floor, and is also flanked on each side by steel, fifteen-light casement windows.

East Elevation

A stepped parapet extends from the façade to this elevation. Each story contains four bays, and the dentilated cornice also extends over bays three and four. The four window openings on the first floor contain brick infill and have concrete lintels. The window are still in place and can be seen from the interior. All windows on the second floor have concrete sills. Bays one and two are steel, ten-light casement windows. The remaining windows in bays three and four are steel, five-light casement windows. Three empty attic vents are visible below the parapet.

North Elevation

A portion of the parapet is absent. The portion that is absent has metal panels and a gutter installed at the roofline. A brick chimney is visible in the north-western corner of the roofline. A metal door is centered on the first story. A small, infilled window is located to the east of the door. Six concrete stairs lead to a window opening infilled with brick and set upon a concrete sill on the east corner of the façade’s first-floor. An entrance is located on the second-story. A steel, three-light casement window and a steel, ten-light casement window are located to the east of the door on the second-story.

West Elevation

The stepped parapet and dentilated cornice from the façade extends to this elevation. Five empty attic vents are visible at regular intervals beneath the dentils. The first-story consists of five bays, and the second-story

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consists of four bays. All five bays on the first-story are window openings that contain brick infill and concrete sills. All four bays on the second-story are boarded window openings with concrete sills. Window hoods comprised of soldier course brick are located over bay two on the first-story, and bay one of the second-story.

Interior

First Floor

The interior of the building features multiple different types of materials. The floors are generally covered with asphalt tiles, underneath which is the original hardwood flooring. This flooring can be seen in areas where the asphalt tiles have either been pulled up, replaced, or deteriorated. Walls are generally covered in plaster, underneath which is either wood or brick. Ceilings are generally covered with plaster or are bare.

The main entrance opens into a foyer covered in asphalt tiles. A doorway leads into the first-floor south corridor. An enclosed wooden staircase is located on the west corridor wall and leads to the second-story south corridor. The enclosure is formed from non-historic partition walls covered in plaster. Decorative scrollwork is visible on the east side of the staircase, though some portions are missing. A wooden baseboard is present throughout the first-floor south corridor and up the staircase.

The east parlor is accessed through one of two entrances. The floor is currently covered with plywood. Five window openings are visible on the east wall of the room, and all are currently bricked in. A single steel, fifteen-light casement window is located on the south wall.

The west parlor room is accessed through a single entrance located on the west wall of the first-floor south corridor. The floors are asphalt tile, and the ceiling is bare. Parts of the original brick wall are visible beneath the plaster. A single steel, fifteen-light casement window is located on the south wall. Four window openings are visible on the west wall and are currently bricked in. Evidence of the original steel casement window frames are visible in some of the openings. An inset, arched alcove is present in the southeast corner of the room.

The first-floor northwest room is accessed via a doorway on the north wall of the west parlor, or by a doorway on the west wall of the north corridor. The space is altered by a square, wood frame consisting of two-by-fours. This frame used to support non-historic partition walls and a doorway. The walls and doorway have been removed, but the frame remains. The floor is covered in plywood, and the ceiling is bare. Two window openings are visible on the west wall of the room, and one is visible on the north side of the room. They have been bricked in and still retain the steel frames of their casement windows.

A door on the east wall of the northwest room accesses the north corridor. The south entrance of the corridor features a doorway with a single-light transom missing its glass. A single panel, single-light wood door with located on the west wall of the north corridor accesses a basement. The door's light is missing its glass. The floor is asphalt tile. The east and north wall of the corridor are exposed brick, while the west wall is plaster. The ceiling is bare. A single replacement, steel door is located on the north wall of the corridor and accesses

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to the exterior. The doorway on the east wall is crowned by a vertical brick arch. A second arch is visible, but has been filled in with wood framing.

An entrance on the west wall accesses a small room formed from non-historic partition walls in the northwest room and the north exterior wall. The north wall is concrete block, and the floor is plywood. A portion of the partition wall on the western end of the room has been removed, thus providing access to the northwest room through slats in the wood frame.

Second Floor

The staircase accesses the second-floor south corridor. It is covered in asphalt tile flooring. Two entrances on the east wall of the corridor lead into the second-story southeast room, the entrance on the north-side of the corridor access the north corridor, and an entrance on the south accesses the south-room. All second story entrances retain their wood transom without glass, unless otherwise noted.

The second-story northeast room has asphalt tiles and plaster wall and ceilings. Wood and brick are visible beneath some parts of the plaster. An historic light fixture remains in the room. A wall with pocket door roughly divides the room. The pocket door is no longer present. A steel, fifteen-light casement window is located on the south wall of the room, and four bricked up window openings are located on the east wall of the room. A built-in cabinet and storage space is located on the east wall, directly south of the pocket door.

The southwest room is also covered in asphalt tile. A steel, fifteen-light casement window is located on the south wall, and two, steel, four-light casement windows are located on the west wall. A slightly raised platform abuts the south wall. An arched opening is also visible on the east wall of the room. An original light fixture remains in this room.

The northwest room has hardwood floors and plaster walls and ceilings. Two steel, four-light casement windows are located on the west wall, and one, steel, fifteen-light casement window is on the north wall. An L-shaped counter is attached to the east wall.

The second story's north corridor is floored with asphalt shingles, and portions of the ceiling are visible as are portions of the brick wall on the east wall. A modern glass door pierces the north wall. A tall, arched entrance is located on the east wall, and two entrances are also located on the east wall.

A janitorial closet is accessed via the north entrance and has a poured concrete floor and plaster walls with some portions of concrete block wall showing underneath. Two drain holes are located at the west end of the closet.

The northeast room is floored with asphalt tiles and has plastered walls and ceilings. The only window opening is covered with plywood, and a light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

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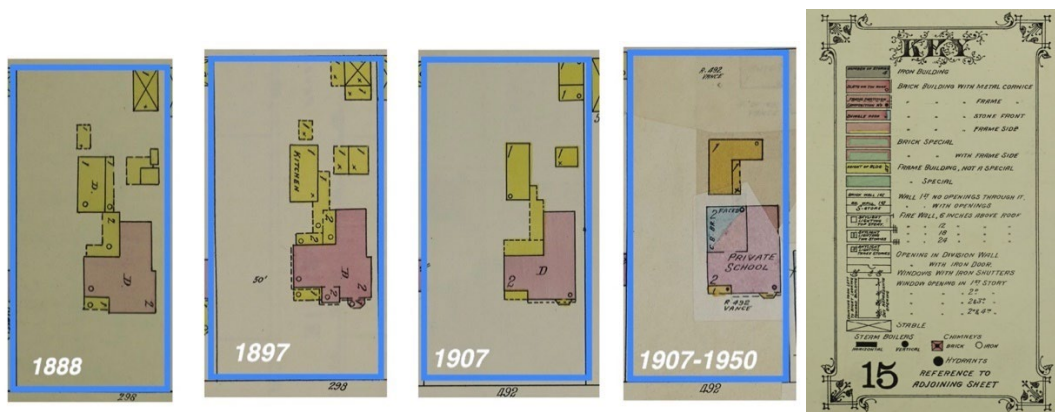
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GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE SIGN, CONTRIBUTING (C. 1949)

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College Sign was erected in 1949 in the Art Moderne style. The sign is supported by a metal pole, and resembles an upside-down T in shape. The sign is made of metal panels. “Griggs” is written vertically on the vertical portion of the sign, and “Business College” is written horizontally on the horizontal portion of the sign. The original neon is no longer present.

INTEGRITY

Though the property has experienced some changes, the changes occurred during the property’s Period of Significance and facilitated the property’s role as the campus for Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. Sanborn maps indicate that that the house was originally designed and constructed in a rough L-shape.¹ By 1907, an addition on the rear squared the house off, which is its current design today.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Key showing 492 Vance Ave (formerly 298 Vance Ave) alterations.

In 1987, the building was described as a two-story brick building constructed in 1858 with an arched doorway, jack arches, brick detail around the doorway, cornice, and parapet. The upper portion of the doorway had been enclosed and replaced with glass and steel frame doors, and the windows had been replaced and reduced to their current size.² Historical images of the College indicate that these features described in 1987 were present in the 1950s. Though the glass and steel frame doors have been replaced, and some of the window openings are bricked up or missing their windows, the fenestration pattern remains the same as they were when the property served as the College’s campus. Several windows are still present behind the brick infill. The interior remains mostly unaltered from its College years, with some rooms still containing original light fixtures and student desks. As such, the property retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, and association, and clearly communicates its historical role as the locally significant Griggs Business and Practical Arts College campus.

¹ Sanborn Map Company, “Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Tennessee,” Memphis, TN, Vol. 2, 1888, 1897, 1907, 1907-1950, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08348_013/.

² Rodney D. Gary and Kay Benton, "Vance-Pontotoc Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, March 19, 1980. Removed March 18, 1987.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1949-1972

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

N/A

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in African American history and education. Located in a historically Black neighborhood, the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College offered Black Memphians an opportunity to gain practical training for working- and middle-class jobs at a time when Black neighborhoods like Vance-Pontotoc were being decimated by Urban Renewal programs. The nominated property was constructed in 1858 and initially served as the private residence for John Gregory and Elizabeth Stovall. In 1949, the nominated property was purchased by Reverend S.A. Owen and C.J. Gaston to serve as the campus for Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. The College itself was founded at a different location in 1944 by Emma Griggs, a civil rights activist, educator, and entrepreneur before its move to 492 Vance Avenue. Emma operated several earlier iterations of the College in Houston, Texas, Nashville, and Memphis. The College lost its accreditation in 1971, and was sold to the Bluff City Lodge #96 Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World on April 5, 1974. The Period of Significance (1949-1974) reflects the year that the property was acquired by the College, and the year that it was sold to the Bluff City Lodge.

Narrative Statement of Significance

492 VANCE AVENUE: 1858-1949

The nominated building was originally constructed as a private residence for attorney Joseph Minter Gregory.³ Gregory was born in Boone County, Kentucky in 1827. He attended Farmer's College in Ohio and served one term in the Ohio legislature before moving to Memphis. Gregory practiced law at Main and Monroe before relocating to the third floor of the Kit Williams building on Madison Avenue. John married Elizabeth Stovall in 1854 and built the nominated house in 1858.⁴ John and Elizabeth lived at this address until their deaths in 1910 and 1920, respectively.

John and Elizabeth's home was located in an area that contained, according to the authors of the original "Vance-Pontotoc Historic District" National Register nomination, "the largest and most outstanding collection of Italianate townhouses in West Tennessee."⁵ The earliest houses in the neighborhood were constructed in the late 1850s, though the majority of construction took place during the 1870s as land in the area was sub-divided following the Civil War and Memphis' many yellow fever epidemics. Residents of the neighborhood during this period were affluent, white Memphians who made their wealth from the cotton trade that defined the city's early economy. Homeowners included attorneys, bankers, jewelers, doctors, wholesale grocers, cotton merchants, musicians, steamboat captains, carriage makers, educators, and real estate developers. The authors also noted that the area was home to a few African-American families who built and owned some of the more "modest homes" in the neighborhood.⁶

Vance-Pontotoc changed in response to Memphis' growth during the twentieth century. Many of the white residents, including those in the Vance-Pontotoc neighborhood, moved eastward as the city expanded.

³ "J.M. Gregory Answers Call," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, January 8, 1910.

⁴ The address for the house was listed as 298 Vance Avenue at the time of its completion. Since then, it has changed to 492 Vance Avenue.

⁵ Gary and Benton, "Vance-Pontotoc Historic District," p. 21.

⁶ Ibid.

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African-American families moved into the vacancies, bringing new life and history to these neighborhoods. Author John Hopkins notes that places like Vance-Pontotoc became home to middle and upper-middle class African American families, and centers for African American culture and commerce. They remained this way until the 1950s and 1960s when Urban Renewal decimated Vance-Pontotoc and other African American neighborhoods like it across Memphis.⁷

On December 15, 1949, Reverend S.A. Owen and C. J. Gaston purchased 492 Vance Avenue to serve as the campus for Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. Prior to its move, the College had been located nearby at 303 Lauderdale. The transformation of 492 Vance Avenue into the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College was part of a vision that began with College founder Emma Griggs in 1906 and continued after her death in 1948.

EMMA GRIGGS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE, 1870-1949

Emma Janes William Griggs was a lifelong student and teacher who founded numerous schools for African Americans throughout her life. Emma was born in Portsmouth, Norfolk County, Virginia in the 1870s to Edmund and Cherry Williams. A report authored by historian Antoinette van Zelm posits that her parents were more than likely born into slavery, as only nine percent of Virginia's African American population was born free in 1860. Her father was a laborer, and they lived in a working-class household in Portsmouth. She had an older sister, Mourna Williams, who worked as a domestic servant, and an older brother James E. William.⁸

While growing up in Virginia, Emma attended Norfolk Mission College. Norfolk was founded in 1883 by the United Presbyterian Board of Missions to "prepare colored young men and women for teachers of their own people." Its varied curriculum taught practical subjects, such as sewing, cooking and several other industries.⁹ van Zelm notes that Emma's time at Norfolk Mission College likely influenced the educational institutions she founded later in life. Much like the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, Norfolk offered practical subjects and curriculum designed to prepare African Americans for the workforce.¹⁰

Emma's education did not end with Norfolk. She went on to attend Hartshorn Memorial College, a school for young women also founded in 1883. The school began in the basement of Ebenezer Baptist Church, which itself was the former home of a Freedman's Bureau school and early African American school. Hartshorn was one of the first institutions to offer higher education to African American women, and specialized in preparing students for teaching positions.¹¹ Emma began teaching at the age of seventeen. In light of her subsequent accomplishments, it is easy to see how these formative years influenced the development of her educational institutions.

⁷ John Linn Hopkins, "Universal Life Insurance Company," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, June 12, 2007, p. 13.

⁸ Antoinette G. van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs: A Lifelong Commitment to African American Education in Nashville and Memphis," MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Murfreesboro, August 2022, p. 4.

⁹ van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs," p. 4.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 5.

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On May 7, 1897, Emma married Reverend Sutton E. Griggs. Rev. Griggs was an activist and prominent member of the Civil Rights Movement.¹² He was educated at Bishop College and Richmond Theological Seminary. Initially an advocate of the W.E.B. DuBois school of thought, Rev. Griggs increasingly aligned with Booker T. Washington's views that African Americans should strive to reach white society's expectations of respectability. It is believed that Sutton's transition to a more conservative and accommodationist approach to race relations can partially be explained by the poor sales of his self-published novels, and the lack of progress in race relations generally. Rev. Griggs was heavily involved in the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. He became an influential member of the National Baptist Convention and the Niagara Movement, and was also a popular writer of both fiction and non-fiction.¹³

In June of 1900, Emma and Sutton Griggs relocated to Nashville. Rev. Griggs served as the pastor of First Baptist Church in East Nashville and ran the Orion Publishing Company. The couple adopted a young girl named Eunice. In 1901, Emma enrolled at Central Tennessee College (later Walden University) where she took courses in piano, shorthand, and typing. She graduated as a member of the Commercial Class on May 11, 1910.¹⁴ Emma opened her first practical arts and business college while attending Central in 1906. The *Nashville Globe* reported in January 1909 that it was a "private industrial school."¹⁵ She taught stenography, typewriting, and art needle work at her college. Griggs Business and Practical Arts College would later offer similar courses.

Emma was also involved with her local community and the Civil Rights Movement during her tenure in Nashville. Though currently available records only focus on Rev. Griggs' support of the 1905 Nashville street car boycott and his involvement with the Niagara Movement, Emma undoubtedly supported these

¹² The literature on Rev. Sutton E. Griggs is extensive. See Arnold Rampersad, "Griggs, Sutton E.," in Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds., *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), p. 271; Brian D. Page, "Sutton E. Griggs," *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/sutton-e-griggs/> (accessed Mar. 21, 2022); James W. Byrd, "Griggs, Sutton Elbert," *Texas State Historical Association Handbook*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/griggs-sutton-elbert> (accessed May 26, 2022); David M. Tucker, *Black Pastors and Leaders: Memphis, 1819-1972* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1975); Randolph Meade Walker, *The Metamorphosis of Sutton E. Griggs* (Memphis: Walker Pub., 1991); Finnie D. Coleman, *Sutton E. Griggs and the Struggle Against White Supremacy* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2007); Eric M. Curry, "Sutton E. Griggs and the African American Literary Tradition of Pamphleteering" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2015); John Gruesser, "Seeking Justice Through Novel Writing and Book Publishing: Sutton Griggs's Commitment to Literature and Battles in Print," *Baptist History and Heritage* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2015), https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A432383883/AONE?u=tel_middleten&sid+ebSCO&xid+134d7678 (accessed May 23, 2022); "Mrs. Griggs Dies;" "Mrs. Griggs in Texas," *Nashville Globe*, Jan. 15, 1909, p. 2; "Walden University," *Nashville Globe*, May 6, 1910, p. 8; Gruesser, "Seeking Justice Through Novel Writing and Book Publishing," https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A432383883/AONE?u=tel_middleten&sid+ebSCO&xid+134d7678; In 1914, the National Baptist Convention was roiled by the feud between Boyd and Griggs, and in 1915 a schism occurred within the Convention as a result. Gruesser, "Seeking Justice," https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A432383883/AONE?u=tel_middleten&sid+ebSCO&xid+134d7678; "Rev. Griggs Buried in Texas," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Jan. 21, 1933, p. 20; "Biography and Family Tree," Sutton Griggs Web site; Rev. Sutton Elbert Griggs, Find a Grave Memorial, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/131554236/sutton-elbert-griggs> (accessed Aug. 26, 2022); Historical marker for Freedman's Cemetery, <https://www.dallasparks.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/Freedmans-Memorial-Cemetery-769?mobile=ON> (accessed Aug. 26, 2022); "Legacy Park," Denison, Texas, Grayson County TXGenWeb, http://usgenwebsites.org/TXGrayson/ANewLand/Towns/Denison/legacy_park/legacy_park.html (accessed Aug. 26, 2022).

¹³ van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs," pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

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events and participated to the fullest extent possible. She gave several lectures at local gatherings and events that addressed African American education, including a paper titled “The Relation of Art to Industrial Education” delivered to the Fleur-de-Lis Art Club, and a lecture titled “Temperence” at the Sunshine Home in 1907.¹⁶ Emma also promoted a woman-centric version of her husband’s “Sentiment Moulding” and served as president of the Women’s Sentiment Moulding Movement. Rev. Griggs saw sentiment moulding as a way to create public, positive attitudes towards African Americans. Emma’s version encouraged women to focus on doing good for others and their community.¹⁷

Though it is not explicitly outlined in available sources, it is likely that the many schools and colleges Emma founded were directly influenced by Booker T. Washington’s view on education. In addition to their conflict on African American respectability, Washington and DuBois differed on the subject of African American education. Washington believed that industrial education better served the African American cause because it provided a “pathway to economic independence and mobility.” This independence and mobility would eventually lead to integration. DuBois believed differently. He contended that African Americans should “aspire to the highest levels of education,” which was best achieved by gaining a liberal education from a traditional college. By gaining a liberal education, African Americans could become independent, think critically, and thus become “emancipated.”¹⁸

The Griggs family moved to Memphis in 1913 following a failed business venture. Rev. Griggs gained employment as the pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Memphis.¹⁹ The Griggs set about turning the Tabernacle Baptist church into an “institutional church” that would provide for the religious, educational, and cultural needs of the nearby African American community.²⁰ Rev. Griggs believed that the church could, and should, be more than just a church. He said that “religion ought to do more than help a man reach heaven when he dies. It ought to help live in this world. It ought to help meet every problem of life.” This led to the construction of a new church building on 658 South Lauderdale Street. The church and facilities served as a community center and even had an employment bureau and swimming pool.²¹

The Tabernacle Baptist Church also housed the School of Practical Arts, founded and administered by Emma Griggs. The school’s first commencement took place on May 10, 1916. The newspaper announced that twelve young women graduated with degrees in stenography, cake decoration, and personal service. Rev.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 8-10.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁸ Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher, “Black History and Career Technical Education,” OOCRI, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, February 8, 2017. Later, Carter G. Woodson would side with DuBois after the passage of the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act in 1917. This act perpetuated segregated education and restricted curricular tracks for African American students in industrial education. The result were African Americans effectively being excluded from higher paying jobs and safe vocational positions. Instead, many African Americans were consigned to lower-level vocations, which included jobs like woodworkers, janitorial services, upholstery, and tailoring.

¹⁹ “Tabernacle Baptist Among Oldest Here,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, January 1, 1940. The article goes on to outline the history of the church and its various pastors. The church was founded in 1882 by Rev. Nelson Countee at 206 Turley, near Beale Street. After Rev. Griggs’ departure, the church relocated to Polk and Walnut, which was the home of the church at the publishing of the article in 1940.

²⁰ Kenneth W. Goings and Gerald Smith, “Duty of the Hour,” in *Tennessee History: The Land, the People, and the Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998) p. 228.

²¹ van Zelm, “Emma J. Griggs,” p. 12.

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Griggs presented the diplomas, and Bishop C. N. Cleaves delivered the commencement address. Displays of the student's work were also present at the commencement and included needlework exhibits, crochet exhibits, and decorated cakes designed by the cake decoration department.²²

Emma and her school continued to evolve and change over the years. The college shifted its focus to female education in the 1920s according to a 1921 article in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* that reported "many colored girls have greatly increased their efficiency and earning capacity by attending."²³ Emma continued her own education by taking courses in domestic science classes at the University of Chicago. She also attended the American School of Home Economics. By 1928, the college offered classes in cooking, cake baking, preserving, jelly making, Bible study, kindergarten, literature, dressmaking, commercial, and music. Emma also taught at the Baptist Theological Seminary associated with Howe Institute.²⁴

The onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s brought an end to the Grigg's first tenure in Memphis. Unable to make their payments, the Tabernacle Baptist Church was sold at public auction, and Emma and Sutton moved to Texas. While there, Sutton served as the pastor of his father's church, and Emma continued her education. van Zelm notes that it is not known if Emma taught or operated a school in Houston, though it is likely that she did considering her passion for education and community service. Shortly after their move, Rev. Griggs died of kidney failure on January 2, 1933.²⁵

Emma Griggs moved back to Memphis in 1934 following her husband's death with the intention of founding an institution that would honor her late husband.²⁶ Emma began teaching where she lived at 741 Walker Avenue, and then launched a funding campaign for a new school in August of 1934. The campaign initially did not raise enough money. Emma spent the next several years moving around and teaching under the auspices of the New Deal's Work Progress Administration, making \$720 a year. She supplemented this income by working as a seamstress, putting into action the very same education that she imparted to her students.²⁷

Finally, a full-page advertisement in the *1943 Negro Year Book and Directory* announced the opening of "The School of Practical Arts and Business," at 1029 Mississippi in Memphis under the leadership of Emma Griggs. Classes offered included stenography, typewriting, flower making, decorating, home economics, and religious education. The advertisement stated that the college aimed "to give a practical turn to Education by equipping those who have acquired a Literary Education with a further means of earning a livelihood. To help those whose Education was short in the regular schools to a point where they can be self-supporting

²² "Sutton E. Griggs Busy Man," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 7, 1916; "Creditable Work Done," *The Commercial Appeal*, May 11, 1916, Memphis, Tennessee.

²³ van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs," p. 13.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 14; "Formal Opening Today," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, October 31, 1920; "Celebrate Anniversary, Dr. Sutton E. Griggs Will Preach at Tabernacle Baptist," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 27, 1927; "Art Schol Graduation," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 8, 1927; "Activities Among Memphis Negroes, By Rev. T.O. Fuller," *The News Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 16, 1919.

²⁵ van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs," p. 15.

²⁶ Emma initially wanted to create a memorial library that consisted of Rev. Griggs' book collection that numbered more than two-thousand books.

²⁷ van Zelm, "Emma J. Griggs," pp. 16-17.

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through a knowledge of useful arts.” Shortly thereafter, school was renamed and chartered as the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College in 1944. The newly minted college moved to 303 South Lauderdale in 1945 after Emma purchased the property to serve as the school’s campus.²⁸

Unfortunately, Emma would not live long after the official founding of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts college, and she never saw its current location at 492 Vance Avenue. Emma’s later years were fraught with personal challenges. Her adopted daughter, Eunice, died in 1946. Emma had also been in poor health, and on January 27, 1948, Emma Griggs died at the Collins Chapel Hospital after a heart attack. She was buried in Elmwood Cemetery.²⁹ Though her death marked the end of the Griggs direct involvement with the college, Emma and Rev. Griggs’ work is crucial to understanding the importance of the college. The many iterations of her school were shaped by the couple’s own journey as they grappled with the challenges of racism and segregation. Their work and experiences served as the foundation for the College’s future.

GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE, 1948-1974

Reverend S.A. Owens chaired the Board of Directors following Emma’s death, and C.J. Gaston, a World War II veteran and insurance executive, served as the secretary of the board and as the school’s business manager.³⁰ Other members of the Board included Dr. Roy Love, Rev. B.L. Hooks, and Henry White. On December 15, 1949, Owen and Gaston purchased 492 Vance Avenue for use as the College’s campus.³¹ Griggs Business College was one of two Black-owned business colleges in Memphis. Henderson Business College was the only other “institution attended predominately by Negroes” according to the United Business Schools Association (USBA) Directory of Business Schools.³² Griggs Business College received accreditation from the USBA in 1954 and maintained that accreditation until 1970. Henderson Business College was accredited from 1932-1971.³³ Other schools that were members of the USBA were Draughton’s Business College at 253 Madison Avenue, Henderson Business College, Inc. at 530 Linden Avenue, the Memphis School of Commerce at 295 South Bellevue, and the Miller-Hawkins Secretarial School at 282 North Cleveland Street.³⁴

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 17-19. It is unclear how long the college operated in that location. A newspaper article in the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* on November 16, 1951 reported that a “fire, which started this morning in the back of Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, 303 S. Lauderdale,” burned the interior of the school and a rooming house next door. It is likely that the house continued to belong to the college, and 494 Vance served as the college’s campus. “School and House Damaged by Fire,” *The Memphis Press Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, November 16, 1951,

²⁹ van Zelm, “Emma J. Griggs,” p. 19; “GRIGGS,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, TN, January 28, 1948.

³⁰ “Griggs Business College Buys a New Home,” *Memphis World*, January 10, 1950.

³¹ “Mrs. Griggs Dies: Founded Business & Arts College,” *Atlanta Daily World*, January 30, 1948.

³² The Henderson Business College was located at 530 Linden Avenue. It was a two-year institution and offered degrees in stenographic, secretarial, executive secretarial, junior accounting, higher accounting, and business administration. Henderson was originally founded in Knoxville in 1912 before it was relocated to several old homes on Linden in 1939. For this and more information on Henderson Business College, see Vance Lauderdale, “Lost Memphis: Henderson Business College,” *Memphis: The City Magazine*, May 23, 2012, <https://memphismagazine.com/ask-vance/lost-memphis-henderson-business-college/>.

³³ United Business Schools Association Directory of Business Schools; Historical Archives of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), <https://acics.contentdm.oclc.org/>.

³⁴ “Five Join Association: Memphis Business Schools Among 500 in New Group,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 31, 1962; “1966 Directory of Business Schools,” United Business Schools Association, Washington, DC, 1962; “1969 Directory of Business Schools,” United Business Schools Association, Washington, DC, 1969. “Business Schools OK’d, 12 in West Tennessee Are Approved by State,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 19, 1963. A central directory of

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The 1966 and 1969 USBA Directories shed some light on the organization, its mission, the services it offered participating schools and students, and what it required from those schools that it accredited. The USBA sought to meet the students at their current educational level, train them, and most importantly, place them in profitable jobs in the public and private industry. Indeed, all accredited schools were required to offer free lifetime placement services for current and former students. Both Directories emphasized the “need for a steady flow of competent office workers” in all industries, and that by attending private business schools like Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, a student would be prepared “not only for his present job, but also for a career.”³⁵ Accredited schools were also expected to work with federal and state programs to help their students afford college. The Directory specifically mentions the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1920, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963, and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.³⁶ Other programs included the War Orphans and War Widows Education Assistance, Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966, and the Insured Loan and College Work-Study Programs of the Higher Education Act. Advertisements for Griggs Business and Practical Arts College emphasized both the free placement services and tuition assistance programs for veterans.

In keeping with its practical education roots, courses at Griggs Business and Practical Arts College included shorthand, business English, commercial law, secretarial guidance, business spelling and intelligence test, and typewriting. The school also offered courses in flower making, home economics, public speaking, and Bible training.³⁷ As enrollment increased, the school offered new courses in accounting, secretarial science, and business administration. The 1950s saw a further expansion in courses offered, moving from strictly business courses to offering an education in business administration, electricity, salesmanship, production, machine trades, building trades, drafting and design, secretarial, and retail merchandising.³⁸ Indeed, Griggs actively advertised that there existed a need for trained students to participate in business and practical fields. An advertisement in 1952 stated “Wanted—At Once: 100 negroes to train for positions as secretaries, stenographers and clerks in Civil Service and private business concerns. Day and night classes. Veterans and out-of-town students accepted.”³⁹

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College was part of broader trend of African American professional and educational institutions that operated in residential homes. This reflected the reality of Jim Crow and legal segregation. As authors Ambrose Bennet, Jasmine Champion, and Kelsey Lamkin state, “the creation of alternative spaces specifically for African Americans was a significant act of resistance to white supremacy

business and practical colleges in Memphis could not be readily located during the research for this nomination. The “Business Schools OK’d” article in 1963 does provide a list of schools approved to do business by the Board of Education. There were sixty total in Tennessee. The ones in Memphis were: Advanced Business College; Draughon’s Business College; Henderson Business College; Memphis School of Commerce; Miller-Hawkins Secretarial School; Office Machines Training Center of the South; Patricia Stevens Finishing & Career School; Punch Card Training of Memphis, Inc.; Private Secretarial School; and Griggs Business and Practical Arts College

³⁵ “1966 Directory,” United Business Schools Association, p. 5.; “1969 Directory,” United Business Schools Association, p. 2.

³⁶ “1969 Directory,” United Business Schools Association, p. 3.

³⁷ “Business School Opens in Memphis Sept. 14,” *News In and Around Memphis*, September 4, 1942. The article mentions that Griggs offered flower making, home economics, public speaking, and Bible training.

³⁸ “Help Wanted At Once! To Train As Specialists in Critically Short Fields,” Memphis, Tennessee, *The Commercial Appeal*, March 18, 1952.

³⁹ “Wanted—At Once,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, Sept. 7, 1952.

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and an opportunity to thrive economically.”⁴⁰ A local Memphis example is the Gladys “MaDear” Bennett House located at 298 North Decatur Street (NR Listed 3/27/2020). Like Griggs, the MaDear House is located in a historically African American neighborhood. The owner Gladys, for whom the house is named, was born a sharecropper. She understood the difficulty that African Americans faced in obtaining marketable skills during Jim Crow. As a result, she founded the Gladys’ School of Domestic Arts, where she used her own skills as a dressmaker to teach other African Americans how to sew and make dresses. The original school was hosted at the Golden Leaf Baptist Church until it moved to her house in North Memphis. In addition to being the home of Gladys’ School of Domestic Arts, 298 North Decatur also housed the “Subway Beauty Salon,” a business run by Gladys’ sister.⁴¹

The Vance-Pontotoc neighborhood itself also contained a high concentration of residential businesses. The Bodden & Company School of Tailoring operated out of the house formerly located at 582 Vance. Little John’s Cabs and Leon’s Supermarket were also located on Vance Avenue. Owen College was another educational institution located on the same street as Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. Owen College was established in 1947 when the Tennessee Baptist Missionary and Education Convention bought property on Vance to build a Junior College. The college opened in 1954 with thirty-three students and was named after S.A. Owen, the chair of Griggs’ Board of Directors and a distinguished civics and religious leader. It secured accreditation in 1958 by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and offered two-year associate degrees in general education, business, home economics, and religious education. Like Griggs, the college faced fiscal problems in the 1960s and after a fire in 1967 that saw a significant loss of money to the school, the institution joined with LeMoyne College in 1968 to form LeMoyne-Owen College, which continues to operate to this day.⁴²

More than one-thousand men and women received their education from the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College.⁴³ These alumni went on to hold leadership roles in their community and their professions. For example, Kathryn Bowers (Class of 1962) served as member of the Tennessee House of Representatives, J.P. Murrell (Class of 1967) won the National Urban League’s “Man of the Year,” and Mary Ann Johnson (Class of 1967) became the first Black woman executive of 20th Century Fox. Other alumni went on to serve local significant roles in their communities. Ophelia Porter graduated from Griggs Business College and worked for the Mid-South Fair in Memphis for six decades. She served as the director of printing, director of wardrobe, employee relations assistant, receptionists, and spirit supervisor. Porter insisted that each of her children get an education, and her Orange Mound home served as “a haven for youths involved in the Civil Rights Movement.”⁴⁴ Alumni Julian C. Benson also graduated from Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. A veteran, Benson was appointed Assistant Shelby County Jury Commissioner in 1973, and in 1980 became the commission’s first African American chairman. He was also a lifetime member of the NAACP, worked to increase representation in the jury pool.⁴⁵ Carrie H. Tippett Herron, a 1967 graduate of Griggs

⁴⁰ Ambrose Bennet, Jasmine Champion, and Kelsey Lamkin, “Bennet, Gladys, ‘MaDear,’ House,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, August 29, 2019, p. 15.

⁴¹ Lamkin et. al., “Bennet, Gladys, ‘MaDear,’ House,” pp. 3-4, 8.

⁴² “Our History,” Lemoyne-Owen College, <https://www.loc.edu/about-us/our-history/>.

⁴³ Vance Lauderdale, “Griggs Business College,” *Memphis The City Magazine*, September 15, 2020.

⁴⁴ “Fair was career to Ophelia Porter,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, January 29, 2011.

⁴⁵ “Benson, retired jury chief, dies,” *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, July 16, 1989.

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Business and Practical Arts College, described her experience attending Griggs like being part of a family and village.⁴⁶

The teacher and student body of Griggs Business and Practical Arts College also participated in the Civil Rights Movement. Griggs College was founded in, and operated during, a time when African Americans faced discrimination and violence from white society. Students were a critical part of the Civil Rights Movement, and their protests brought attention to the movement as a whole. One of the most well-known protest tactics was the sit-in. The first sit-in occurred on February 1, 1960 when four African American freshmen from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat in at the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. The sit-in was successful, and after that a number of sit-ins at lunch counters occurred across Tennessee. In Memphis, the first sit-in targeted a public library, rather than a lunch counter. African American students conducted a sit in at a public library in the spring of 1960.⁴⁷ Students then targeted other public spaces, and Griggs Business and Practical Arts students were at the head of these sit ins.

An excerpt from the book *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* by Bobby L. Lovett states, "Eleven students from LeMoyne College and Griggs Business College... were arrested at the Dobbs House Restaurant in the airport for conducting a sit-in demonstration... The students were holding place cards: 'Discrimination Still Exists in Memphis', 'Negroes Want Freedom', and 'Is America the Land of the Free?'"⁴⁸ Each were fined \$51, and at the time of their arrest were held at \$250 bond. Only one protestor received a larger bond, Ollie Neal. He was twenty-two years old at the time of his arrest and, according to the report, had "figured in four sit-ins" prior to the one at the Municipal Airport. The protest took place when then Senator John Kennedy arrived at the airport for a campaign speech in Memphis.⁴⁹ Griggs students were also reported as being among the freedom riders that travelled throughout the American South. Students from Griggs also served in the Intercollegiate Chapter of the NAACP, which helped organize and support the Civil Rights Movement.⁵⁰ Their efforts met with some success, as by the early summer of 1960, all of Memphis libraries and counters had been desegregated

Though less is known about the teachers at Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, a 1967 newspaper article does provide some information on James I. Taylor, a former teacher there. The article announced that "Taylor taught school in the Memphis city schools for 14 years and in Griggs Business College two years before entering the real estate business." The newspaper article announced his intention to run for city councilman. In addition to owning his own real estate firm, he was a member of the Shelby County Democratic Club, a member of the NAACP, a World War II veteran, and a graduate of LeMoyne College.⁵¹

⁴⁶ The current owners of the property are conducted oral history interviews with Griggs Business and Practical Arts alumni. These interviews will provide more information about the school and the impact that it had on the community and Memphis.

⁴⁷ Cynthia G. Fleming, "'We Shall Overcome': Tennessee and the Civil Rights Movement," p. 451 in Carroll Van West, ed. *Tennessee History: The Land, the People, and the Culture* (Knoxville: UT Press, 1998).

⁴⁸ Bobby L. Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee: A Narrative History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005) p. 280.

⁴⁹ "11 Are Arrested at City Airport, Negroes Enter the Restaurant," *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, September 22, 1960.

⁵⁰ "Waitresses to Have a Ball," *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, March 31, 1965.

⁵¹ "Negro to Run for Council," *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, April 26, 1967.

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Taylor's profile suggests that many of those who taught at Griggs College were also educated and involved in the betterment of their communities.

The historic Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a major piece of legislation passed in response to the Civil Rights Movement. The act provided federal measure to enforce school desegregation, amongst other powers designed to dismantle Jim Crow. However, desegregation and the White response to the Civil Rights Act was not always positive. As African American families, students and businesses moved into "white" neighborhoods and schools, institutions that catered to African Americans lost their economic base. The result was a de-concentration of wealth within historic African American communities. Desegregation also caused a mass exodus of white families, students and businesses to suburbs and private schools. This trend became known as "white flight" and caused the annexation of some areas while the city expanded into others.⁵² This resulted in the disinvestment of critical infrastructure for the inner-city. Disinvestment led to a decay in the inner-city and a rise in increased vacancies, poverty, and crime. By 1968, the year of the sanitation worker strike and Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, the impacts of desegregation and inner-city resident flight had decreased the value of housing and businesses in Memphis and other cities across America.⁵³

Urban renewal projects also destroyed African American communities like Vance Avenue. An article published in *The Memphis Press-Scimitar* illustrates how organizations like the Memphis Housing Authority wiped out vibrant, middle-class African American neighborhoods in Memphis. The context of the article is the proposal for a \$6,000,000 Georgia Street public housing project designed for African Americans. Petitioners confronted MHA about the project, arguing that it was "unfair to wipe out these homes which have been kept up with pride, for the sake of providing new low-rent housing for others who have been content to let their places run down." One hundred residents gathered at Emmanuel Episcopal Church to meet with Walter Simmons, the director of the MHA. In response, Simmons said that "there are some houses in the project area on St. Paul and Orleans that are in pretty good structural condition. We wish they were outside the area. But MHA has never been able to find an area for a project where there have not been some good houses." Simmons also argued that they were valuing the houses at three-and-a-half times what they were worth, and that while they may be good homes today, they will becoming sub-standard after being surrounded by "new public housing." The newspaper article provides several pictures of houses in the area along with a description of their owner. Included in those whose house would eventually be demolished for the project was Lou Della Dawkins, a notary public and teacher of commercial subjects at Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. Other houses lost included E. Johnson's, a janitor at Alonzo Locke School, Emma Crittendon's, a teacher at Florida Street School, and Rev. R.A. Morris.⁵⁴

The Vance Avenue neighborhood was not immune to these forces and entered into a slow decline. Practical colleges like Griggs struggled to stay in business. In 1970 Griggs, along with seven other Memphis Colleges and universities, received money from the U.S. Office of Education under the National Defense Student Loan Program. Other colleges that received money included Memphis State University, LeMoyne-Owen, Southwestern, Christian Brothers College, Siena College, and Henderson College. Griggs Business and

⁵² Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee*, p. 81.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 228.

⁵⁴ "Negroes With Nice Homes Are Fighting Eviction," *The Memphis Press Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, May 25, 1951.

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Practical Arts College received a total of \$683 while Memphis State received \$31,812.⁵⁵ The money Griggs received is equivalent to \$5,240 in 2023 (compared to \$244,000 received by Memphis State), and though the money helped, it was not enough.⁵⁶ A year later the Griggs Business College lost its accreditation with the USBA in 1971.⁵⁷ According to a November 6, 1971 ad in the *Tri-State Defender*, Griggs and Henderson colleges were “united for better service,” and by 1972 Henderson no longer existed.⁵⁸ On April 5, 1974, the college sold the building to the Bluff City Lodge #96 Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, thus bringing to a close the years that it served as the campus of Griggs Business and Practical Arts College.⁵⁹ The Lodge maintained the property until the mid-1980s. The Tennessee Secretary of State records show the college was officially dissolved in 1983 due to a loss of revenue.

⁵⁵ “In Our City: College Funds,” *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, April 21, 1970.

⁵⁶ “U.S. Inflation Calculator,” accessed January 6, 2023. <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>

⁵⁷ United Business Schools Association Directory of Business Schools, United Business Schools Association, various directories. Historical Archives of the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) <https://acics.contentdm.oclc.org/>.

⁵⁸ *Tri-State Defender*, November 6, 1971.

⁵⁹ Warranty Deed from the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College to the Lt. George W. Lee Lodge #96 of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, April 5, 1974. Shelby County Register of Deeds <https://register.shelby.tn.us/>

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of repository: Withers Collection Museum & Gallery
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property	0.463	USGS Quadrangle	Northwest Memphis, TN, AR, 2019
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Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 35.135501	Longitude: -90.045764
2. Latitude: 35.134968	Longitude: -90.045852
3. Latitude: 35.134933	Longitude: -90.045544
4. Latitude: 35.135455	Longitude: -90.045471

Verbal Boundary Description

The Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is located at 492 Vance Avenue, Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee on Shelby County Parcel 007019 00025. The boundaries correspond with the aforementioned legal parcel boundaries. The property is located in part of lot four in block fifty-three on the plan of South Memphis. The boundaries are described as follows, beginning at a point in the north line of Vance Avenue 132 feet east of the east line of South Wellington Street; thence eastwardly along the north line of Vance Avenue 101 feet to a point in the west line of the lot formerly known as the L. M. Clapp residence; thence northwardly and parallel with South Wellington Street two hundred feet to the south line of an alley 101 feet to a point; thence southwardly parallel with South Wellington Street two hundred feet to the point of beginning.

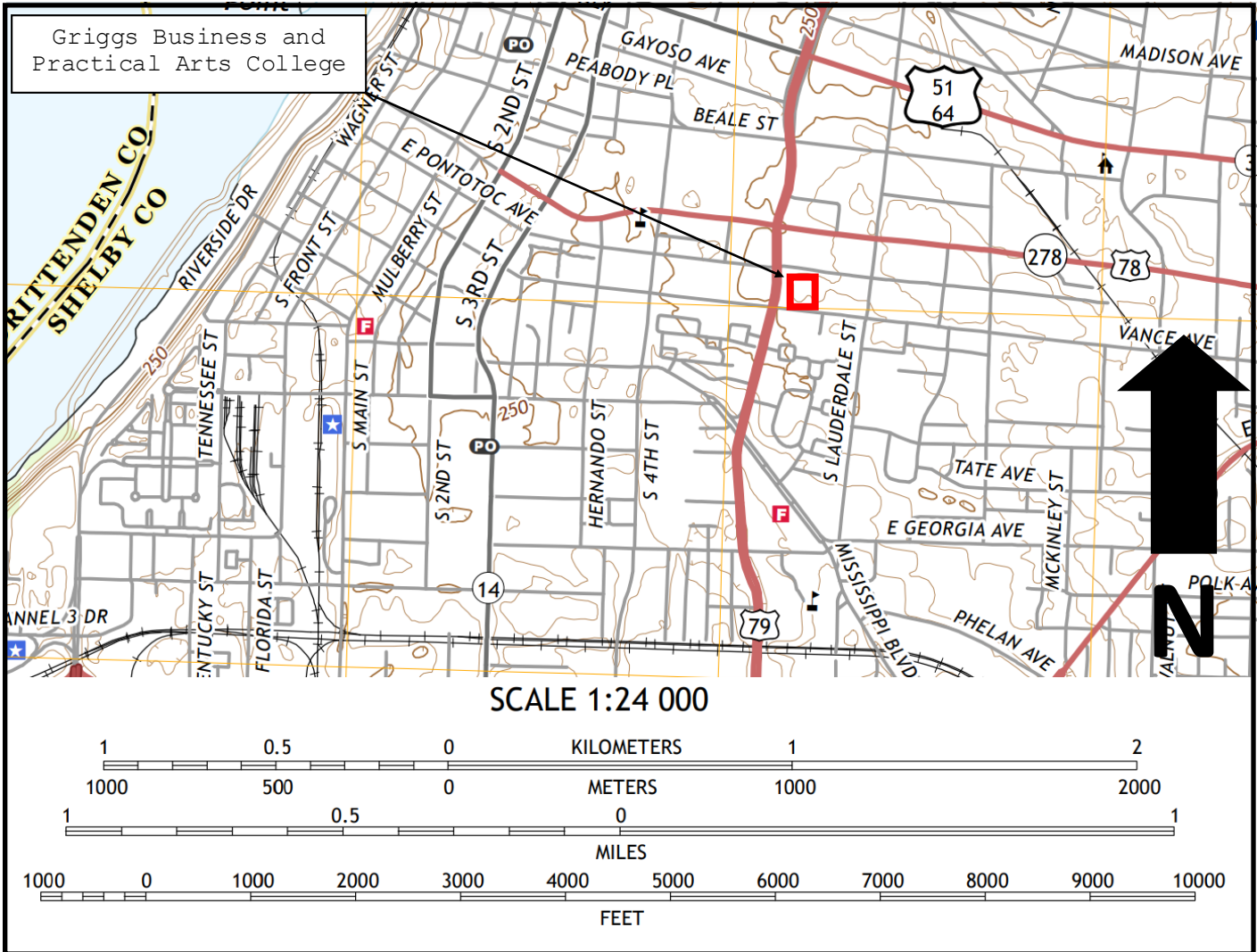
Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire nominated 0.463-acre property, which contains all the property historically and currently associated with the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College.

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USGS Topographic Map



Northwest Memphis, TN, AR, 2019. The location of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College is illustrated with a red square.

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Boundary Map



Approximate boundaries of the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College. Map courtesy of the Shelby County Assessor of Property.

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11. Form Prepared By

Name Stephanie Wade

Organization JS Real Estate

Street & Number 480 Doctor M.L.K. Jr Ave #201 Date September 16, 2022

City or Town Memphis Telephone 901-609-6027

E-mail jsrealestatellc@outlook.com State TN Zip Code 38126

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints. Photos should be submitted separately in a JPEG or TIFF format. Do not embed these photographs into the form)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. can be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps. They can also be embedded in the Section 7 or 8 narratives)

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College
Name of Property

Shelby County, Tennessee
County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Griggs Business and Practical Arts College

City or Vicinity: Memphis

County: Shelby

State: Tennessee

Photographer: Rebecca Schmitt

Date Photographed: November 2nd, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Image 1: Griggs Business and Practical Arts campus, Photographer facing north.

Image 2: Façade, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 3: West elevation, Photographer facing east.

Image 4: North elevation, Photographer facing south.

Image 5: Parking lot, Photographer facing southwest.

Image 6: East elevation, Photographer facing northwest.

Image 7: Griggs Business and Practical Arts Sign, Photographer facing southeast.

Image 8: South Corridor, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 9: South Corridor Staircase, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 10: South Corridor Staircase Detail, Photographer facing northwest.

Image 11: East Parlor, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 12: East Parlor, Photographer facing southwest.

Image 13: West Parlor, Bricked Windows, Photographer facing east.

Image 14: West Parlor, Photographer facing south.

Image 15: West Parlor, Photographer facing north.

Image 16: Non-historic Partition Walls, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 17: View of Partition Walls, Photographer facing northeast.

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College
Name of Property

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County and State

Image 18: Basement Door, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 19: View of Basement Stairs, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 20: North Corridor, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 21: Interior View of North Elevation wall, Photographer facing northwest.

Image 22: Stairwell, Photographer facing southeast.

Image 23: Second Story Corridor, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 24: Second Story, Southeast Room, Photographer facing southwest.

Image 25: Second Story, Southeast Room, Photographer facing north.

Image 26: Second Story, Southwest Room, Photographer facing southwest.

Image 27: Second Story, Northwest Room, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 28: Second Story North Corridor, Photographer facing northeast.

Image 29: Second Story Storage Room, Photographer facing northwest

Image 30: Second Story Northeast Room, Photographer facing east.

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College
Name of Property

Shelby County, Tennessee
County and State

Site Plan

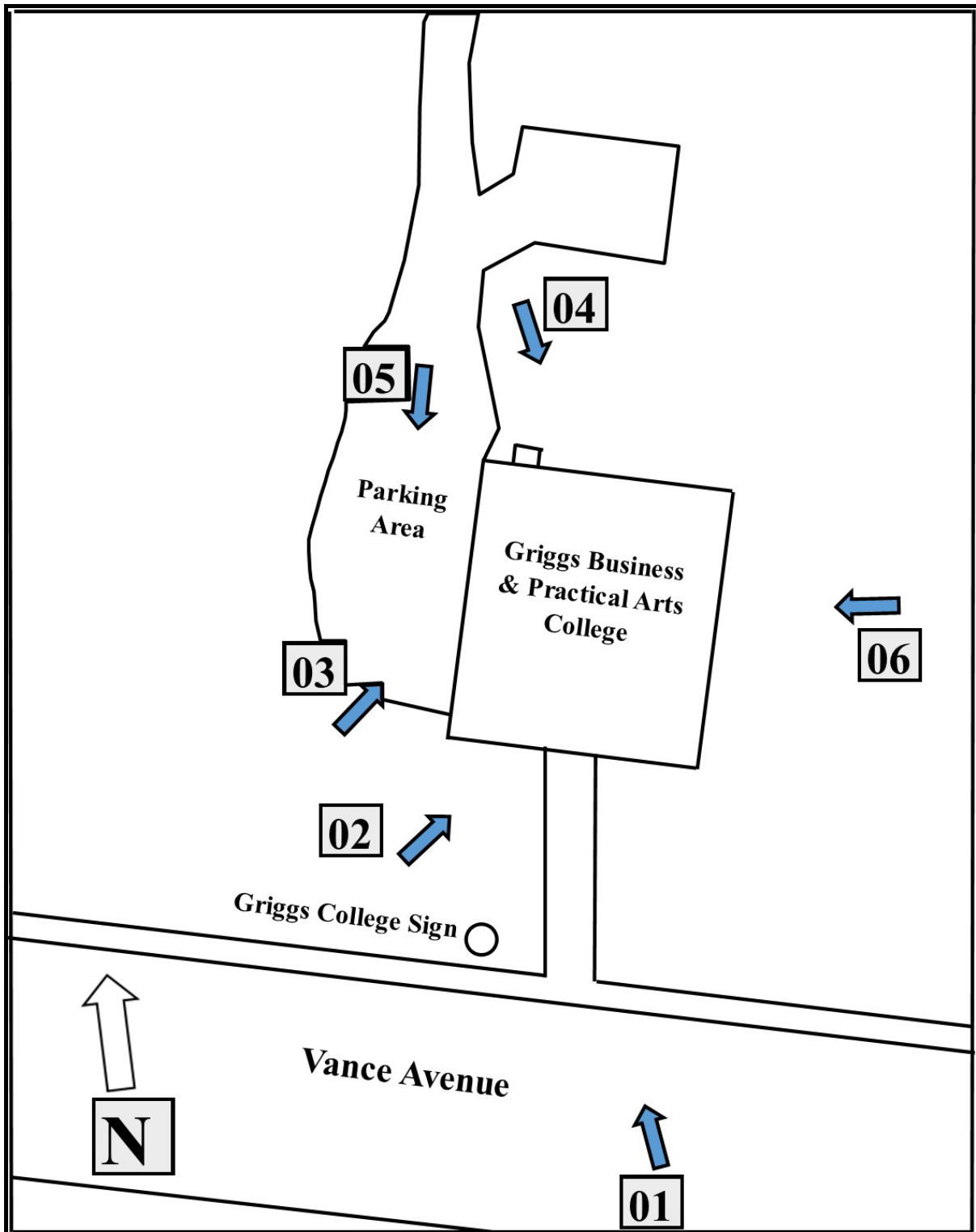
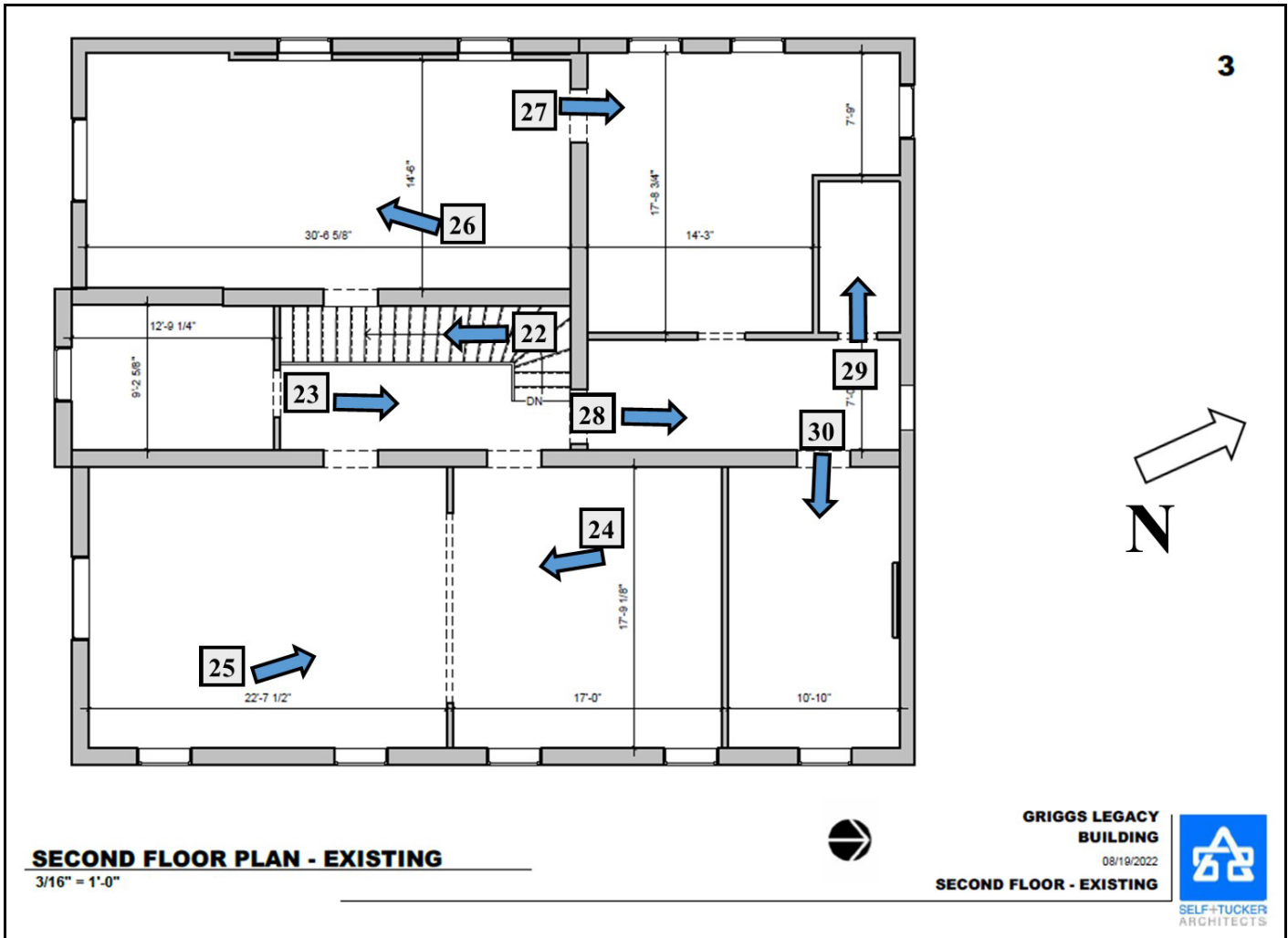


Image Courtesy of Shelby County Assessor of Property, 2022.

Griggs Business and Practical Arts College
Name of Property

Shelby County, Tennessee
County and State

Floor Plan, Second Floor



Floor Plan Image Courtesy of Self + Tucker Architects, 2022

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Griggs Business and Practical
Arts College

Name of Property
Shelby County, TN

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

"CONTINUE YOUR
EDUCATION AT GRIGGS"
APPROVED BY THE STATE
OF TENNESSEE AND THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIA-
TION AND COUNCIL OF
BUSINESS SCHOOLS.



COURSES OFFERED
SECRETARIAL, STENO-
GRAPHIC, JUNIOR AC-
COUNTING, HIGHER AC-
COUNTING, RADIO AND
TV, BUSINESS ADMINIS-
TRATION.
GRIGGS BUSINESS AND
PRACTICAL ARTS

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Griggs Business and Practical
Arts College

Name of Property
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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**J. M. GREGORY
ANSWERS CALL**

SHORT ILLNESS WAS FATAL

DECEASED WAS THE OLDEST LIVING MEMBER OF MEMPHIS BAR.

Came to Memphis Over Fifty-Five Years Ago, and Had Offices in Same Building for Forty Years. Funeral Sunday.

John Minter Gregory, 83 years of age, one of the oldest lawyers of the Memphis bar and a resident of this city for over fifty-five years, was claimed by death yesterday afternoon at 1:20 o'clock at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. J. A. Sample, 425 Vance avenue.

Mr. Gregory was stricken suddenly ill in his office shortly after beginning his daily work Wednesday morning. Medical aid was summoned and he was removed to his daughter's home, where since then he has been hovering between life and death. Heart failure is said to have been the cause of his death.

Mr. Gregory was born in Boone county, Kentucky, Sept. 28, 1827. He was educated at Farmer's College, in Ohio, and studied law in an office in Covington, Ky., where he fitted himself for admission to the bar. Before taking this step, however, he entered politics in Kentucky and was sent to the legislature, where after serving one term he came to Memphis and was received at the local bar Jan. 1, 1855. New Year's day he celebrated his fifty-fifth anniversary of this event.

After practicing in Memphis several years Mr. Gregory moved into offices on the third floor of the old Kit Williams building which, until two months ago stood on the southwest corner of Second street and Madison avenue.

FORTY YEARS IN ONE BUILDING.

It was in this building that he spent over forty years of his life. He was the first to move into the offices, which were then the best that Memphis afforded, and only two months ago, with the sound of the wrecker's blows ringing in his ears as the old brickwork was torn asunder, he superintended the moving of his office furniture to new quarters—his first move in nearly half a century. Mr. Gregory survived the old building hardly two months.

A year before he was admitted to the Memphis bar Mr. Gregory married Miss Elizabeth Stovall. The ceremony was performed April 18, 1854, and for nearly sixty years this lovable old couple cherished the vows they exchanged when their union was blessed by the minister.

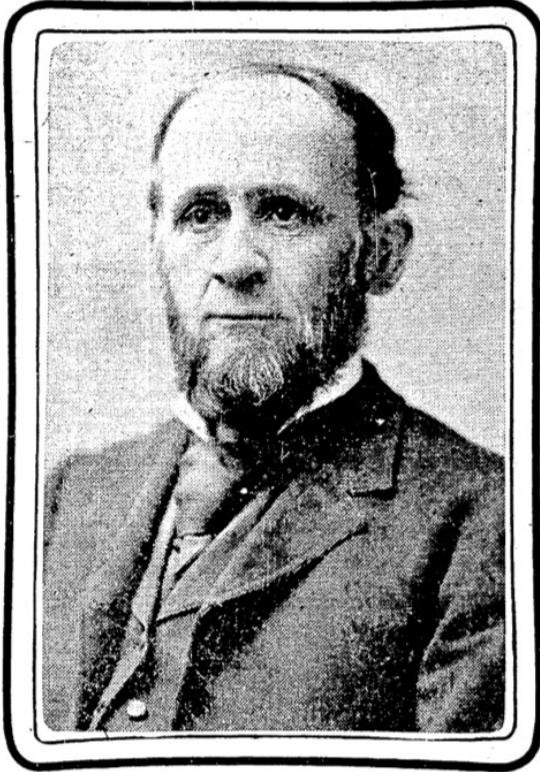
Mrs. Gregory is comforted in her hour of bereavement by two daughters, Mrs. J. A. Sample and Mrs. John M. Hays, both of this city. Five grand-children also survive.

The funeral services will be held from the residence of Mrs. Sample, 425 Vance avenue, Sunday afternoon with interment in Elmwood Cemetery.

Rev. James R. Winchester and Rev. H. M. W. Black will officiate.

REDS TRIUMPH OVER BLUES.

John Minter Gregory, Pioneer of the Memphis Bar, Succumbs to Short Illness



JOHN MINTER GREGORY.

MERCURY DOWN TO 12 ABOVE ZERO

peratures prevail as far south as the Gulf of Mexico and as far east in the Southern country as the Apalachicola river in Florida. The snow storm, which has prevailed for more than 12 hours over Eastern Arkansas and Northern Mississippi and the country northward, has subsided, leaving a sting of decidedly cold weather. Memphis reports a temperature of 12. Knoxville 18. Atlanta

"John Minter Gregory, Pioneer of the Memphis Bar, Succumbs to Short Illness," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, January 8, 1910

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Arts College

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N/A

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Mrs. Griggs Dies; Founded Business & Arts College

MEMPHIS, TENN. —(SNS)—

Mrs. **Sutton E. Griggs**, founder-president of Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, whose late husband, Rev. Sutton S. Griggs, stirred audiences across the entire southland a score of years ago with his silver-tongued oratory, died Tuesday morning of this week at Collins Chapel Hospital at 6:45. She had been confined with illness at the hospital about a week, but in failing health over a period of several years plagued Mrs. Griggs.

Her only close relative, an adopted daughter, Mrs. Eunice Griggs Jones, died about two years ago. Mrs. Griggs' immediate associates in recent years were her students at the college. It was this institution that she invested her last full measure of devotion, physically, spiritually, and otherwise, associates of the college declared.

Mrs. Griggs, according to unconfirmed reports, was a native of Virginia here she received her early education. She attended the Norfolk Mission College, and the high school at Portsmouth, both located in Virginia. Additional educational training was received at Hartshorn Memorial College, Richmond, and at the age of 17 Mrs. Griggs began teaching.

Date of her marriage to Rev. Griggs could not be disclosed by close friends, but her marriage led Mrs. Griggs into the field of religious education. She came to Nashville, and began studying at Roger Williams Baptist College, and later completed a course in Commercial Science at the old Walden University. Mrs. Griggs also did advanced work at Chicago University in Domestic Science, the American School of Home Economics, and Dennison School where she learned many of the arts.

Her first school was established in 1906 at Nashville with an enrollment of fifty students. She came back to Memphis in 1912, and four years later in 1916 opened a Practical Arts School.



MRS. SUTTON E. GRIGGS

Mrs. Griggs' greatest public service, however, was in religious education when her late husband was at the height of his ministerial career. Rev. Griggs, frequently sought as a public speaker, often quoted for his philosophy on race issues and other national problems, was one of Memphis' best known leaders and writers during the early twenties. He organized the Tabernacle Baptist church, and through his leadership constructed the great church edifice on South Lauderdale at Georgia St. The church, after Rev. Griggs left Memphis, . . . disappointed over the community's failure to accept many of his points of view on racial matters, was purchased by the Saints and is now pastored by Elder Charles H. Mason, of the Church of God in Christ.

Mrs. Griggs went to Texas with her husband and remained there until Rev. Griggs' death. Coming back to Memphis, Mrs. Griggs re-entered the educational field. Her college of business and practical

arts operated on Walker Avenue for a number of years, but moved to 303 South Lauderdale where the institution began developing rapidly. It was chartered in 1944 as the Griggs Business and Practical Arts College, and during the latter part of 1947 the institution was certified by the Veterans Administration to train veterans for courses in business and the practical arts.

Rev. S. A. Owen, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church, and head of the State Baptist Convention, is chairman of the board of directors of the college. Mrs. Griggs was a member of Metropolitan, devout worker in women's circles of the Baptist Church, and remained in close touch throughout her active life with affairs of the Baptist ranks of this city and state.

C. J. Gaston, prominent young insurance executive with the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co., and an ex-service man with overseas experience, is serving as business manager of the school, and secretary of the board of trustees. The college will continue to operate both Mr. Gaston and Mrs. Edith Herron, one of the chief instructors, told the Memphis World, but added that the board of trustees would have the final word as to details.

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TERM BEGINS AT GRIGGS
 — September 10, 1956 marked the beginning of the Fall term at Griggs Business and Practical Arts college located at 492 Vance ave. According to a statement from C. J. Gaston, managing director of the college, this institution was founded 51 years ago by the late Mrs. Emma Griggs, pioneer educator and wife of the late Rev. Sutton E. Griggs. Since that time more than 1500 students have graduated from its departments of business ed-

ucation and practical arts and many of them are now gainfully employed throughout the United States of America. The college is located on busy Vance ave. and occupies a building that is suitable in every respect and all classes are taught by competent instructors. The college is a non-profit institution chartered by the state of Tennessee and is managed by a board of directors with Rev. S. A. Owen serving as chairman of the board.

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**GRIGGS
BUSINESS COLLEGE**
SINCE 1916

**Accounting-Secretarial
Executive Secretarial
Business Administration**

**Refresher Course in
Typing and Shorthand**
DAY AND EVENING CLASSES

VETERANS ACCEPTED-
STUDENT LOANS AVAILABLE

Call or Write Rev. C.J.GASTON.DIRECTOR
492 Vance Avenue-Ph.527-4917

**Griggs Business
College**

Rejoices With The
MEMPHIS WORLD
in Celebration of its
20th ANNIVERSARY

* * * * *

For TWENTY YEARS, it has been a bulwark for its people, a crutch for those needing support, and a voice for protest.

In sincere appreciation of your accomplishments,

* * * * *

WE SALUTE YOU!

As the MEMPHIS WORLD is prepared to give you news, we are especially prepared to offer courses which will lead up to Civil Service Positions.

303 S. LAUDERDALE STREET PHONE 37-4917

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CHI RHO CHAPTER AT GRIGGS — The Alpha Nu chapter of the Chi Rho International Sorority was organized at Griggs Business college last week. Instructors and students elected as its first offi-

cers include: Mrs. Maxine Cash, president; Miss Bernice Strong, vice president; Mrs. Evergreen Caldwell, secretary; Mrs. Helen Deans Burrell, corresponding secretary; Miss Myrtle Lake, treasurer;

Miss Will Mae Caldwell, sergeant-at-arms, Mrs. Lynda N. Allen, historian; Mrs. Louise M. Gaston, parliamentarian; and Miss Maggie G. Newsom, sponsor. (Withers photo)

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N/A

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Bright Future

PREPARE NOW
For Greater Opportunities In Life.

COURSES OFFERED:
Stenographic
Secretarial
Executive Secretarial
Junior Accounting
Higher Accounting

DAY AND NIGHT CLASSES
Reasonable Tuition Rates
Placement Service For Graduates

Call or Write:
GRIGGS BUSINESS COLLEGE
492 Vance Ave.
Ph. JA. 7-4917

ANNOUNCING
New Classes to Begin
March 9, 1964

8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Daily - 6 to 10:15 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday, Friday

COURSES OFFERED

Retail Merchandising	Salesmanship
Secretarial	Executive Secretarial
Junior Accounting	Higher Accounting

REFRESHER COURSE IN TYPING AND SHORTHAND
Low Tuition Rates Competent Instructors

Call or Write
GRIGGS BUSINESS COLLEGE
492 Vance Avenue Phone 527-4917

Accredited by the
Accrediting Commission for Business Schools

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Griggs Business and Practical Arts College

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WANTED—AT ONCE

100 negroes to train for positions as secretaries, stenographers and clerks in Civil Service and private business concerns. Day and night classes. Veterans and out-of-town students accepted.

CALL OR WRITE THE REGISTRAR

GRIGGS BUSINESS COLLEGE, 492 Vance Ave.

PHONE 37-4917



your key...

TO GREATER VALUES

GRIGGS
BUSINESS COLLEGE

492 Vance Avenue JA7-4917

Property Owner(s):

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name 492 Vance, LLC
Street &
Number 480 Doctor M.L.K. Jr Ave #201 Telephone 901.609-6027
City or Town Memphis State/Zip TN 38126

GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE



1 OF 30



2 OF 30

GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE



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GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE



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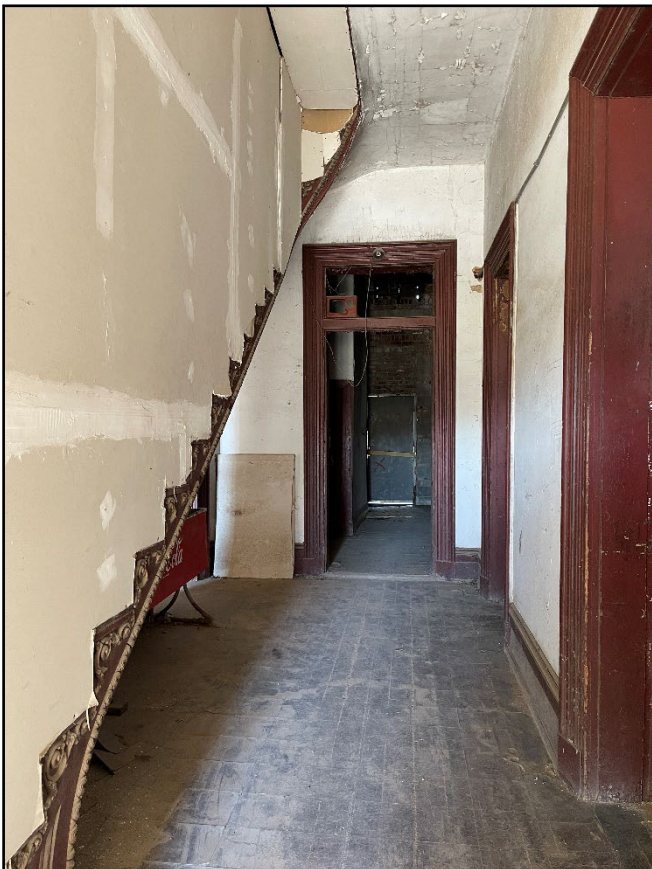


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GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE



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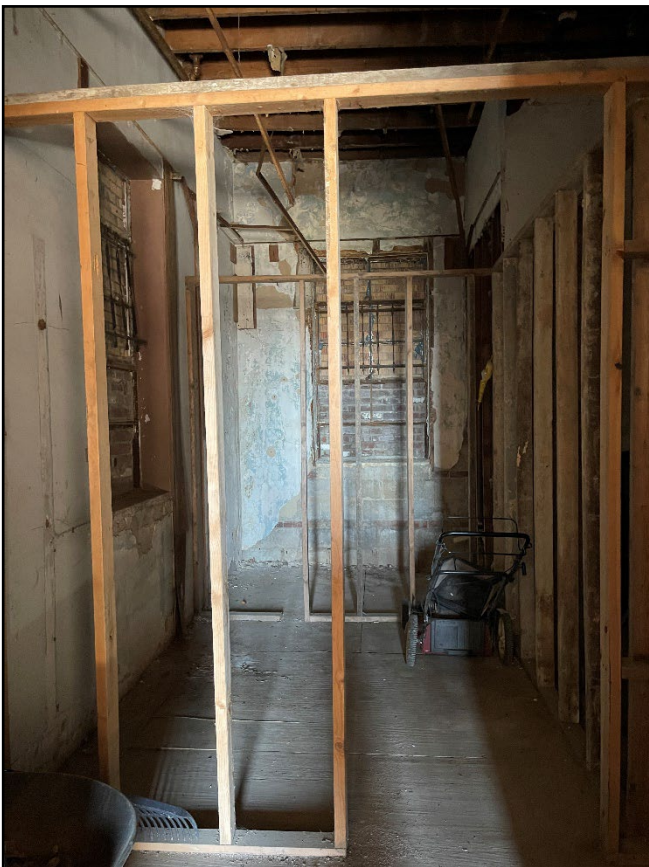


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GRIGGS BUSINESS AND PRACTICAL ARTS COLLEGE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE



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