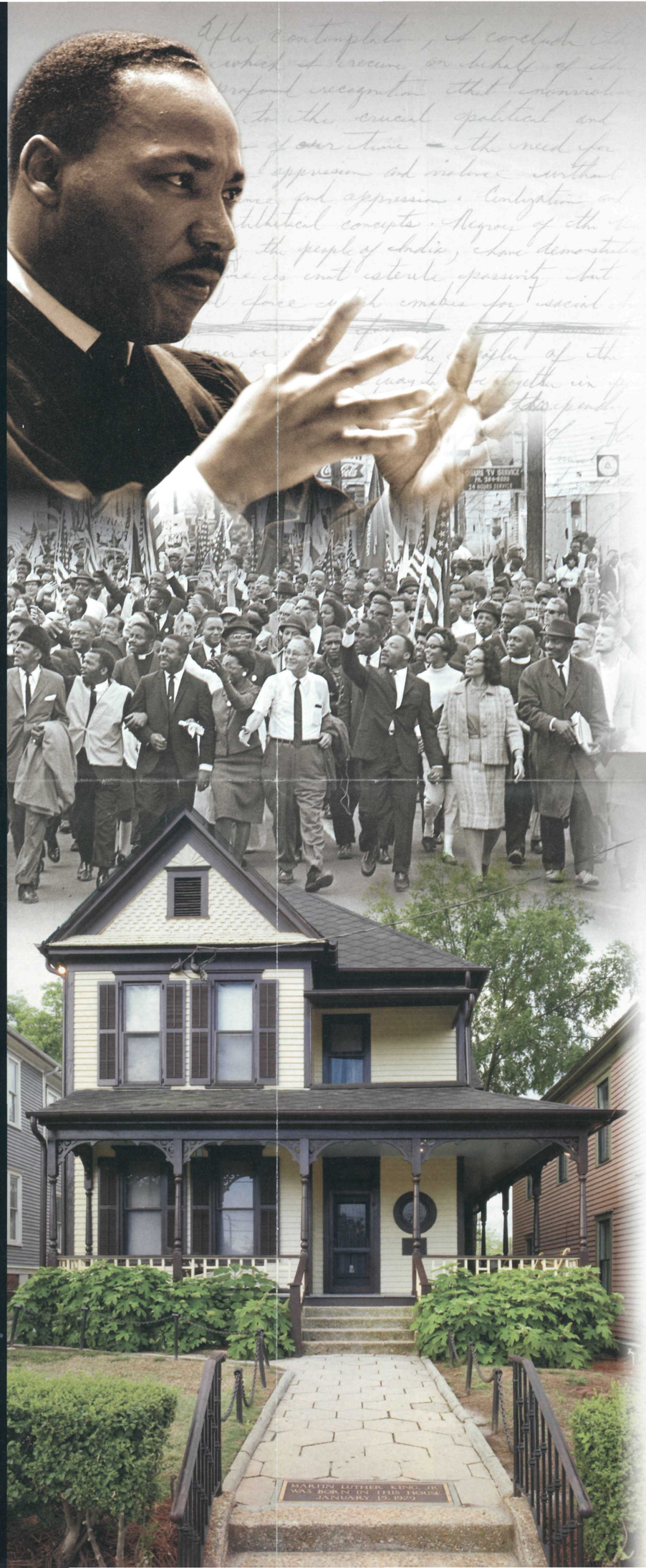
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Martin Luther King, Jr.
National Historic Site
Georgia

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Sweet Auburn to Montgomery 1929–1959

Martin Luther King Jr. grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, surrounded by his close-knit family. Neighbors were prosperous working people. Life for the Kings revolved around Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin's father and maternal grandfather preached. Ordinary as his childhood was, it played out against the backdrop of the segregated South. Young Martin grew increasingly aware of words and actions—in Sweet Auburn as in other African American communities—that would become the modern civil rights movement.

The roots of Dr. King's lifelong fight for equality are here at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The house where Dr. King was born still stands, along with the surrounding neighborhood, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and many more places from his youth. In preserving this setting, the site honors the man and those who live the legacy.

Left, from top: Dr. King, 1960s; handwritten text for Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech; Selma to Montgomery march, 1965. *Right, clockwise from top:* Young Martin and family; at Ebenezer; arrested in Montgomery, Ala., 1958; outside SCLC headquarters; first book published; wedding day.

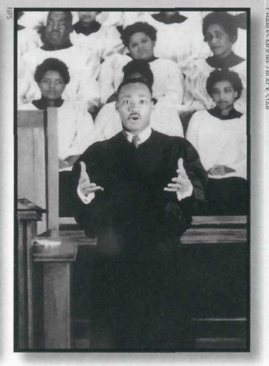
PORTRAIT—FLIP SCHULKE / BLACK STAR; SPEECH—THE KING CENTER; MARCH—AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

1929
Born January 15 at home of maternal grandparents, 501 Auburn Avenue. *(Above, standing: Alberta Williams King (mother), Martin Luther "Daddy" King Sr., (father), Jennie Williams (maternal grandmother); seated: A. D. (brother), Christine (sister), Martin Jr.*

1930s–40s
Attends segregated Atlanta public schools: Yonge Street Elementary; David T. Howard Colored Elementary; Atlanta University Laboratory School; and Booker T. Washington High. Admitted to Morehouse College.

1947
Preaches his first (trial) sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

1948
Ordained as Baptist minister and appointed assistant pastor at Ebenezer. Graduates from Morehouse College with BA in sociology. Enters Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Penn. Begins studying life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.



1951
Earns BD from Crozer. Begins PhD studies in theology at Boston University. Meets Coretta Scott, a student at New England Conservatory of Music.

THE KING CENTER

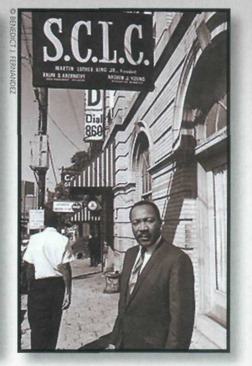
1953
Marries Coretta Scott June 18 at her parent's home in Marion, Ala.

1954
U.S. Supreme Court rules school segregation unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education. Dr. King becomes pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.

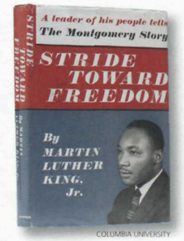
1955
Earns PhD in Systematic Theology from Boston University. Rosa Parks arrested December 1 for violating Montgomery bus segregation ordinance. Dr. King and others initiate bus boycott. Dr. King receives national attention as a civil rights leader.

1956
U.S. Supreme Court ends segregation on public transportation. Montgomery buses integrated on December 20, 1956, and boycott ends after 381 days.

1957
Becomes founding president of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Appears on cover of *Time* magazine. Congress passes first civil rights act since Reconstruction.



1958
Stride Toward Freedom published, the first of his four books.



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

1959
As guests of Prime Minister Nehru, Dr. and Mrs. King travel to India to study the nonviolent teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Back in the U.S, while autographing his book in Harlem, New York City, King is stabbed in the chest and seriously wounded.

Back Home—and Beyond 1960–1968

In the 12 or so years that Martin Luther King Jr. led the American Civil Rights Movement, African Americans made more progress toward equality than in the previous three centuries. Dr. King credited this success to the courageous men, women, and children he led, and to the philosophy of nonviolence he learned from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, Mahatma Gandhi, and others. Perhaps most widely celebrated for his powerful "I Have a Dream" speech, Dr. King was also a brilliant strategist in organizing nonviolent protests, and a tireless soldier marching side by side with others in the movement.

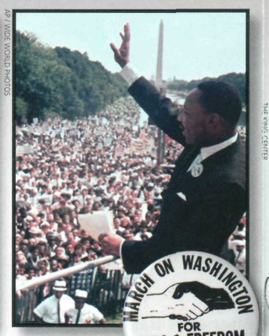
In 1964 he became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. In January 1986 the nation first celebrated the federal holiday in his honor. Dr. King earned his place in history with his dream of equality for African Americans, but his ultimate dream was of human rights worldwide.

Left: King Birth Home, 501 Auburn Avenue. *Right, clockwise from top:* Dr. King at Ebenezer with Daddy King in background; 1963 March on Washington; Kings with children Bernice, Dexter, Martin Luther III, and Yolanda; marble tombs; Nobel medal; Dr. King's suitcase from final Memphis trip.

HOUSE, SUITCASE, MEDAL, AND TOMBS—NPS / GARY TARLETON

1960
King family moves to Atlanta. Dr. King becomes co-pastor of Ebenezer with Daddy King. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed in Raleigh, N.C., to coordinate student protests. First lunch counter sit-ins occur in Greensboro, N.C. Dr. King arrested in Atlanta sit-in.

1961
Dr. King and other protesters arrested in Albany, Ga. Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) organizes Freedom Riders to nonviolently protest interstate bus segregation.



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

1962
Arrested at prayer vigil in Albany, Ga. Sentenced to 45 days in jail, served three days, then ordered to leave town. "For the first time," he stated, "we witnessed being kicked out of jail." James Meredith is first black student to enroll at University of Mississippi.

1963
Writes "Letter from Birmingham Jail" after being arrested in Alabama protest. *Strength to Love* published. Delivers "I Have a Dream" speech at Lincoln Memorial during March on Washington *(above)*.

1964
Named *Time* magazine Man of the Year. Attends signing of 1964 Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson. *Why We Can't Wait* published. Wins Nobel Peace Prize.

1965
Malcolm X assassinated in Harlem. SNCC, SCLC, and other protesters are beaten during Selma to Montgomery voting rights march in Alabama. Under federal protection, Dr. King and 25,000 marchers finally reach state capital. President Johnson signs 1965 Voting Rights Act.

1966
Campaigns in Chicago for equality in education and housing; leads march through crowds of angry whites on city's south side. James Meredith shot and wounded in Memphis, Tenn., during his solitary March Against Fear. Dr. King and others continued the march in Meredith's honor.

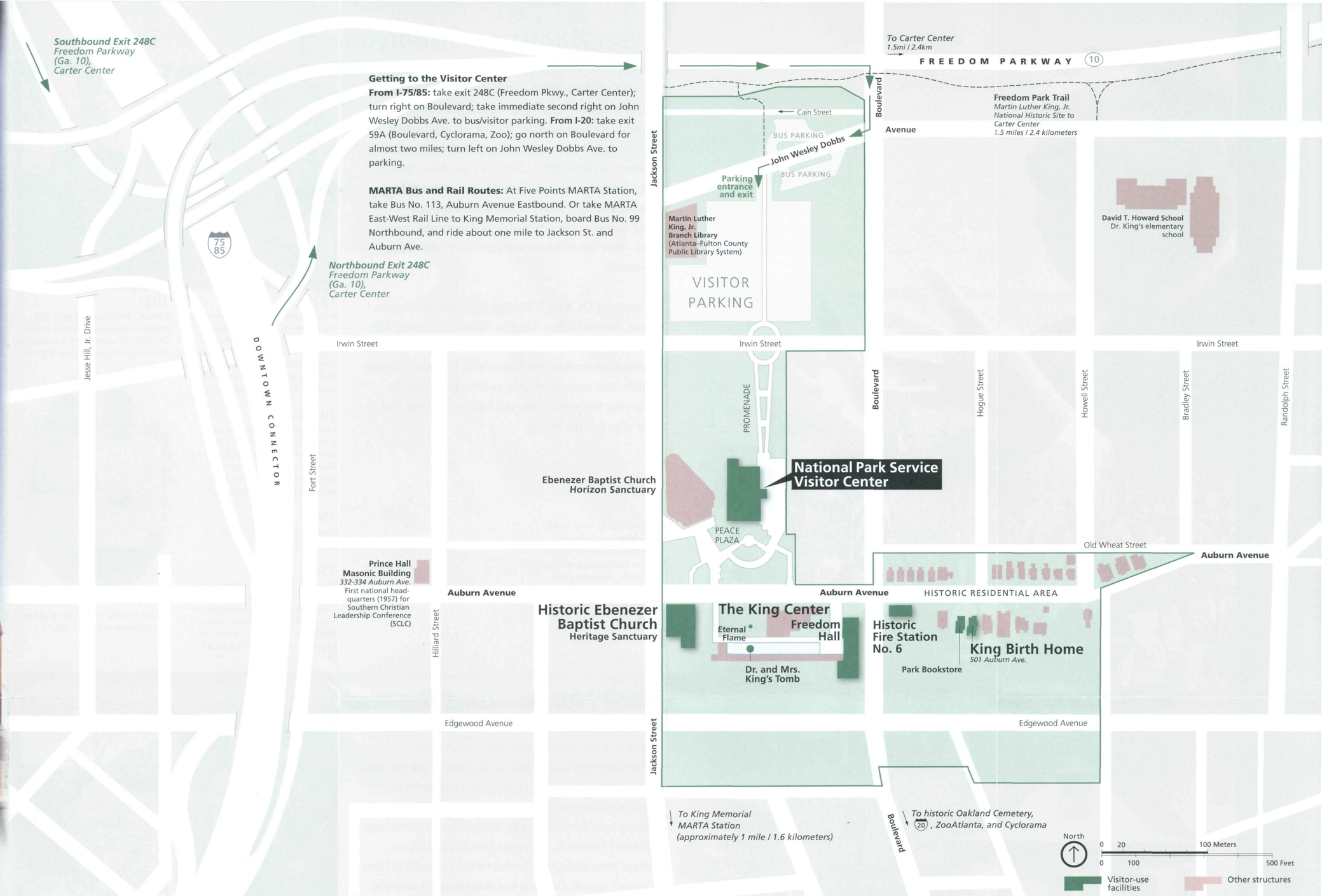
1967
Delivers first public antiwar speech, "Beyond Vietnam," at Riverside Church in New York City. Launches SCLC's Poor People's Campaign. *Where Do We Go From Here* published.

1968
March 28: Leads 6,000 protesters through Memphis in support of striking sanitation workers; march turns violent. April 3: Final speech, "I've Been to the Mountain Top." April 4: Fatally shot in Memphis. April 9: Buried in Atlanta.

1969–Present
Coretta Scott King and supporters establish the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Center in Atlanta, which becomes the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded posthumously in 1977. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site established in 1980. First observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday in 1986. Coretta Scott King dies in 2006 and is entombed next to her husband.

Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve . . . You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve . . . You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.

Martin Luther King Jr., "The Drum Major Instinct" sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church, February 4, 1968



Planning Your Visit

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site was established in 1980 to preserve the places where Martin Luther King Jr. was born, lived, worked, worshipped, and is buried. The site is open daily except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Hours are 9 am to 5 pm (6 pm in summer).

Check at the visitor center for schedules of King Birth Home tours and other activities. Guided tours of the Birth Home are offered daily, free of charge. Tours are limited to 15 persons and fill quickly; on-site registration is required. Exhibit areas include the Children of Courage Discovery Center, Courage to Lead, and D.R.E.A.M. Gallery. Films about Dr. King and the civil rights movement are shown throughout the day.

The preservation district surrounds the national historic site. The eastern part of the district is primarily residential and the western section commercial. Most buildings within the national historic site and preservation district are privately owned.

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Heritage Sanctuary

Built in 1914–22, Ebenezer was the center of spiritual and community life for the Williams-King family. "The church has always been a second home for me," Dr. King wrote. For nearly 80 years, Martin's maternal grandfather, Rev. Adam Daniel "A. D." Williams, and father Rev. Martin Luther "Daddy" King Sr. served as pastors. Dr. King's grandmother Jennie C. Williams and mother Alberta "Mama" King diligently led various church activities.

During the 1960s Dr. King served as co-pastor with Daddy King. After Dr. King was assassinated, his brother A. D. King was co-pastor until his sudden death in 1969. In 1974 a gunman fatally shot Mama King and Deacon Edward Boykin and wounded three others in the sanctuary.

The Heritage Sanctuary *(below)* and Fellowship Hall are restored to their 1960s appearance.

The King Center

Freedom Hall has exhibits and a gift shop/resource center on the first floor. Upstairs are biographical exhibits on Dr. King *(pastoral robe and sash below)* and Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, and Mahatma Gandhi.

The Reflecting Pool surrounds the tombs of Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr. The Eternal Flame serves as a reminder of the Kings' undying commitment to their beloved community.

Historic Fire Station No. 6

Built in 1894 in Romanesque Revival style, the fire station stood guard over the city for nearly 100 years. In the 1960s it became Atlanta's first racially integrated firehouse. It closed in 1991.

The exterior *(below)* is restored to its appearance in the 1930s–40s. The interior has exhibits on firefighting history, including a 1927 LaFrance fire engine.

King Birth Home

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in an upstairs bedroom *(below)* on January 15, 1929. Young "M. L." lived here for his first 12 years with his parents, maternal grandparents, sister, brother, uncle, and great aunt.

In 1941 the family moved to Boulevard and the house on Auburn became a rental property. It has been restored to the time of M. L.'s childhood in the 1930s–40s.

Historic Residential Area

The residential neighborhood surrounding the King Birth Home is still an active community. Many of the late 19th- and early 20th-century homes *(below right)* are restored and used as park offices or private residences. Wayside exhibit panels give some history of the Sweet Auburn community.

Books and gifts are available for sale at the Eastern National shop at 496 Auburn Ave., next door to the Birth Home.

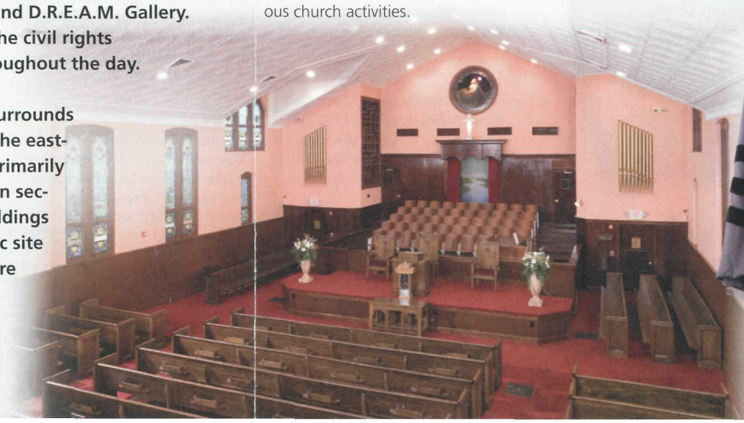
For a Safe Park Visit

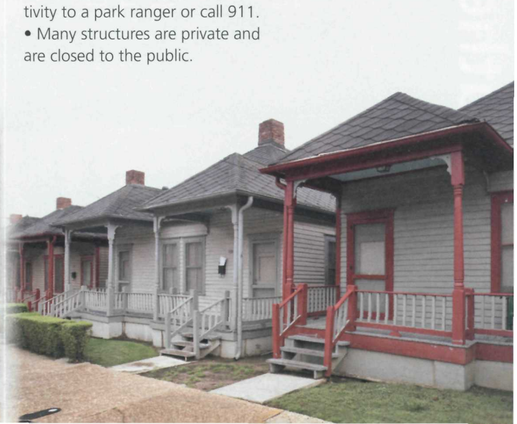
Park in designated visitor parking, 417 John Wesley Dobbs Ave. *(see map above)*. • Secure your vehicle and personal belongings • Points of interest are in close proximity of each other. Sites that have steps to climb are wheelchair accessible by other means. • Use established crosswalks at intersections. • Service animals are welcome in the park. • Solicitation (panhandling) is not permitted. • Firearms are prohibited in park buildings. • Report unsafe or suspicious activity to a park ranger or call 911. • Many structures are private and are closed to the public.

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. For more information, visit www.nps.gov.

Martin Luther King, Jr.
National Historic Site
450 Auburn Ave., NE
Atlanta, GA 30312
404-331-6922
www.nps.gov/malu

GPO:2013—378-769/30020 Reprint 2013
Printed on recycled paper.





ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE—NPS / GARY TARLETON