

HISTORIC FURNISHINGS REPORT

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., BIRTH HOME

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Atlanta, Georgia

by

David H. Wallace  
Staff Curator

Division of Historic Furnishings  
Harpers Ferry Center  
National Park Service  
March 1989

PLEASE RETURN TO:  
TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER  
DENVER SERVICE CENTER  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ON MICROFILM

**B&W Scans**  
3.14.2003

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA .....	1
HISTORICAL DATA.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	3
ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC OCCUPANCY.....	5
Occupants of the Auburn Avenue House, 1929-1941 .....	5
EVIDENCE OF FURNISHINGS .....	6
General Evidence .....	6
Evidence for Specific Rooms .....	11
Porch .....	11
Entrance Hall (F-1) .....	12
Stair Hall (F-2) .....	14
Living Room (F-3).....	16
Williams/King Bedroom (F-4).....	18
Dining Room (F-5) .....	20
Kitchen (F-6).....	22
Christine's Room (F-7) .....	24
Downstairs Bathroom (F-8).....	26
Pantry (F-9) .....	26
Back Porch (F-10).....	27
Upstairs Hall (S-1 and S-2) .....	27
Front Bedroom (S-3).....	29
Birth Room (S-4).....	30
Joel's Room (S-5).....	31
Spare Room (S-6).....	33
Upstairs Bathroom (S-7).....	34
Cellar.....	35

<b>FURNISHING PLAN</b> .....	37
<b>INTERPRETIVE OBJECTIVES</b> .....	37
<b>OPERATING PLAN</b> .....	38
<b>VISITOR CIRCULATION AND ROOM DRAWINGS</b> .....	39
<b>LIST OF FURNISHINGS</b> .....	59
Front Porch .....	59
Entrance Hall (F-1) .....	61
Stair Hall (F-2) .....	64
Living Room (F-3) .....	65
Dining Room (F-5) .....	71
Kitchen (F-6) .....	76
Christine's Room (F-7) .....	84
Front Hall/Boys' Bedroom (S-2) .....	88
Birth Room (S-4) .....	91
Joel's Room (S-5) .....	96
<b>FURNISHINGS MAINTENANCE AND PROTECTION     RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURES</b> .....	99
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	101
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS</b> .....	103
<b>APPENDIXES</b> .....	115
APPENDIX A—"Restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home: Plan and Procedures." Undated statement, ca. 1975 .....	116
APPENDIX B—"Preliminary Draft of Inventory—MLK, Jr., Birth Home," January 11, 1975 .....	118
APPENDIX C—"Opening Tour—Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home," February 11, 1975 .....	120
APPENDIX D—Interview with Mrs. Christine King Farris, March 13, 1984 .....	124
APPENDIX E—Interview with Rev. Joel King, Sr., Mansfield, Ohio, November 13, 1987 .....	131
APPENDIX F—Interview with Mrs. Benita Bennett, friend of the King family and tour guide at the Birth Home, January 6, 1984 .....	149

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For his willingness to answer my many questions about his memories of the house on Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, I am deeply grateful to the Rev. Joel King, Sr. My November 1987 visit with him in his home in Mansfield, Ohio, not only provided much new information on the Birth Home, where he spent most of his boyhood and adolescence; it also afforded me a moving glimpse into the family life which was at the center of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s childhood environment.

I am also indebted to Superintendent Randolph Scott and his staff, particularly Dean Rowley, Troy Lissimore, and Cathy Jones for introducing me to the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site and the Sweet Auburn Historic District and for supplying me with research data and interview tapes relative to the Birth Home and its furnishings.

Cheryl Hill and Kam Sloan, editorial assistants, and Norma Smallwood, secretary, of the Division of Historic Furnishings have been of great help in seeing this report through to completion.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Planning documents affecting the use and management of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home are:

Entered on National Register of Historic Houses on March 27, 1974.

Plans and elevations, Birth Home, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, March 1984.

General Management Plan, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site and Preservation District, 1986.

Historic Structure Report, Martin Luther King Birth Home, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, November 1986.

Interpretive Prospectus and Scope of Collection Statement, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, January 1987.

## HISTORICAL DATA

### INTRODUCTION

Since the Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home has already been partially restored and refurnished, it is important to summarize the available information on the goals of that restoration and the procedures followed by those who carried out the refurnishing.

On August 17, 1971, Mrs. Alberta Williams King deeded to the Martin Luther King Memorial Center the house and lot, 501 Auburn Avenue, where her son, Martin Luther King, Jr., was born in 1929 and lived until 1941, when he was 12 years old.<sup>1</sup> Under the auspices of the Center (now known as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Non-Violent Social Change, Inc.), plans were drawn up "to restore the building and furnish the rooms as they were during the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth and boyhood years."<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Alberta Williams King and her daughter, Mrs. Christine King Farris, headed the restoration committee. The furnishings committee was chaired by Mrs. Nina King Miller, a close friend of the King family; the other members were Mrs. King, Mrs. Farris, and Mrs. India Crittenden, "a former neighbor and friend from the earlier days on Auburn Avenue."<sup>3</sup>

Most of the information on furnishings and interior details came from family members, especially Mrs. King and Mrs. Farris. "Taped interviews with these

- 
- 1 Fulton County Deed Book 5442, p. 545, Fulton County Courthouse, Atlanta, Georgia, quoted in National Park Service, "Historic Structure Report, Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home," p. 17.
  - 2 "Restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home: Plan and Procedures," 1975 (cited hereafter as "Restoration...Plan and Procedures"). See Appendix A.
  - 3 "Opening Tour—Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home," February 11, 1975 (cited hereafter as "Opening Tour"). See Appendix C.

family members and friends have been conducted and will be continued," the committee reported in 1975, "to provide house, neighborhood and life-style information as a part of the future program for the house."<sup>4</sup>

"Many original pieces that came from the house were available from family and friends," the 1975 committee report stated. "Style and form of the others has been determined from the memories of family and friends. These details were checked with sources such as the Sears Roebuck catalogs of the period for stylistic details." Funds for the purchase of furnishings came largely from academic sororities, including Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Delta Sigma Theta.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly before the house was opened to the public on February 11, 1975, Mrs. Farris, chairman of the restoration project's advisory council, reported:

We have been working on the home since 1971 and the restoration is now complete enough to admit the public. We were fortunate because Mother was able to personally supervise the painting, wallpapering and selection of some of the furniture before she was taken from us and the house is very much as it was when Martin was born.<sup>6</sup>

The committee recognized, however, that the restoration was not complete and regarded it as an ongoing project. Plans for family-oriented exhibits in the downstairs bedroom never materialized, leaving a difficult-to-interpret empty room in the middle of the first floor; token furnishing of the room as Pastor Williams' study only compounded the problem, since there is no evidence that it ever served that function.<sup>7</sup> Upstairs, the lack of a bedroom showing how young Martin lived when he was growing up left another gap in the story.

These and other furnishing questions were still unresolved when the operation of the Birth Home was turned over to the National Park Service in 1983, with the understanding that the Service would carry out the necessary research to document the history of the structure and its furnishings during the years Martin Luther King, Jr., lived there.

4 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures," 1975. These taped interviews have not been available to the author of this report.

5 Ibid.; Mrs. Benita Bennett, interview, January 6, 1984. See Appendix F.

6 Quoted in "King Center Announces Opening of Birth Home," press release of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change, dated February 6, 1975.

7 "Opening Tour," 1975.

The present report on the furnishings incorporates information gathered in connection with the 1974-75 restoration project, in 1984 interviews with Mrs. Farris and Mrs. Bennett, and in a 1987 interview with the Rev. Joel King, Sr., younger brother of Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., and a resident of the house from about 1927 to 1937. Since the site staff plans to conduct additional interviews with members of the King family and friends from the 1930s and 1940s, this report may be subject to future revision on the basis of evidence not presently available.

## **ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC OCCUPANCY**

### **Occupants of the Auburn Avenue House, 1929-1941**

At the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth on January 15, 1929, the family in residence at 501 Auburn Avenue included the following persons:<sup>8</sup>

Rev. A.D. Williams, aged about 65, the baby's maternal grandfather, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, a founder and past president of the Atlanta Chapter, NAACP;

Mrs. Jennie Celeste Parks Williams, Martin's maternal grandmother, known as "Mama";

Rev. Mike (not yet Martin Luther) King, almost 30, the baby's father, pastor of two small Baptist churches in the Atlanta area;

Mrs. Alberta Williams King, 25, the baby's mother, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Williams, a talented musician who gave up her intended teaching career to marry Rev. Mike King in 1926;

Willie Christine King, 16 months old, the baby's older sister;

Joel King, 13, Mike King's youngest brother who had come to live with Mike and Alberta soon after their marriage;

---

8 Information in this section has been drawn from the following sources: Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982); Martin Luther King, Sr., with Clayton Riley, *Daddy King, an Autobiography* (New York: William Morrow Company, 1980); Lerone Bennett, Jr., *What Manner of Man* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1964); and Rev. Joel King, Sr., interview, 1987 (Appendix E).



Mrs. Ida Worthem (Aunt Ida), Mrs. Williams' sister, who made her home with the Williams family in her last years.

A third child was born to Mike and Alberta King in July 1930, a son named Alfred Daniel, but generally known as A.D. His older brother, called at first Mike, Jr., came to be known as M.L. after his father formally took the name Martin Luther King, Sr., in 1933.

The first break in the family circle occurred in 1931 when Grandfather Williams died of a heart attack while playing with little Christine. M.L.'s Great-aunt Ida also died while he was a small child.

M.L.'s Uncle Joel, only 13 years his senior, remained a part of the household through his college years until his marriage in 1937, when he left for his first pastorate. He was an occasional visitor in later years.

"Mama" Williams, to whom M.L. was especially devoted, died suddenly in the spring of 1941. Although she left 501 Auburn Avenue to her daughter Alberta, the Kings bought a larger house on Boulevard, a few blocks away, and moved in the summer of 1941, when M.L. was twelve. The Auburn Avenue house thereafter was rented out.

Besides the permanent residents, there were also many visitors—family and friends—who stayed overnight in the one or two spare rooms available most of the time. According to Rev. Joel King, there were no paying boarders during these years.

## **EVIDENCE OF FURNISHINGS**

### **General Evidence**

The following evidence relates to the house in general rather than to specific rooms.

**Wall Treatments.** During a visit to the Birth Home about two weeks after the building restoration had begun, Russell V. Keune, Director of Field Services, National Trust for Historic Preservation, noted that "almost all of the interior plaster had already been removed from the first and second floors." He "urged that immediate steps be taken to salvage whatever sections might be available so as to provide some documentary evidence of what the interior colors and

wallpapers were."<sup>9</sup> There is nothing to indicate that this recommendation was followed, except, perhaps, for the trim paint. Interior paint colors and finishes for the 1929-1941 period were selected on the basis of Mrs. Alberta King's memory, as confirmed by "analysis of the old paint chips."<sup>10</sup>

Wallpapers for the rooms to be furnished were chosen by Mrs. King "as those available patterns that were closest to those she remembered."<sup>11</sup> In rooms not refurnished, paint was applied directly on the new plaster; there is no recorded evidence of the original wallpaper in these rooms.

**Floor Coverings.** For the living room Mrs. King selected a new rug "similar to the one she originally used." Mrs. Farris recalled that:

Other rooms had linoleum, floor-size rugs. Since this material was not available [in 1975], vinyl rugs with similar patterns were chosen. If some linoleum rugs can be found in the course of the continuing project, they will be substituted.<sup>12</sup>

The Rev. Joel King, Sr., remembered linoleum on the floors in the kitchen, hallway, and bathroom downstairs; woven rugs in the entrance hall, living room, and bedrooms; and a bare floor in the dining room.<sup>13</sup>

---

9 Russell V. Keune, Director, Field Services, National Trust for Historic Preservation, field report of meeting on February 21, 1974, with officials of The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change and representatives of other organizations interested in the restoration of the Birth Home (cited hereafter as Keune, field report, 1974).

10 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures," 1975.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Rev. Joel King, Sr., taped interview, November 13, 1987 (cited hereafter as Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview).

**Lighting Fixtures.** According to Mr. Keune and the restoration committee, Mrs. Farris remembered that the ceiling lights were operated by pull chains rather than by wall switches.<sup>14</sup> Ceiling lamp holders of this type were installed during the restoration. It is not known whether any of the original fixtures were still in place and retained.

**Fireplaces and Heaters.** "Mantels and fireplace tiles were extant.... Fireplace grates and heatrola or circulator heaters which were used before central heating will be researched and an attempt made to find examples."<sup>15</sup>

Use of gas heaters during the historic period, after central heating had been introduced, is evidenced by the following:

According to an interview conducted with Mrs. Farris on July 19, 1983, there were gas heaters in the house the day the family moved from Auburn Ave. to Boulevard. Evidences remaining in the house confirm this recollection. However, it is unknown as to when these heaters were added, but it is obvious that they were added during the historical period. Therefore, gas heaters can be added to the house as well as left out and either way be historically correct....<sup>16</sup>

The Rev. Joel King, Sr., did not recall the gas heaters, which may indicate that they were added after he left about 1937.<sup>17</sup>

In the same report, the unidentified architect mentioned that "many of the fireplace hearths either have damaged or missing tiles; these," he recommended, "should be replaced in kind. Because these tiles are nonexistent, we recommend that they be custom made."<sup>18</sup>

---

14 Keune, field report, 1974; "Restoration...Plan and Procedures," 1975.

15 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures," 1975.

16 "Historic Structure Report, The Martin Luther King Birth Home, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Atlanta, Georgia," p. 29 (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, November 1986) (cited hereafter as HSR).

17 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

18 HSR, p. 30.

In regard to fireplace covers, the architect reported:

There are very few fireplace covers present in the house (not mentioned in inventory). Even though these are [not?] directly attached to the structure, they are still considered as part of the structure. These covers are in a great need of revarnishing and repainting where needed."<sup>19</sup>

In a 1984 interview Mrs. Bennett, a long-time resident of Atlanta, suggested that "in all probability there were blowers in this house that went in front of the fireplaces, so that you could close it off when you weren't using it and to keep the draft from coming down." A blower, she explained,

is a piece of metal and it was usually decorative...and it even helped you get the fire started. It would be back, like this outline in here [in living room fireplace] and it would fit in this area and it would have handles on it, so that you could pull it out and also push it in when you got ready to start it. But this [referring to a wooden fireplace cover in the restored living room] is a piece that would have come along later in order to...make it very decorative. But this would have nothing to do with the fire....<sup>20</sup>

The original stoker-fed coal furnace, probably dating from the 1930s, is still in the cellar, though no longer operative, having been replaced by an oil-burner after 1971.

**Pictures.** According to Mrs. Farris, "there weren't that many pictures," photographs or prints, on the walls, although she did remember some mirrors. "I guess we didn't take that many pictures," she explained, "and I'm beginning to see that now, because I don't have but very few pictures of that time."<sup>21</sup>

---

19 Ibid.

20 Mrs. Bennett, taped interview, January 6, 1984 (cited hereafter as Bennett, 1984 interview).

21 Mrs. Christine King Farris, taped interview, March 13, 1984, with Mrs. Coretta Scott King (cited hereafter as Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview). Rev. Joel King, Sr., recalled a few pictures, which are mentioned in the evidence on the living room and kitchen (1987 interview).

**Plants and Flowers.** Mrs. Farris remembered that there were pink hollyhocks in front of the house, rose bushes in the front and back yards, and petunias and coleus in the hanging flower boxes on the porch. Her mother had cut flowers in the house but "not too many potted plants."<sup>22</sup> "It is commonly known," reports another source, "that Mrs. Martin Luther King, Sr., was very fond of flowers."<sup>23</sup>

**Reading Matter.** Although young Martin showed early an interest in reading, there is little information on the books, magazines, and newspapers that he had access to while growing up in the Auburn Avenue house. Mrs. Farris is the source of the only specific reference to books in this house:

We had an encyclopedia and everything, because my aunt, my great-aunt, who was my grandmother's sister, lived with us and she used to read to us all the time, out of the Book of Wisdom encyclopedia, and I remember she used to point out to us about the gorillas and the apes and so forth. She used to read to us all the time, fables, things like that.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the books, according to Joel King, were in the bedrooms.<sup>25</sup>

---

22 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

23 Ibid.; HSR, p. 31.

24 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview. The "Book of Wisdom encyclopedia" may have been *The Book of Knowledge*, a children's encyclopedia popular in the 1920s and 1930s, published by The Grolier Society.

25 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

## Evidence for Specific Rooms

### Porch

The porch extends across the front of the house and down the west side, with a front door leading into the entrance hall and a side door opening into the hall under the staircase. In warm weather the porch was a favorite place for the children to play and for older family members to sit and visit with friends and neighbors or just wave to passers-by.<sup>26</sup>

In one of the few family photographs from the 1930s (not available for reproduction in this report) some of the porch furniture is visible, including at least two wooden rocking chairs with woven seats and backs and wooden planters hanging from the porch railing. There was a door mat at the front door, but no matting on the floor, and no furniture along the side porch, where the children often played.<sup>27</sup>

The original ceiling hooks for a porch swing are still in place at the east end of the front porch. The swing that was there when Joel King lived in the house (1927-37) is gone, but a similar swing was procured for the restoration.<sup>28</sup>

---

26 "Opening Tour."

27 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

28 "Opening Tour"; Joel King, 1987 interview.

The flowers in the planters were usually petunias and coleus, while in front of the porch grew pink hollyhocks.<sup>29</sup>

When the house was restored, Mrs. Leana McCain donated "wooden rockers with wicker seats and backs that are similar to the originals."<sup>30</sup>

### Entrance Hall (F-1)

What the family called this space is not clear. When the restored house was opened to the public in 1975, tour guides were instructed to call it the entrance hall.<sup>31</sup> In 1984 Mrs. Farris referred to it as "that little foyer or hallway." In 1987 Rev. Joel King called it "the hallway."<sup>32</sup> Planning documents variously refer to it as the entrance foyer, entry hall, and entrance hall.<sup>33</sup> Unless the actual 1929-41 usage can be established, this report recommends the use of entrance hall, on the assumption that the restoration committee followed Mrs. Alberta King's lead on this.

The function of this small (9'4" x 11') area is more certain. Visitors greeted at the front door found themselves in a sort of vestibule, dimly lit in the daytime by two windows looking out on the porch. To the left was a large opening into the living room; straight ahead the narrow hall that led to the other first floor

---

29 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

30 "Opening Tour."

31 Ibid.

32 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

33 1974 restoration plans, J.W. Robinson & Associates, Inc. (see HSR, Appendix D); undated, unlabelled sketch plans, historian's files, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site (MALU); Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home drawings, NPS 489/62,056-62,060, March 1984.

rooms and the stairs to the second floor. Visitors could leave their hats, coats, and umbrellas out here, but family members usually used a rack in the stair hall. There is no evidence that the entrance hall was used as a waiting room; both Pastor Williams and Pastor King conducted most of their church business at the church. The entrance hall did provide overflow space for choir members on rehearsal evenings.<sup>34</sup>

Mrs. Alberta King selected for the restoration modern wallpaper similar to the original paper. The ceiling light with pull chain is of the type remembered by Mrs. Farris. Rev. Joel King recalled a "little chair...just inside the door," a coatrack that was rarely used, and a carpet on the floor.<sup>35</sup> The restoration committee placed in the room a whatnot and a small table that were in the house originally but not necessarily in the entrance hall.<sup>36</sup> Also original are two hats that belonged to Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr.<sup>37</sup> The hall rack, donated by Mrs. Mamie Raiford Hamilton, a neighbor, is said to be similar to the original oak hall rack "with a lift-up bench and mirror which stood near side entrance in stair-hall."<sup>38</sup> What kind of rack stood in the entrance hall is not recorded.

Curtains and window shades were selected by the committee under Mrs. King's direction and are, therefore, presumably similar to the originals.<sup>39</sup>

---

34 "Opening Tour."

35 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures"; Rev. Joel King interview, 1987.

36 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview. The whatnot was in the living room when the house first opened ("Opening Tour").

37 Mrs. Farris interview, 1984.

38 "Opening Tour."

39 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures."



## Stair Hall (F-2)

This middle portion of the hallway is 16'6" long and 5' to 9'6" wide. Its long east wall is broken only by the door to the downstairs bedroom. On the other side of the hall are the stairs to the second floor, the side porch door, and the cellar stairs, covered with a trap door in the floor. At the north end a pair of French doors separates the entrance hall and stair hall. These may have been kept closed in cold weather or when there was a meeting in the living room.

The stair hall was obviously little more than a passageway, with room for few furnishings. The only documented piece of furniture, an oak hall rack with a mirror and lift-up seat, stood "near side entrance in stair-hall." The original hall rack is gone; one similar to it was donated by a neighbor, Mrs. Mamie Raiford Hamilton, but the restoration committee placed it in the entrance hall near the front door instead of in the stair hall near the side door.<sup>40</sup>

A telephone was located in the stair hall where it was equally accessible from all the first floor rooms. According to Rev. Joel King the telephone was at one time on the wall next to the Williams' bedroom door, but he chiefly remembered it being on the north wall over the stair landing.<sup>41</sup> The original instrument is not extant.<sup>42</sup>

Three stories about young Martin Luther King, Jr., are associated with the stair hall. The first dates from about 1936, when he was seven years old. According to Mrs. Christine King Farris, her father, recuperating in the big downstairs bedroom from a tonsillectomy, was talking with visitors one evening after the children had been sent upstairs to bed. "We did not always go right away," Mrs. Farris admits, and this time young M.L. perched himself on the upstairs hall banister where he could hear and see what was going on below. He dozed off, however, tumbled over, and landed dramatically on the cellar trap door just outside his father's room. M.L.'s mother rushed to him and saw that his eyes were "walled [or rolled] back."<sup>43</sup>

---

40 "Opening Tour." Rev. Joel King (interview, 1987) said: "Along under the steps there was where we kept our clothes."

41 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

42 Mrs. Bennett interview, 1984.

43 Mrs. Farris, as quoted in "Opening Tour."

Then I guess Mother kind of shook him and he came to; I don't even think they carried him to the hospital. They examined him, but nothing—just a fall. It was really a miracle. And he fell on his head, I understand.

My uncle Joel was coming in the house, because he lived with us...and he had...a bag of groceries...and I recall I heard and I got up and I saw that Joel had dropped the groceries and went to M.L. and I saw these two different forms and I thought that maybe M.L. had come apart. I couldn't figure it out for a while.<sup>44</sup>

Another story, from an unidentified source, concerns the two brothers' practice of sliding down the banisters. Once M.L. knocked down Grandmother Williams who was standing at the foot of the stairs. Thinking that he had killed her, the story goes, M.L. ran upstairs and tried to kill himself by jumping out a window.<sup>45</sup>

The third story, told by his brother A.D., aptly demonstrates that as a youngster, Martin Luther King, Jr., had yet to espouse the doctrine of non-violence with which his name has become indelibly associated.

I remember once, that I was giving our sister Christine...a hard time, and he told me to cut it out. I kept on with whatever I was doing, and M.L. suddenly reached over and picked up the telephone. I thought he was going to call Daddy or Mother, wherever they were, but he didn't. He conked me over the head with that phone and almost knocked my brains out.<sup>46</sup>

---

44 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

45 Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, pp. 8-9.

46 Quoted in Bennett, *What Manner of Man*, p. 24.

### Living Room (F-3)

When the house was first built, this room, approximately 14 feet square, was probably a formal parlor and the room behind it the back parlor or family sitting room, but during the years the Williams and King families lived there the front room was the "living room" and served both functions. It was "a major gathering place" for the family and their friends and it was used for choir rehearsals, church meetings, and occasional public meetings arising out of Rev. Williams' and Rev. King's involvement in efforts to improve the lot of Atlanta's black citizens during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>47</sup> It was here, for instance, that black teachers of Atlanta met in 1936 to organize for their equal pay fight.<sup>48</sup> The living room and adjacent entrance hall were used for rehearsals of the Ebenezer Baptist Church choir, organized by Mrs. Alberta King in 1932. Her daughter, Mrs. Farris, remembers helping serve the choir members cookies and hot chocolate.<sup>49</sup>

The Ricca & Son upright piano in the restored Birth Home is the original piano given to Alberta Williams by her parents before she went to study music at Hampton Institute. It remained in the house until the Kings moved away in 1941. Mrs. King held on to it until her death in 1974. The following year it came back to the house on Auburn Avenue.<sup>50</sup>

Music was an integral part of the household. Mrs. King, Sr., played and sang and worked with the church music, sometimes the family sang spirituals and hymns together.

---

47 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

48 Martin Luther King, Sr., with Clayton Riley, *Daddy King*.

49 "Opening Tour." Joel King (interview, 1987) explains that Mrs. King held choir rehearsals and occasional women's church meetings at home because she could not leave the children alone at night.

50 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

Children all took piano lessons. Martin's sister, Mrs. Farris, tells stories about the lessons, especially about a teacher who would strike the children's fingers when they hit a wrong note. At one time a roll-up type piano stool was being used. The children knew it was loose, but said nothing. One day while Christine was taking her lesson, and M.L. was close by waiting his turn, the piano teacher jarred the seat loose and landed on the floor, much to the children's enjoyment.<sup>51</sup>

Mrs. Farris has also pointed out that, if you look closely at the piano, "you can see where my brothers hammered on it," adding that M.L. and A.D. "didn't want to take music sometimes."<sup>52</sup>

About 1924, when she began teaching school, Alberta Williams is said to have bought a three-piece parlor suite consisting of a sofa and two chairs. These have been described as "upholstered, but not massive, with ornamented band of wood across the back of the sofa," and maroon cut-velvet upholstery. This set is not extant.<sup>53</sup>

Rev. Joel King remembered the living room as containing the piano at an angle in the southeast corner, a victrola on the east wall, a sofa between the north windows, a rocking chair, and at least one large picture of "a farm, old-fashioned picture like they were gathering wheat." There was a "real carpet" on the floor. Up to 1937, when he left, there was no radio in the living room. A wood or coal fire in a grate in the open fireplace provided heat before the installation of central heating.<sup>54</sup>

Other evidence for living room furnishings is found in the "Opening Tour" guide, as follows:

Davenport Table—Long narrow table which stood behind the sofa, and often had a vase of cut flowers on it.

---

51 "Opening Tour."

52 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview. Joel King (1987 interview) recalled that M.L. learned to play better than Christine and A.D. and he regretted that they had not made him take music, too.

53 "Opening Tour."

54 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

Floor Lamp—White shade and brass pole of this lamp is like original. Found in home of Miss James Dibble in South Carolina by committee member Mrs. Palmer.

What-not shelves—an original piece from the house. Family and friends remember small pitchers and animals which stood on its shelves....

Majestic radio—This radio, donated by Mrs. Alverna Greene is like the one purchased by the family about 1930.

Victrola—Loaned by Mrs. Albert Manley who found it in the president's home at Spelman College.

Curtains—Lace type which was placed on stretchers when washed. Light manila shades are of type originally in house which were pulled down with a crocheted ring.

Rug—Original was flowered pattern, room rug with fringe. This one chosen by Mrs. King, Sr., as similar to the one she originally had.<sup>55</sup>

When the house was opened to the public in 1975 there were two brass vases in the living room that had belonged to Grandmother Williams; one was later moved to the entrance hall.<sup>56</sup>

As in other rooms, Mrs. Alberta King selected wallpaper similar to what she remembered.<sup>57</sup>

The unshaded ceiling light is as remembered by Mrs. Farris.<sup>58</sup>

### **Williams/King Bedroom (F-4)**

This large (15'6" x 14'), bright room, with its fireplace and bay window, was probably intended to be a family sitting room when the house was built. It may have been so used in the early years of the Williams' occupancy, but it was Rev. and Mrs. Williams' bedroom at least from 1926 to 1931, when Alberta and Mike

---

55 "Opening Tour." The victrola is no longer in the house. The whatnot was later moved into the entrance hall.

56 "Preliminary Draft of Inventory, MLK, Jr., Birth Home," January 11, 1975 (cited hereafter as "Inventory," 1975); photographic inventory of Birth Home, January 26, 1984 (cited as photo inventory, 1984), roll 2, frames 18 and 23.

57 "Restoration...Plan and Procedures."

58 Ibid.

King occupied the big upstairs bedroom (Birth Room). Sometime after her husband's death in 1931, Mrs. Williams moved upstairs and the Rev. and Mrs. King took over the downstairs bedroom. Sources differ on whether the room remained a bedroom until 1941. Mrs. Farris said that it was "used more or less as a den" in later years, and that they played family games there, like Old Maid, Monopoly and Chinese Checkers. Rev. Joel King, on the other hand, said that this room was the King parents' bedroom "all the time I remember" and that the "den" was in the dining room.

The room has also been identified as Rev. A.D. Williams' study, perhaps harking back to its otherwise undocumented use in the years before 1926. Rev. Joel King, however, points out that the pastor's study was at the church, not at home. When the restoration committee placed Rev. Williams' desk here in 1975, for lack of any other place to show it, they may have inadvertently fostered the mistaken assumption that this actually was his study at one time.<sup>59</sup>

The evidence at hand appears to indicate that this room was used as a bedroom all or most of the time while Martin Luther King, Jr., was growing up, possibly as a den or family room toward the end of that period.

Mrs. Alberta King selected wallpaper for this room similar to the paper she remembered. There is no direct evidence on the furnishings of the Williams' bedroom or of the den, aside from the games mentioned by Mrs. Farris.<sup>60</sup>

Plans for this room at the time the house was opened to the public called for an exhibit "which would include family history, events and ideas of the movement which Martin Luther King, Jr., led, and the life-style and culture of the period of his youth."<sup>61</sup> This plan has not been carried out. Instead, the committee placed in the room Pastor Williams' desk and photographs of Rev. A.D. Williams and his wife, Mrs. Jennie Williams, thereby linking the room to Dr. King's maternal grandparents, although the sparse furnishings give no hint of the room's actual functions or appearance.

---

59 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview; "Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

60 "Opening Tour."

61 Ibid.

## Dining Room (F-5)

The dining room played an important part in the development of the King children. "We used to have family meals all the time," Mrs. Farris says. "That was a regular routine, breakfast and dinner" and both meals were served in the dining room, "always the dining room." Adults and children ate together, for "that was the time for the family really to get together.... We had to be here at dinner time and everybody had to be there around the table," even when Pastor King was late getting home from Ebenezer Baptist Church down the street. "On Daddy's orders, M.L., Chris and little A.D. recited Scripture at evening meals in the dining room."<sup>62</sup>

Other families might eat in their kitchen, at least for breakfast, but "here on Auburn Avenue even this morning meal was laid out family style in the dining room," according to the 1975 committee notes. Breakfast typically consisted of "eggs, grits and bacon all served on large platters." Mrs. King and Mrs. Williams served this and the other meals, assisted part of the time by Aunt Ida, who lived with them.<sup>63</sup>

The Rev. Joel King recalled that, sometime after he left, they "used the dining room for a den there for a while," with the table turned to allow more space at the west side of the room.<sup>64</sup>

The room measures 15'6" x 14'. Original features include the built-in china cabinet and part of the Kings' dining room furniture. Although the "Opening Tour" guidesheet of 1975 states that the buffet is original to the house, Mrs. Farris has recently said that the dining room set was given to a church member, who later donated the original table and chairs to the Birth Home, but not the buffet. The buffet now in the house, Mrs. Farris said, was "selected by Mrs. King, Sr. from an antique store."<sup>65</sup> The table was usually covered with a white

---

62 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, p. 5.

63 "Opening Tour."

64 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview. Since he also mentioned their moving a TV into the dining room/den, Rev. King may have been recalling something that took place when A.D. and Naomi King lived in the house in the 1950s.

65 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, conversation with Park Ranger Barbara Tagger, 1989. In her 1984 interview, Mrs. Farris was not sure whether it was the table or the buffet that was original.

damask cloth; a cloth of this type that belonged to Mrs. Alberta King is in the site collection. Also in the collection is a brass crumber used by Mrs. King.<sup>66</sup>

Several pieces of glass and china that belonged to Mrs. Alberta King and her mother were returned to the house in 1975 for display in the dining room. As inventoried in 1975 these included the following:

Pressed glass

two pitchers, wheat-diamond pattern  
sugar and creamer, scalloped border  
sugar and creamer, Sandwich-type  
vinegar cruet, rosettes  
sugar bowl, button-and-daisy pattern  
butter dish, round, button pattern

Other glassware

two fruit compotes, Della Robbia-style  
four ice cream dishes  
wine glass, cut glass  
bud vase, etched  
mayonnaise dish  
three-piece compote and saucer

China

platter, owned by Mrs. Williams  
plate, owned by Mrs. Williams  
dishes

A plate "in rose design," presumably one of the above pieces of china, is further described as "from original set that was given by Grandmother Williams to Mrs. King on the occasion of her finishing course work at Morris Brown."<sup>67</sup>

As in other rooms, Mrs. King selected wallpaper similar to the paper she remembered from the 1930s. Mrs. Farris remembered a linoleum rug on the floor; Rev. Joel King remembered a "plain, natural, hardwood floor."<sup>68</sup>

---

66 "Inventory," 1975.

67 "Inventory," 1975; "Opening Tour."

68 Ibid.; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.



## Kitchen (F-6)

The kitchen, measuring 11'6" x 13', retains much of its turn-of-the-century character, with exposed plumbing, an old-fashioned sink and drainboard, and painted wainscoting. It is a bright room, with windows on the south and east walls. Two doors in the northwest corner lead to the dining room and back hall, respectively.

While the Williams-King family lived here, the kitchen appears to have been used almost exclusively for preparing meals and cleaning up afterward. As previously noted, the family regularly ate together in the dining room, although Grandmother Williams often served young Joel King his breakfast in the kitchen, when he was a college student.<sup>69</sup>

Washing dishes was a chore assigned to the children, with somewhat uneven success, as sister Christine recalled:<sup>70</sup>

[When] it was time to wash the dishes, of course, I hate to say it, but my brother [M.L.] had to go to the...bathroom each time it was time for the dishes to be washed. That's one thing that he did; he didn't want to wash those dishes, neither of them wanted to do that. And my mother tried all kinds of things. She would give us a rotating system; she'd set up a schedule, you know—this is your week to wash the dishes—but it always ended up being my week, because there was something that would happen, so they didn't do much washing of dishes.

As far back as Mrs. Farris remembered, they cooked on a gas range. "A lot of people have been trying to say that it was a coal stove. I never knew a coal stove.

---

69 "Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview. See also Dining Room, above, for evidence on meal service.

70 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

It was a gas stove."<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Farris later identified it as a Roper Gas Range; from Roper advertisements (1923-25) she selected as most like her mother's range the six-burner, five oven model (illus. 6).<sup>72</sup> The stove stood on the south wall, with the stovepipe going up through the ceiling.

In the southeast corner of the restored kitchen stands a small stove, wood or coal fired, for heating water. Its stovepipe vents through the kitchen ceiling. Described as a "typical one for the period," this water heater probably is original, although Rev. Joel King did not remember such a stove in the kitchen during his time.<sup>73</sup>

At the start of the period, a large icebox provided cold storage for food. Later, probably in the late 1930s, Mrs. King acquired a Frigidaire refrigerator. For the restoration, a neighbor donated a small icebox.<sup>74</sup>

Like many kitchens of the days before built-in cabinets became standard equipment, this kitchen had a free-standing, all-purpose kitchen cabinet, no longer extant. A Hoosier cabinet donated to the Birth Home by Miss Lillian Wright, a neighbor, is, according to Mrs. Farris, "very much like the cabinet that we had." Rev. Joel King thought they kept dishes and glasses in this cabinet.<sup>75</sup>

Toward the north side of the room there was a wooden-top table, "more of a work surface than an eating place." Oilcloth was tacked to the top; a cloth was laid

71 Ibid.

72 Memorandum, Superintendent, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, to the author, June 17, 1985. For copies of Roper Gas Range advertisements the author is indebted to the Rockford, Illinois, Museum Association.

73 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

74 "Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

75 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

over this for meals. There were two cane-bottom chairs. Since the original table and chairs were not available, the restoration committee placed here a maple table and two matching chairs that had been used by the Kings after 1941 in the breakfast room of their house on Boulevard.<sup>76</sup>

The kitchen floor was covered with linoleum, green and white checkerboard pattern. As a temporary substitute, the restoration committee put down a vinyl rug, hoping one day to find a suitable piece of linoleum.<sup>77</sup>

Rev. Joel King recalled that there were at least two pictures and a calendar on the walls but could not describe them. One picture hung above the sink, another "little thing" hung above the kitchen cabinet, and a "large calendar" hung next to the south window.<sup>78</sup>

### Christine's Room (F-7)

This room on the west side of the back hall, opposite the dining room, was Alberta Williams' bedroom before her marriage. Mrs. Nina King Miller, who was the future Mrs. King's close friend, remembered visiting with her in this room. Before central heating, she reported, "bedrooms were warm places and were used as living space."<sup>79</sup> Later the room became Alberta's daughter's

---

76 "Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

77 "Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

78 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

79 "Opening Tour."

bedroom. "That was while my grandparents were living, when I was young," Christine King Farris has said; "then my parents moved back downstairs, [and things] changed."<sup>80</sup> The implication appears to be that Christine occupied the downstairs bedroom during her early childhood but moved upstairs sometime in the mid-1930s. After that the downstairs room seems to have been a spare bedroom. The Rev. and Mrs. Joel King were married in this room in 1937, the groom's brother officiating.<sup>81</sup>

The white-painted bed, bureau, and dressing table now in the room are original pieces, given to Alberta Williams by her father "as a birthday or Christmas gift" and later by her to her daughter Christine, who has returned them to their original setting.<sup>82</sup>

On the bed, Mrs. Farris recalled, was a "Dutch girl spread," a type made in rural Georgia. Since a spread of this type was not available, the restoration committee accepted a "cotton bedspread, hand embroidered birds and flowers with pink border," as a gift from a committee member.<sup>83</sup>

The doll furniture on the dresser in the restored room, Mrs. Farris noted, "are things that...we actually played with." The girl's dress and socks that someone placed in the restored room are of the period but not family-associated.<sup>84</sup>

The wallpaper was selected by Mrs. King as similar to what was there in 1929-41. A vinyl rug placed on the floor was a temporary substitute for the linoleum rug Mrs. Farris recalled.<sup>85</sup>

---

80 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

81 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

82 "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

83 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; "Inventory," 1975.

84 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

85 "Opening Tour."

## Downstairs Bathroom (F-8)

Without architectural investigation it is not possible to tell whether the downstairs bathroom was part of the original structure or an early addition. Since public water and sewers had reached this part of Atlanta by 1895, it could date from the original construction, although a full bathroom on the first floor would have been unusual. Perhaps it was added when two downstairs rooms were made into bedrooms after the Williams family acquired the house in 1909. In any case, it was in place before the King children came along in the late 1920s. "Christine has said to me," reported Mrs. Bennett in 1984, "that...she never heard her mother speak of any outdoor lavatories, that as far as she recalls there was always this bathroom down here and the one upstairs."<sup>86</sup>

The bathroom fixtures are no more precisely datable than the room itself. The ball-and-claw-foot bathtub and the water closet certainly date from before 1929, but the sink, space heater, and two towel bars could date from the 1930s or even later. The vinyl floor covering is quite recent, replacing the green and white linoleum Joel King remembered mopping as a boy.<sup>87</sup>

## Pantry (F-9)

"Also on that back porch...what we now use as a kind of storage closet—we called that a pantry, but it wasn't a food pantry," Mrs. Farris recalled. "It was a storage pantry and that's where different things stayed that you weren't using," such as roller skates, tricycles, and bikes, along with Mrs. King's housekeeping supplies.<sup>88</sup>

Since the north wall of this little (5' x 6'4") room is still covered with shiplap siding, it was evidently at one time part of the back porch. The date of its conversion to a storage room is not known, although it must have been in the 1920s at the latest. The wood shelving probably dates from the same time.

86 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

87 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

88 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

## Back Porch (F-10)

Although it was enclosed by the time the King children were growing up, this must originally have been an open or screened porch which included what later became the pantry and possibly the downstairs bathroom. Further architectural investigation is needed to confirm this in detail, but the shiplap siding indicates that this space was once outside the house, as does the retention by the family of the name "back porch" for what had become, in effect, part of the back hall. In any case, the change occurred not later than the 1920s, since Mrs. Farris remembered it only as an enclosed area.<sup>89</sup>

The back porch was "the place where washing and ironing were done in good weather," using wash tubs and a washboard in early years, a wringer-type electric washing machine by the 1930s.<sup>90</sup> No other function is recorded for the back porch, but it was probably also used for storage.

The washing machine, washtub, ironing board, irons and washboard on display here since 1975 are not King-associated items. They were placed here to show how laundry procedures have changed over the years.<sup>91</sup>

## Upstairs Hall (S-1 and S-2)

The upstairs hall extends the full depth of the house, about 50 feet, and is divided into two sections: S-1, the back hall, and S-2, the front hall.

---

89 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview. Asked if they had enclosed "what appears to have been a small back porch," Mrs. Farris replied, "It wasn't a back porch. It was just a roof...an extended roof." It is not clear whether she was referring to a time within her own memory or earlier.

90 "Opening Tour."

91 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

The back hall, separated from the front hall by a door next to the stair landing, is about 22 feet long and 5 feet wide. At the south end it narrows slightly, forming an entry to the upstairs bathroom off to the right; this section is also one step down from the rest of the hall. In this entry area there is a sink, probably dating from before 1930. The present door in the south wall, leading to an outside stairway, is a pre-1937 replacement of the original window.<sup>92</sup> The metal ceiling lamp holders are modern, replacing porcelain lamp holders that were there during the Kings' time.<sup>93</sup>

The front hall measures 28 feet from the stair landing to the north wall; it is 5 feet wide along the stairwell, widening to 9-1/2 feet at the north end of the stairwell. This wider front section served as the King boys' bedroom in the mid-1930s, according to Rev. Joel King, Sr., their uncle. They shared a single bed along the west wall and a small chest of drawers on the north wall; there was a throw rug on the floor beside the bed. On the chest of drawers was a lamp and probably the encyclopedia or *Book of Knowledge*.<sup>94</sup> After the boys moved into Uncle Joel's room about 1937, the front hall became a play area. The two tables, treadle sewing machine, and small rug placed here by the restoration committee are not King-associated pieces.<sup>95</sup>

There are two windows in the front hall. One is over the side porch roof; the other, originally a door, opens onto a small balcony overlooking the front porch roof. This hallway is unusually rich in family associations. When Martin

92 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

93 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

94 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

95 Mrs. Bennett, interview.

Luther King, Jr., was born, his father was so joyful that, as he has written, "I jumped up in the hall outside the room where he was born and touched the ceiling..."<sup>96</sup>

A few years later little Martin fell from the upstairs hall railing to the hall below and on another occasion, sliding down the banister, knocked his grandmother down. The latter incident led to the first of his two abortive attempts at suicide by jumping out a second story window, possibly one of those in the upper hall.<sup>97</sup> At the age of 12, he tried again, driven by grief and guilt over the sudden death of his beloved Grandmother Williams while he was out watching a parade instead of home studying.<sup>98</sup>

### Front Bedroom (S-3)

Entered from the front hall, the front bedroom measures 13-1/2 feet by 14 feet. It has two windows on the north side, a blank east wall, and a fireplace on the south side.

"As I was coming up there was always a roomer," recalled Mrs. Farris, "someone who lived in the house, so that the front room upstairs was used for a person who lived in the house."<sup>99</sup> In the 1920s the roomer was sometimes a young

---

96 King, *Daddy King*, p. 189.

97 See Stair Hall, above.

98 Both incidents are described in Bennett, *What Manner of Man*, pp. 18-19; Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, pp. 8-9, 13. Mrs. Bennett, a friend of Mrs. King, identified the "front window" as the one Martin jumped from in 1941 (1984 interview). Since the front window opens onto the balcony, it seems more likely that he jumped from the side window or from a window in his own bedroom.

99 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.



ministerial student from out of town, sometimes a relative such as Miss Woodie King, Mike King's sister, who lived with Rev. and Mrs. Williams while she was going to college in Atlanta.<sup>100</sup> When the King children were growing up the room's main occupant was Aunt Ida, a sister of Mrs. Williams.<sup>101</sup> Mrs. Farris thought that her Uncle Joel had this room "a good deal of the time," but he said that he always had the back bedroom (S-5).<sup>102</sup>

Since this room was not included in the 1974-75 refurnishing, no information on its furnishings was recorded. The wallpaper dates from 1974 and was not intended to duplicate the original paper.

### **Birth Room (S-4)**

What was, in effect, the master bedroom, is now known as the Birth Room, because Martin Luther King, Jr., was born there on January 15, 1929.<sup>103</sup> This was the King parents' bedroom from the time of their marriage in 1926 until they traded rooms with Grandmother Williams sometime after 1931. It remained Mrs. Williams' room until her death in 1941. During these years it was probably known to the family as Mama's room.<sup>104</sup>

The largest of the four upstairs bedrooms, this room measures 15 feet 3 inches by 14 feet (15 feet 9 inches at the center of the bay on the east side). There is a fireplace on the north wall, next to the closet door; two windows on the east side; nothing on the south wall; and a door on the west wall opening from the hall near the stair landing.

---

100 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

101 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

102 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

103 "Opening Tour."

104 See Williams/King Bedroom for evidence on the shifting bedroom arrangements during the 1920-41 period. Mrs. Williams was called "Mama" by her grandchildren; Mrs. King was known as "Mother" or "Mother Dear."

Of the original bedroom suite, acquired by the Kings at the time of their marriage, only the chifforobe was available to be returned to the room in 1975. A cedar chest that had belonged to Mrs. Alberta King was also restored to the room at that time. The other pieces of furniture—double bed with bowed head and foot boards, vanity dresser with three-part mirror, and chest of drawers—are of the period and similar to the original pieces remembered by the family.<sup>105</sup>

A “pearlized” hand mirror from Mrs. Alberta King’s dresser set and a Bible used by her husband are the only accessories now in the room associated with the King family. A bedspread “used at the time of Mrs. Williams’ death” was donated by committee member Mrs. India Crittenden; the description presumably refers to the spread’s age rather than to actual use in this house. Other documented, but not King-associated, accessories include a doily “used in period” by Nina King Miller, a family friend, and a quilt made by the mother of Mrs. Coretta Scott King.<sup>106</sup>

The birth room wallpaper was selected by Mrs. Alberta King as similar to the paper on the walls in 1929. The shadeless ceiling light, with pull chain, was restored in 1975 on Mrs. Farris’s authority. Joel King remembered a small rug in this room. Before central heating, this room was heated by coal or wood in a fireplace grate.<sup>107</sup>

### Joel’s Room (S-5)

According to Joel King, this was always his room while he lived with Mike and Alberta King. After he left home in 1937, it became M.L. and A.D.’s room.<sup>108</sup> “The room right next to the Birth Room is where my brothers stayed,” Mrs. Farris stated in 1984, adding:

---

105 “Opening Tour”; Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

106 “Opening Tour.”

107 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

108 Ibid.

they moved at different points, but at the point of our moving from that house they were staying in that room.... Like typical boys their room always was in great disarray...and I remember once my brother got sick—that is, my younger brother (A.D.)—and as sick as he was, he knew the doctor had to come to the house, so he said, “You all clean up the room now, get the room clean,” because he knew they could hardly get in, with it looking like it was.<sup>109</sup>

It was here, “in the bedroom he [M.L.] and A.D. shared,” that Daddy King spent “nearly all of an afternoon” in May 1941, explaining to 12-year-old Martin that God was not punishing him by taking away his grandmother while Martin was “neglecting a little homework...to see a parade.”<sup>110</sup>

The back bedroom measures 15 feet 6 inches by 13 feet 9 inches. A door on the west wall opens from the back hall. The north wall is unbroken. There are two windows on the east wall. Lined up across the south side are a closet door, a fireplace with cast iron grate, and a low door providing access to the attic space above the kitchen. The walls and ceiling were replastered and painted in 1974; no sample survives of the wallpaper removed at that time. The room was occupied by visiting ministers from 1974 to 1983 and has been used for administrative purposes in recent years.

Joel King’s room, as he remembered it in 1987, contained a wooden bed with a natural finish, against the north wall; a carpet under the bed; a chest of drawers “with a vanity like” between the windows on the east wall; a built-in closet in the southeast corner; and a cane-seat chair, with a natural finish, on either side of the hall door. There were some pictures, but he did not remember their subjects.<sup>111</sup>

There is no record of furnishings in the room when Martin Luther King, Jr., and his brother occupied it; they may have used what was there when it was Uncle

109 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.

110 King, *Daddy King*, p. 109.

111 Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

Joel's room. A Bigelow Hartford Saxony rug (approximately 9' x 12') now in the room, has no known King family association.<sup>112</sup>

### Spare Room (S-6)

Without giving it a special name, Mrs. Farris has identified this as a multi-purpose room where she slept "sometimes".<sup>113</sup>

...the room right on the other side of the hall as you come upstairs, on the right hand side, that was just another bedroom, for guests or whoever, and from time to time it was used for different things, because there was a point—sometimes I stayed upstairs in that room.

Although Mrs. Farris did not date her use of the room, it may have been about the time her grandmother moved upstairs and her parents downstairs in the early 1930s. After the Kings moved out in 1941, this room became the kitchen for the second-floor apartment.

In recent years "this was the room from which the non-violence program" was conducted, before the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Non-Violent Social Change was constructed. After that, "there were times when the person...conducting the tours did work from this room."<sup>114</sup>

The room measures 15-1/2 feet by 9 feet. There is a door opening from the hall in the east wall, a window on the west side; the other two walls are unbroken.

---

112 Information from Lead Historian Dean Rowley, MALU, 1985.

113 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview. Rev. Joel King (1987 interview) referred to it as a vacant room used "for company."

114 Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview.

The room has no closet. The walls and ceiling were stripped, replastered, and painted in 1974; no sample of the wallpaper removed at that time has survived.<sup>115</sup>

There is no record of furnishings used in this room except, by implication, for the period when it was occupied by Christine King.

### Upstairs Bathroom (S-7)

Like the bathroom directly below, the upstairs bathroom may have been part of the original 1895 house, though it seems more likely that it was added a little later. Further architectural investigation might settle the question. It was clearly in place when the King children lived here, however, and probably at least 10 or even 20 years before that.<sup>116</sup>

A story involving the young Martin Luther King, Jr., presumably relates to this bathroom, nearest his bedroom:<sup>117</sup>

When Martin was a kid his mother was dressing him one morning on his way to church and after she had bathed young Martin and...A.D. and after she had completely dressed A.D., young Martin ran back and jumped in the bathtub with his clothes on.

This bathroom is unusual in that it contains a bathtub and water closet but not a sink, which is located on the other side of the wall in the back hall. The tub and sink appear to be of the same age as those downstairs, while the water closet looks as if it may have been added somewhat later, perhaps in the 1940s when the second floor became a separate apartment.

---

115 HSR, p. 10.

116 Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview, in which Mrs. Farris stated that even her mother did not remember a time when there wasn't any bathroom in the house.

117 Quoted from a taped tour of the Birth Home about 1984 (side 2 of Mrs. Bennett's 1984 interview tape.) The story was originally told by Mrs. King, Sr. in a talk about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s childhood, a tape recording of which is in the King Center's oral history collection.

## Cellar

The only recorded information about the cellar is that the coal furnace and hot air central heating system were put in by the Kings in the early 1930s. Tending the furnace was one of Joel King's duties as a boy; later it became one of young M.L.'s particular chores. "He soon learned to fire it, to bank the fire at night, and get up early mornings to open the damper, put on the coal, and haul out the ashes."<sup>118</sup> Conversion to a stoker-fed operation probably occurred after the Kings moved away.

Although a new oil furnace and air-conditioning system have been installed by the National Park Service, the stoker-fed furnace has been left in place and visible to visitors through a mirror below the open hatchway in the stair hall. An iron gate and wooden railing on the cellar stairs are modern additions to protect visitors and site staff from falling.

---

118 Coretta Scott King, *My Life*, p. 81; Mrs. Bennett, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.

## FURNISHING PLAN

### INTERPRETIVE OBJECTIVES

Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site was established in 1980 to "protect and interpret...the places where Martin Luther King, Jr., was born, where he lived, worked and worshiped, and where he is buried." In addition to the Birth Home, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and the grave site, the legislation established a preservation district encompassing much of the Sweet Auburn neighborhood within which Martin Luther King, Jr., grew up and spent much of his professional career.

Interpretive programs, existing and proposed, are designed primarily to help visitors understand Martin Luther King, Jr.'s role as the pre-eminent spokesman for non-violent social change in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s and the most articulate, most visible leader of the civil rights movement until his assassination in 1968. Films, publications, and exhibits document for visitors the dramatic events of Dr. King's short life and remind them of his unparalleled impact as a speaker and writer in the cause of equality and freedom.

In terms of the historic site itself, and the surrounding preservation district, the interpretive media aim to show how his family, his church, and the neighborhood where he grew up in the 1930s and 1940s helped mold the boy M.L. into Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and revered/hated leader of a non-violent revolution, which changed the course of American social history.

The "Birth Home" at 501 Auburn Avenue will be for many visitors the focus of particular interest as the house where Martin Luther King, Jr., was born in 1929 and lived until he was 12 years old. Curiosity about how famous people once lived is common, but when the era involved is recent enough to be remembered by older visitors a strong element of nostalgia adds to the attraction. The interpretive objective in partially refurbishing the house is to capitalize on this interest by showing what kind of household Dr. King grew up in. Many older visitors will recognize, without being told, that the Kings were relatively well off in the 1930s, in spite of the Depression. They will also understand the needs of an extended family that put the little boys in a makeshift bedroom in the upstairs hall. For younger visitors these and other aspects of life fifty years ago may need to be explained, but good personal interpretation can do much to make the home setting meaningful in relation to the social, moral, and intellectual development of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Although the Interpretive Prospectus for Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site (1987) calls for guided tours of the Birth Home, it does not specify which rooms

are to be refurnished. On the basis of the information presently available, summarized in the preceding section of this report, refurnishing of the following areas is recommended: front porch, entrance hall (F-1), stair hall (F-2), living room (F-3), dining room (F-5), kitchen (F-6), Christine's room (F-7), M.L. and A.D.'s hall bedroom (S-2), "Birth Room" (S-4), and Joel's room (S-5).

As furnished, the house will reflect conditions about the mid-1930s, while both Aunt Ida and Uncle Joel were still living with the Kings, but after the death of Grandfather Williams. The Williams' bedroom on the first floor (F-4), for which there is little documentation, will not be furnished; it will contain minimal exhibits on the Williams and King families and on the neighborhood during Martin Luther King, Jr.'s boyhood, helping to place the house in its period context.

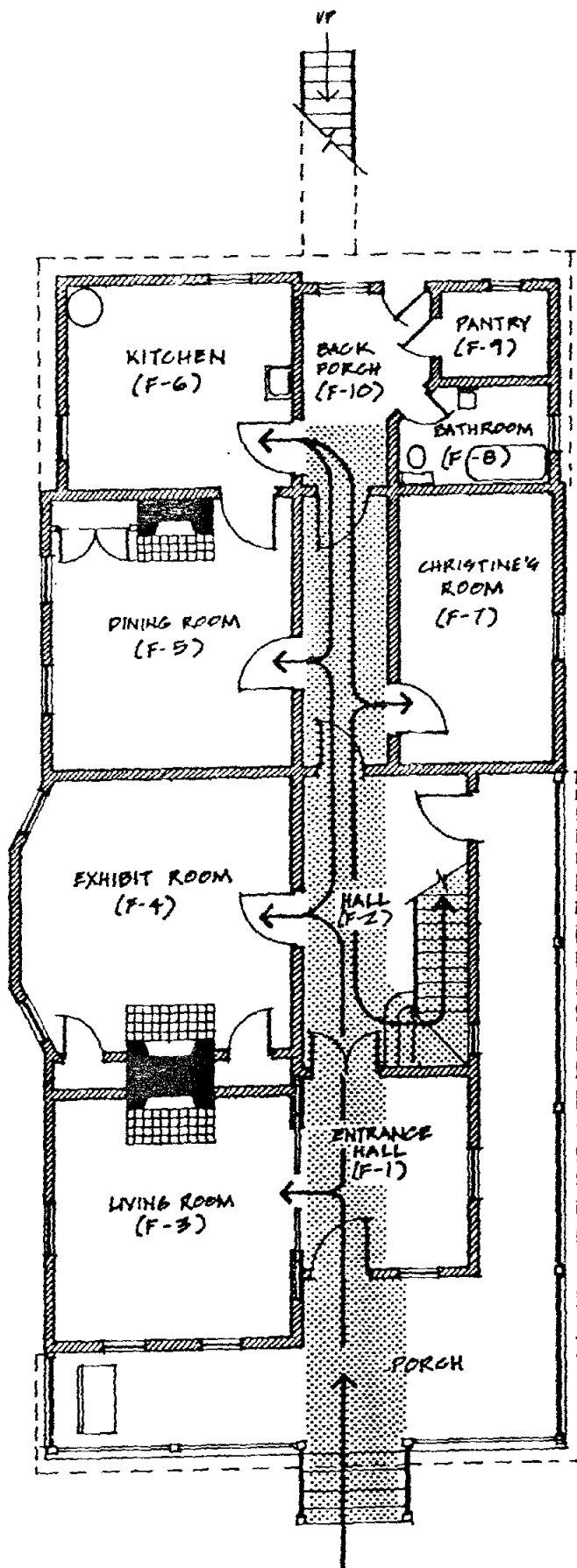
## OPERATING PLAN

Visitation at the Birth Home will be limited to scheduled, guided tour groups of no more than 10 people, conducted by a uniformed ranger who will provide both interpretation and protection. Visitors will view the furnished rooms from the doorways, behind movable rope-and-stanchion barriers. Unobtrusive vinyl or synthetic carpet runners will protect floors and help keep visitors on the tour path.

Tour groups will be met at the front door and invited into the entrance hall, where they will receive a brief introduction to the house and tour. After seeing the living room, they will pass along the narrow hall to the dining room and kitchen, then retrace their steps for a look into Christine's room and a glimpse of the old coal furnace in the cellar, reflected in a mirror at the head of the cellar stairs. Before going upstairs, they will have an opportunity to view exhibits in room 3 on the family and neighborhood. Upstairs, visitors will see the boys' hall bedroom, the Birth Room, and Joel's room and exit the building at the south end of the hall, down the outside stairway to the back yard.

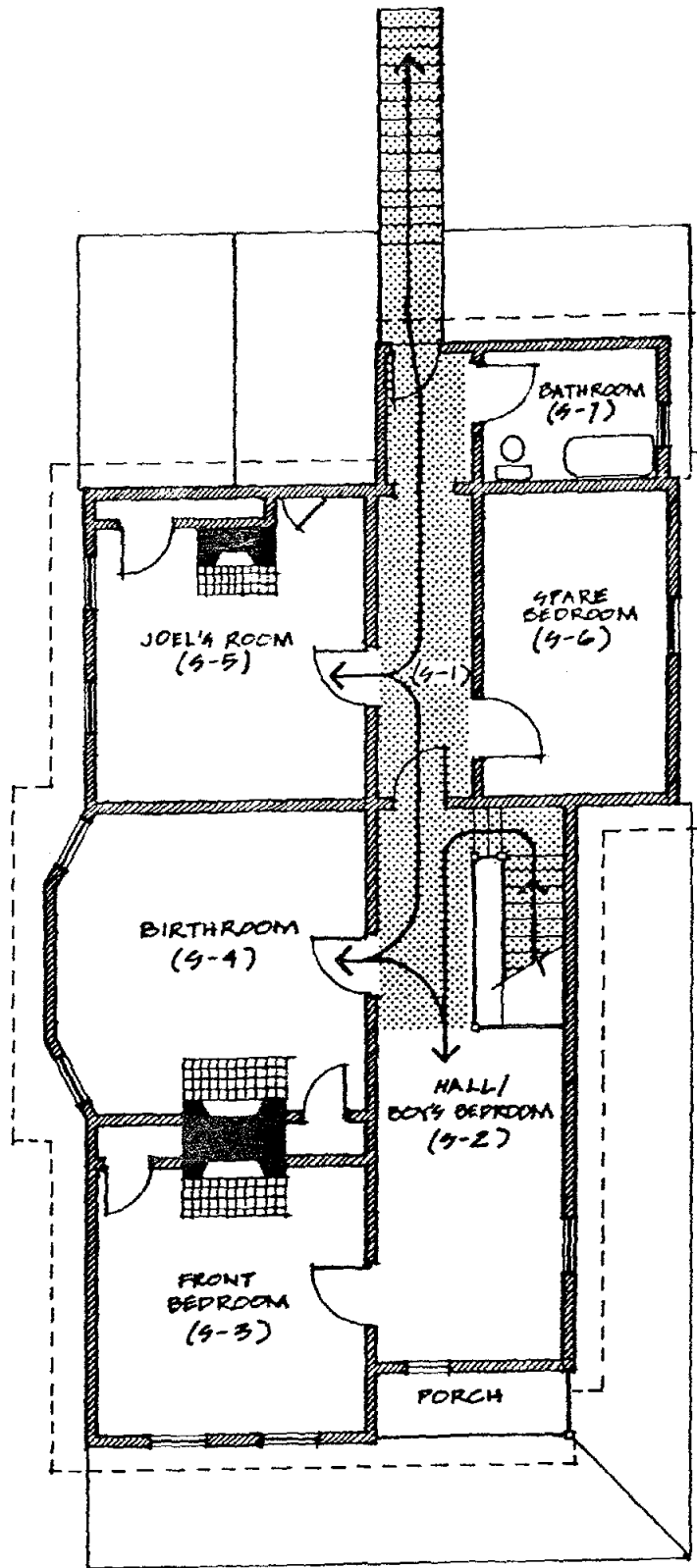


**VISITOR CIRCULATION AND ROOM DRAWINGS**



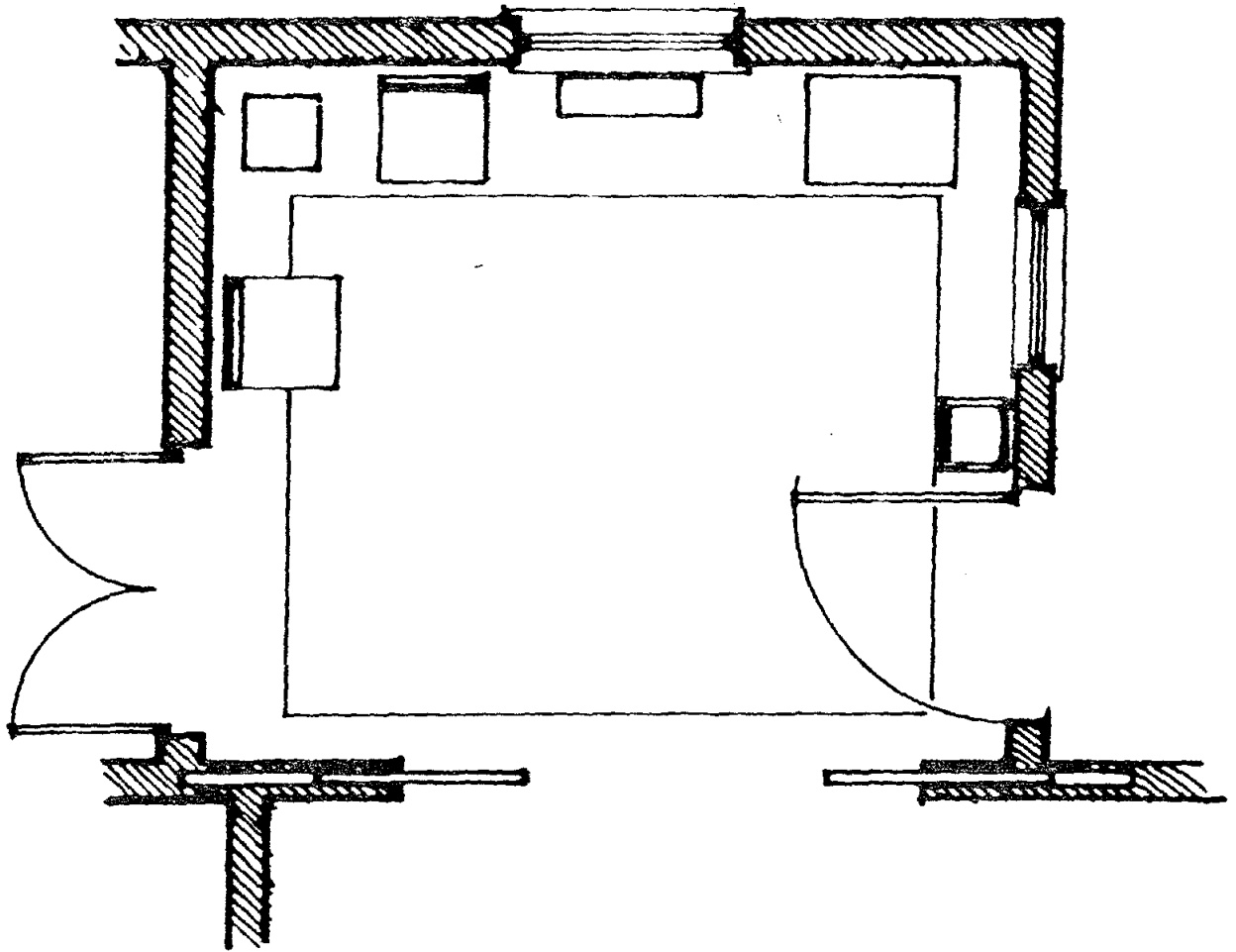
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



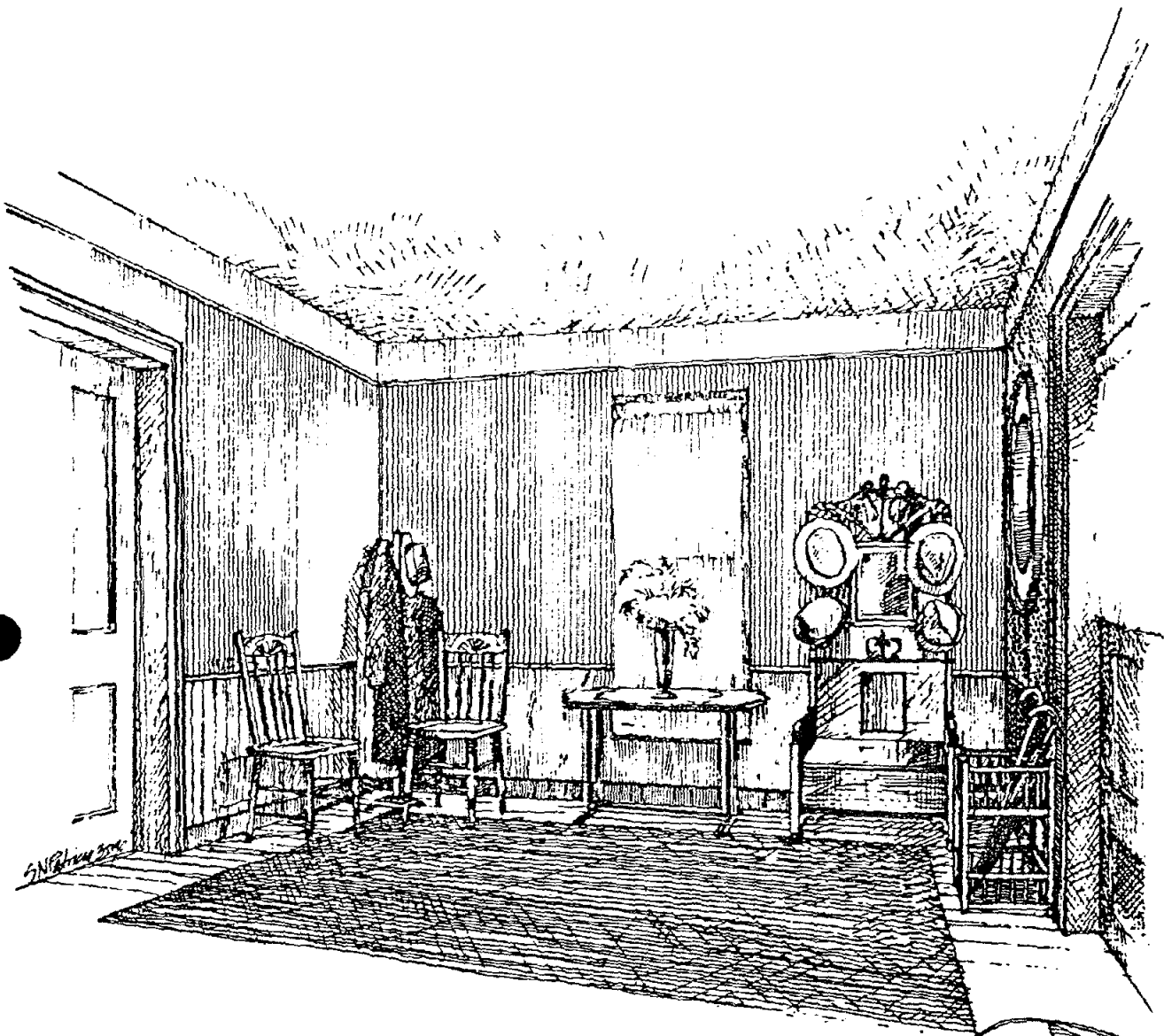


SECOND FLOOR PLAN

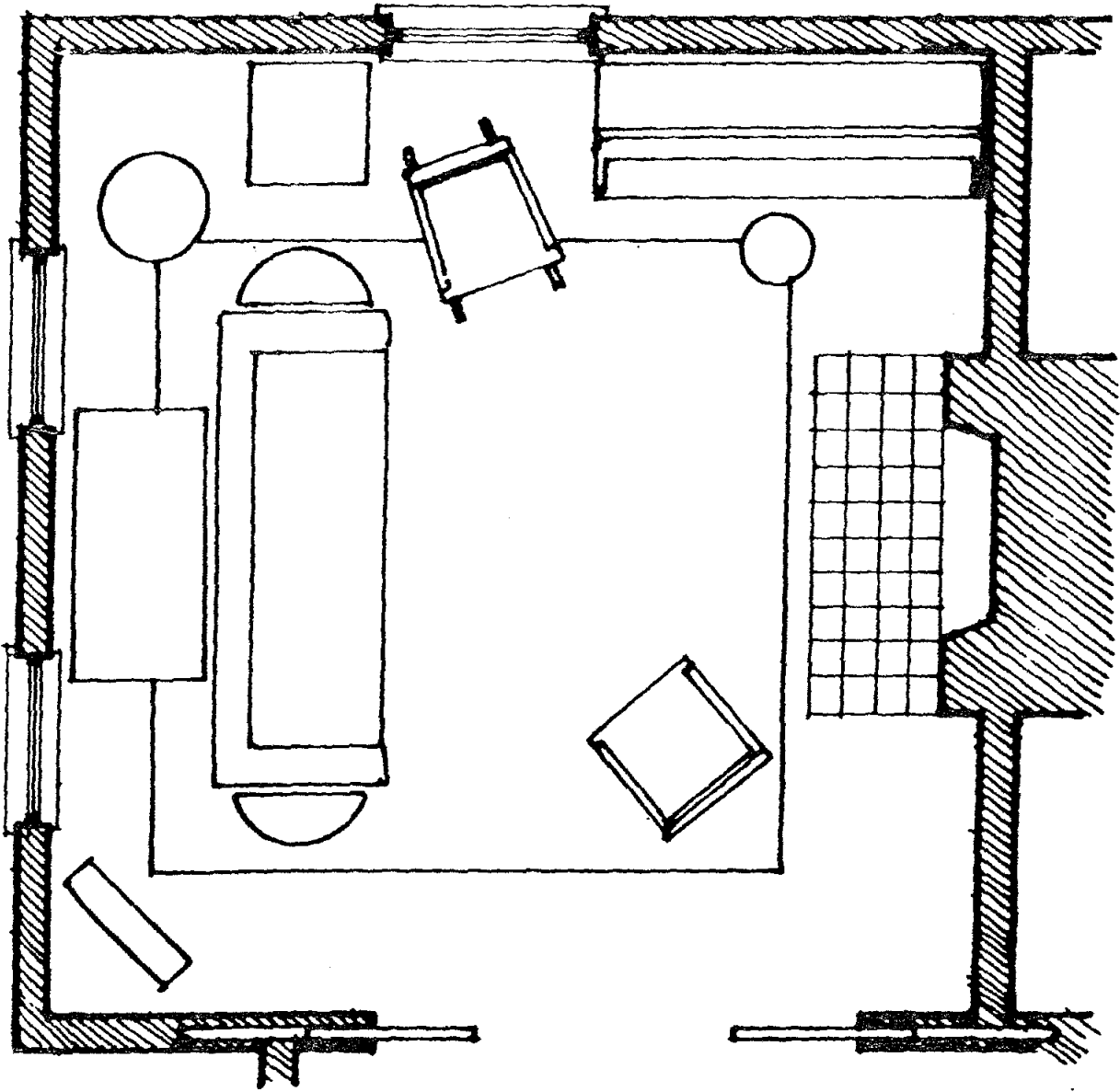




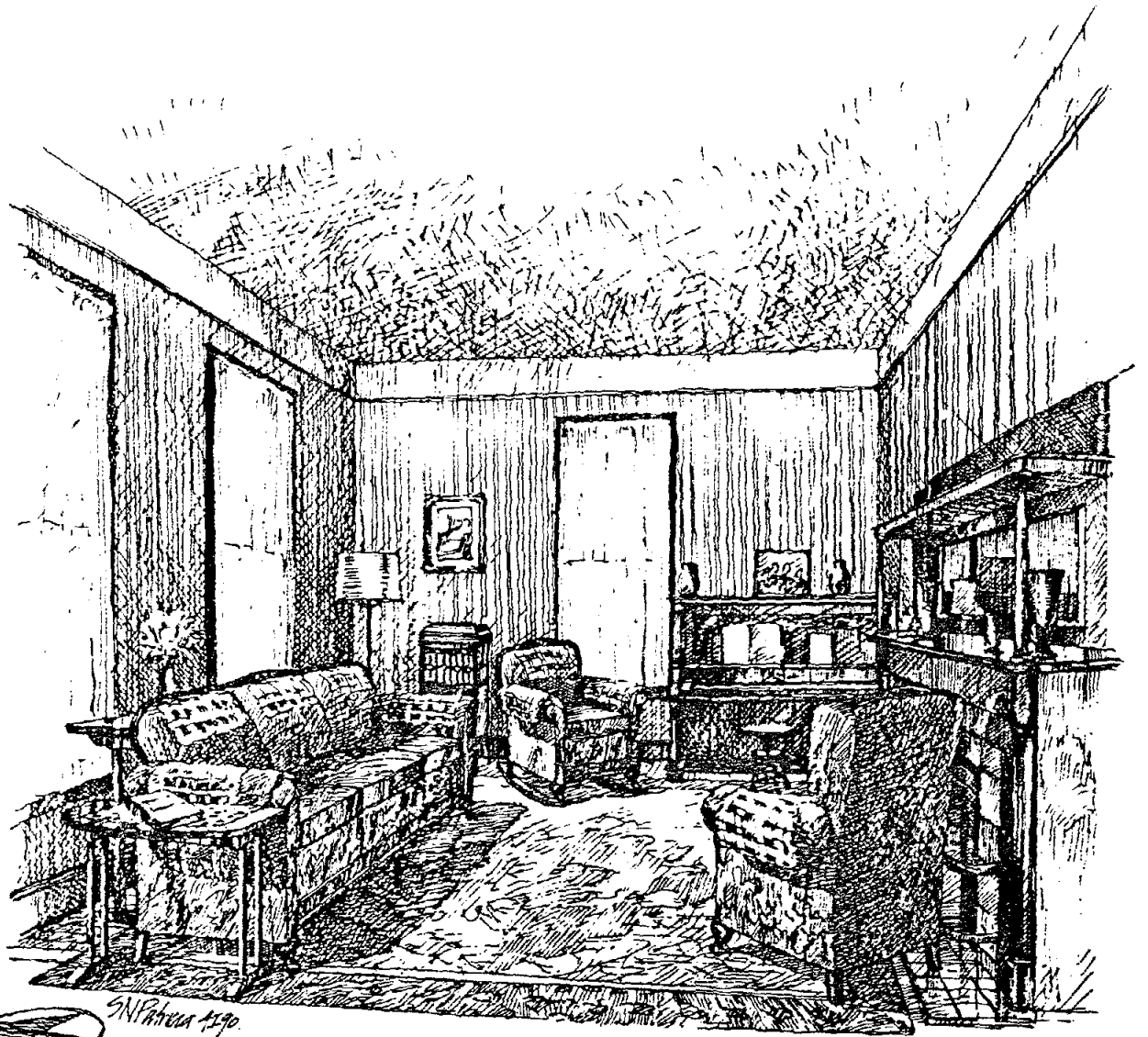
ENTRANCE HALL



ENTRY

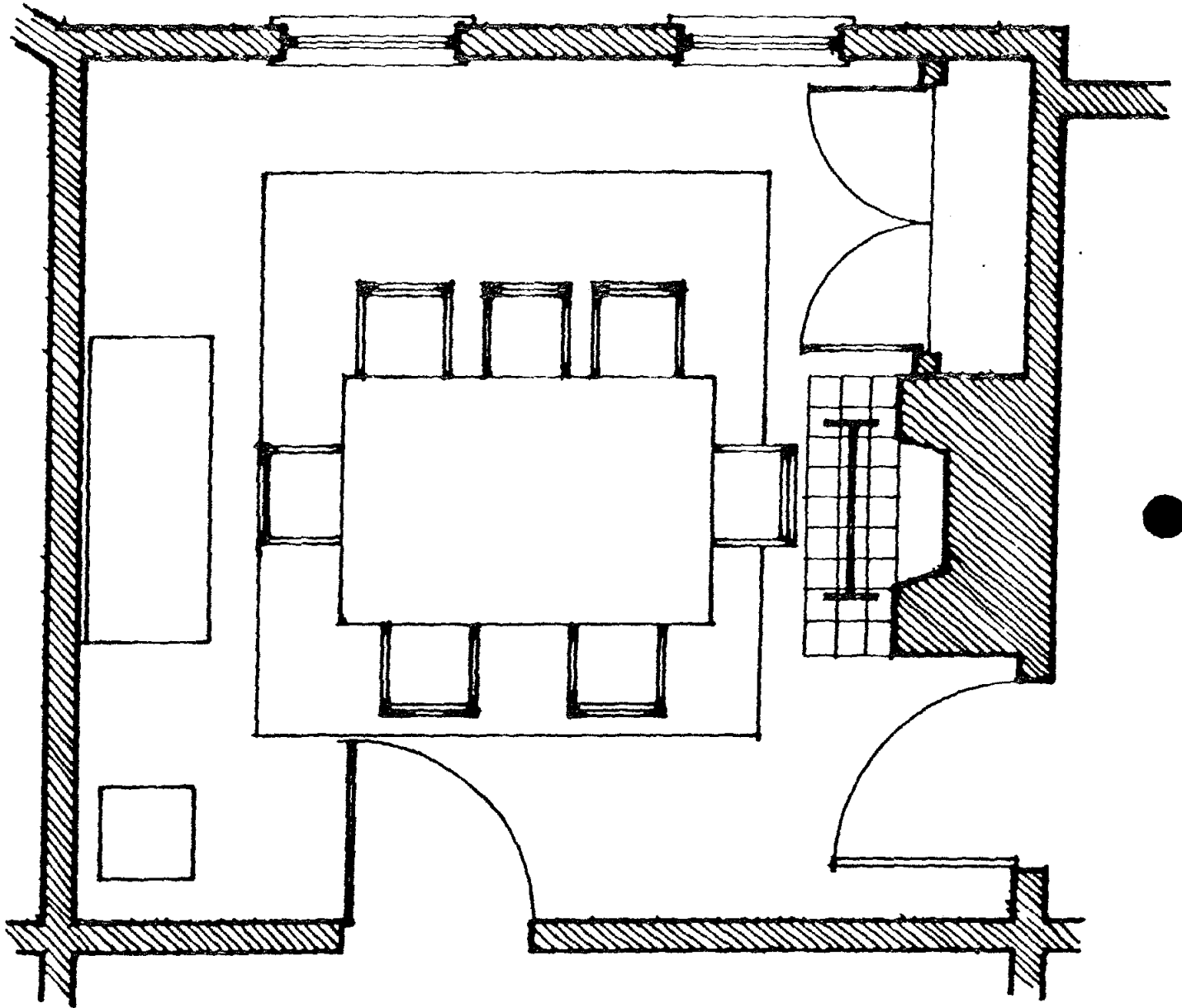


LIVING ROOM



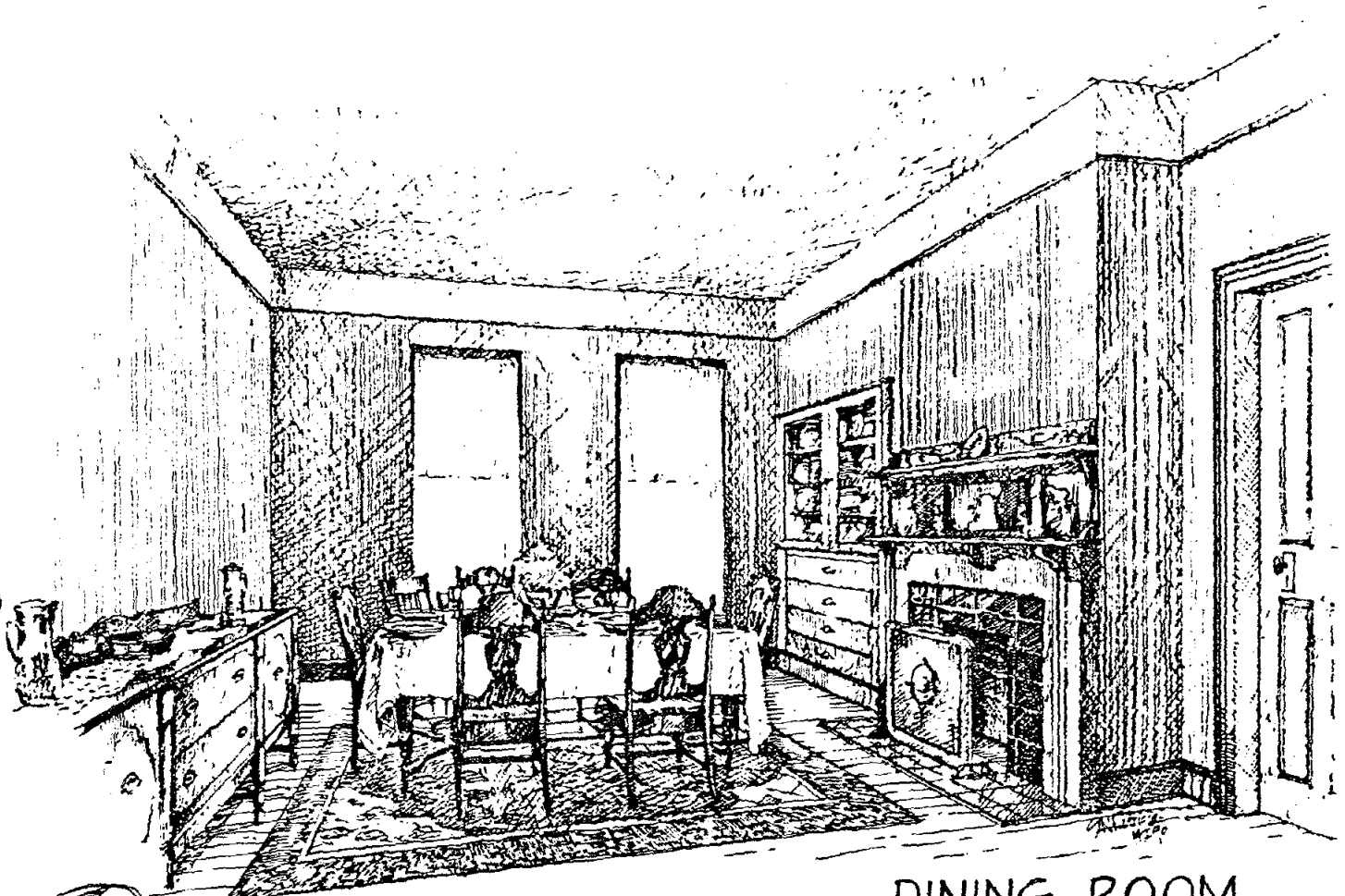
N  
SN P. 1970

LIVING ROOM

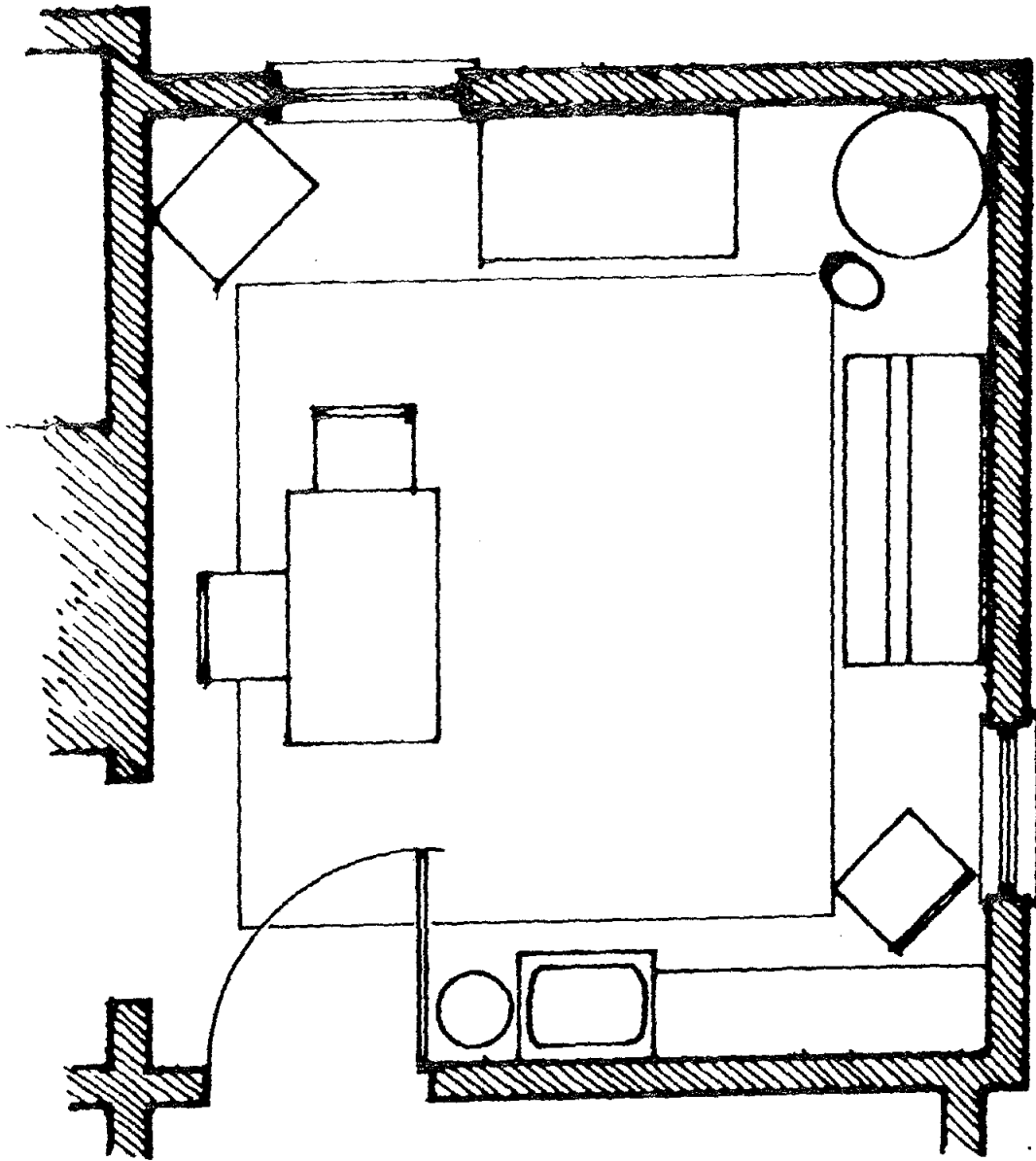


DINING ROOM

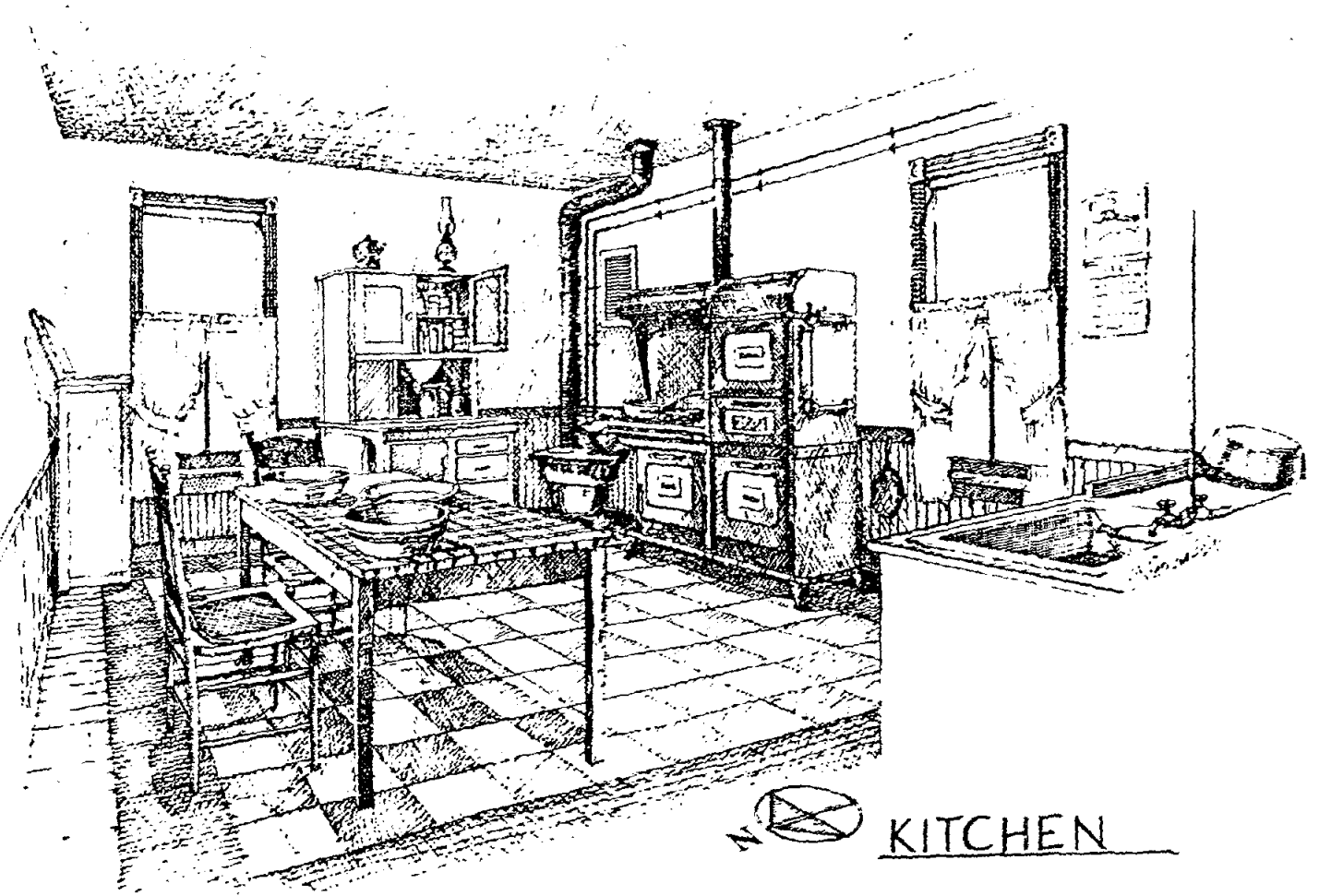




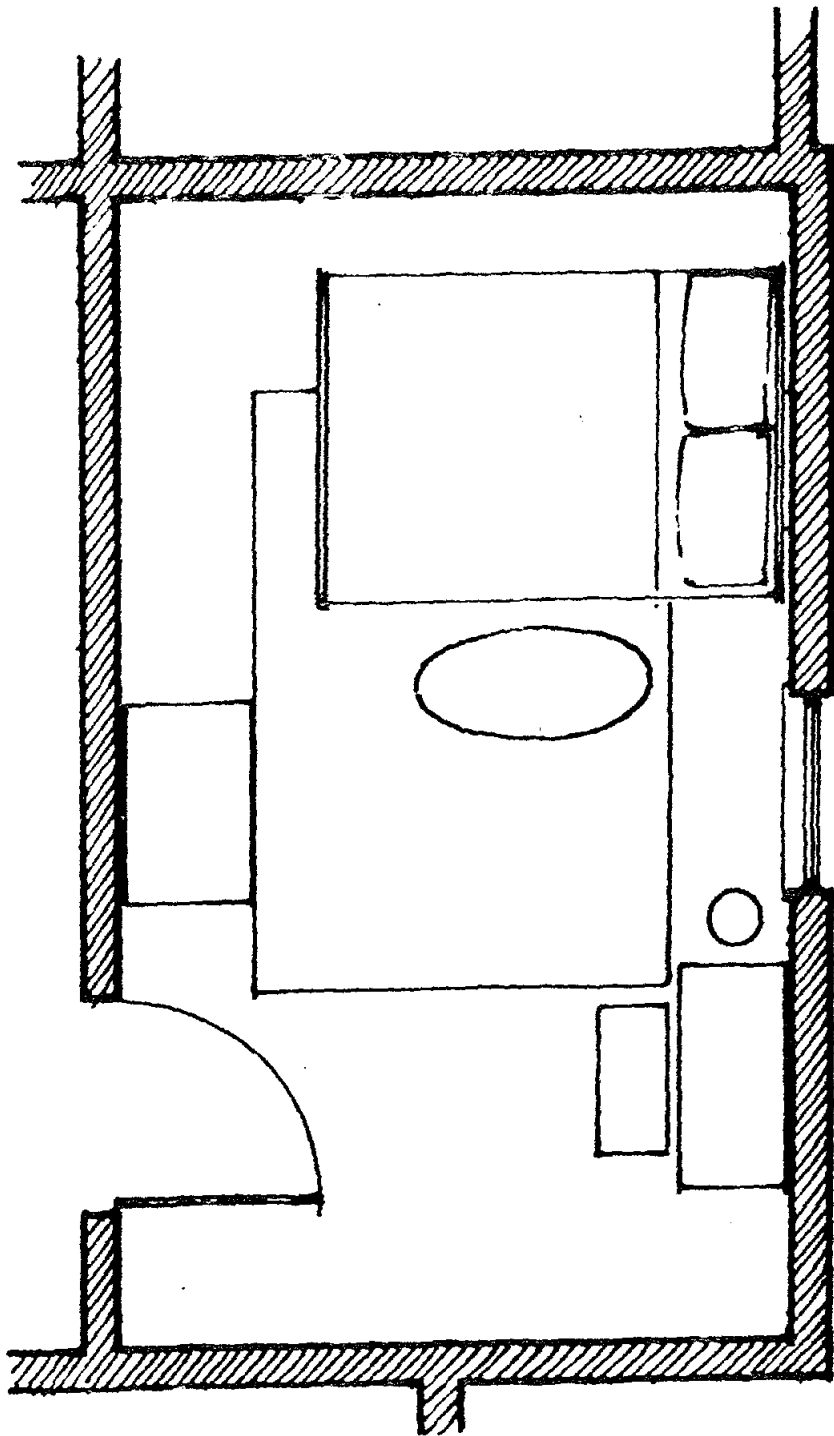
DINING ROOM



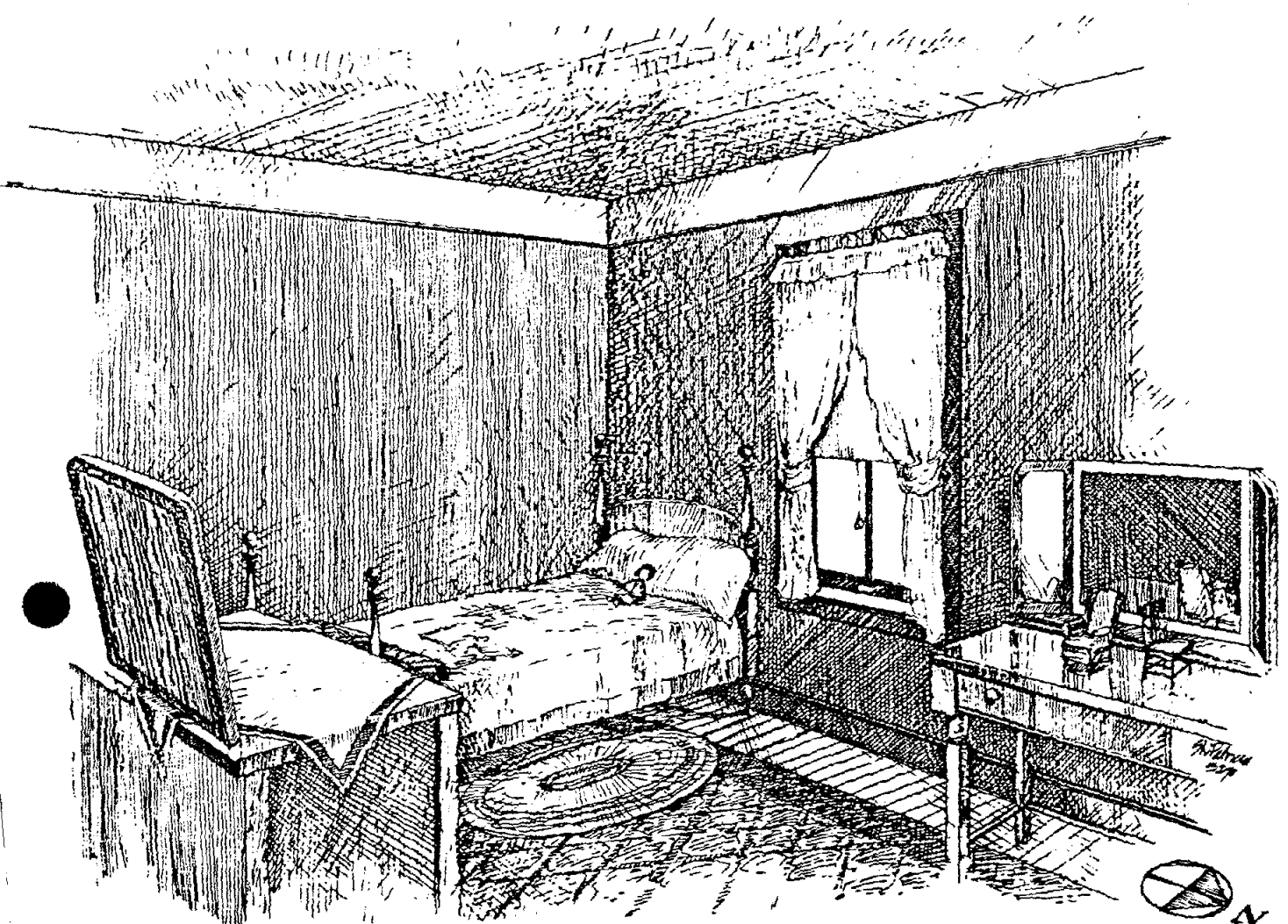
KITCHEN



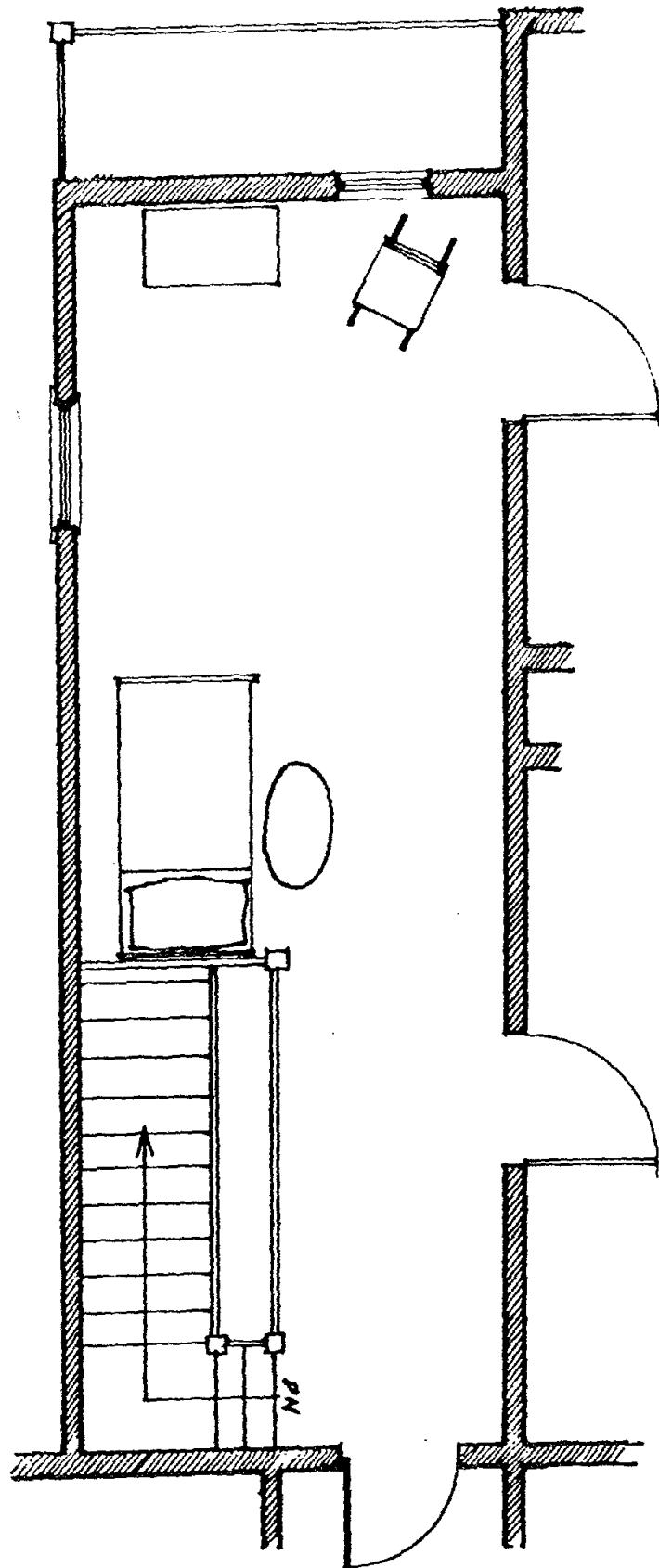
KITCHEN



CHRISTINE'S ROOM



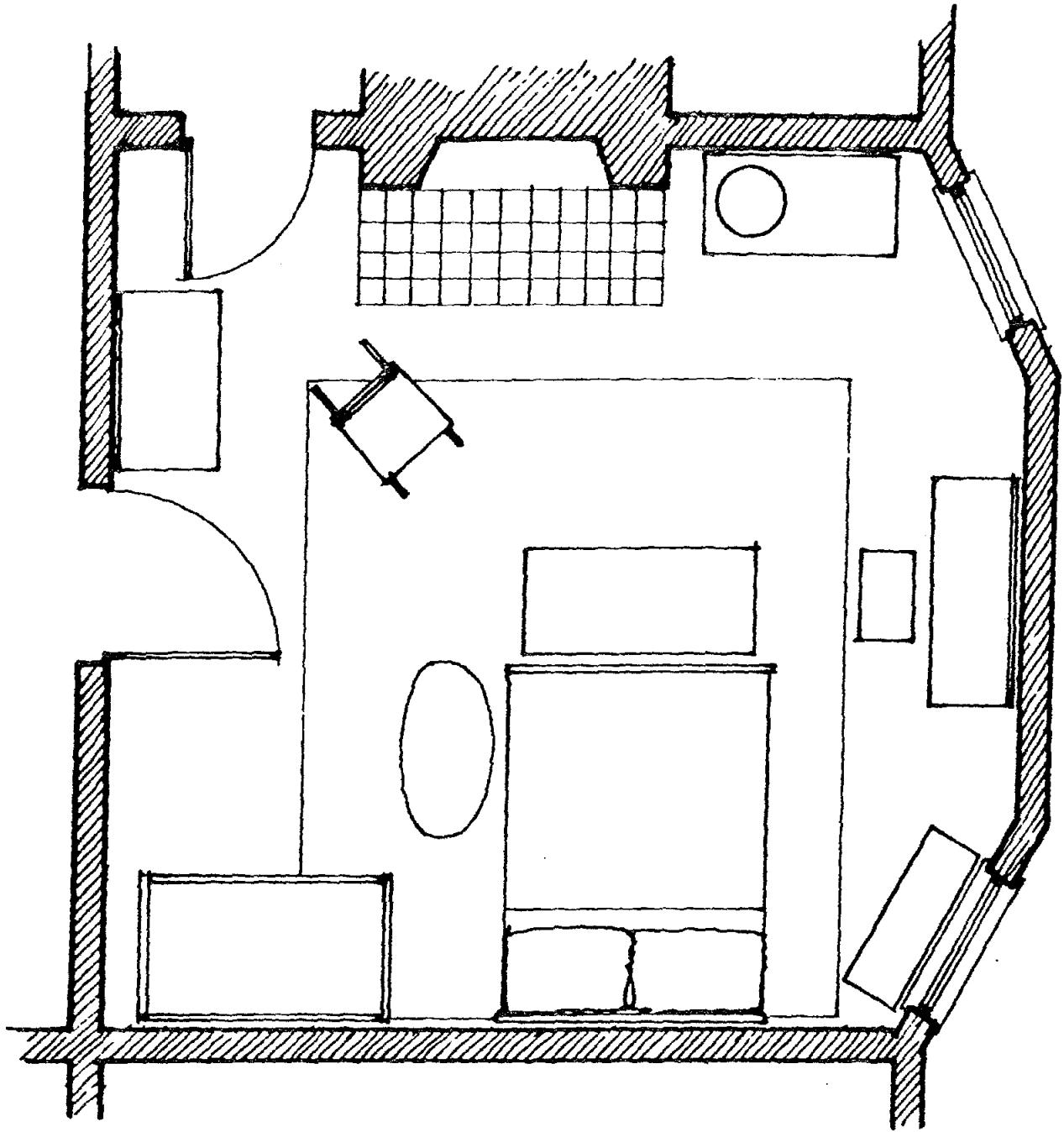
CHRISTINE'S ROOM



FRONT HALL/BOYS' BEDROOM

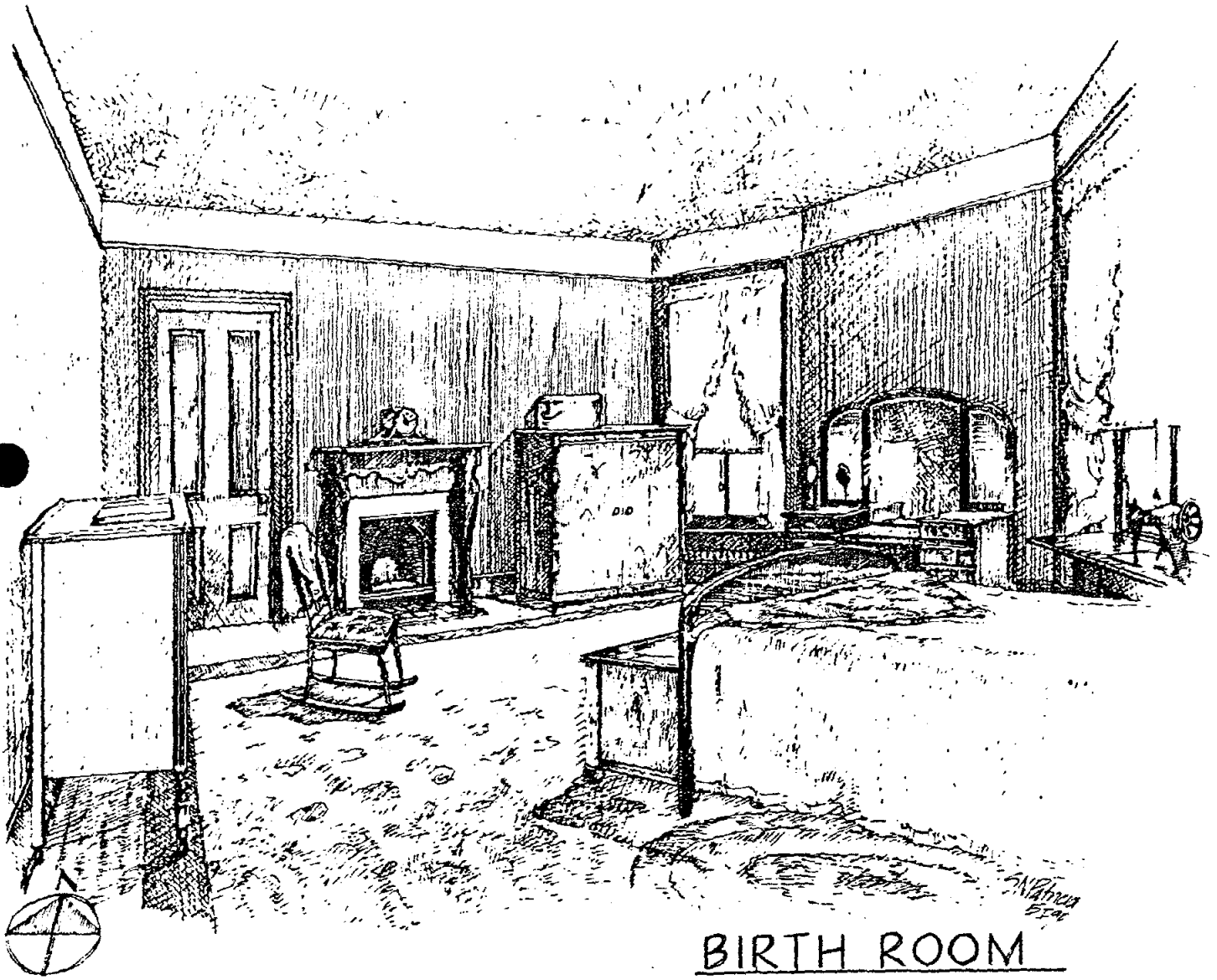


FRONT HALL/BOYS' BEDROOM

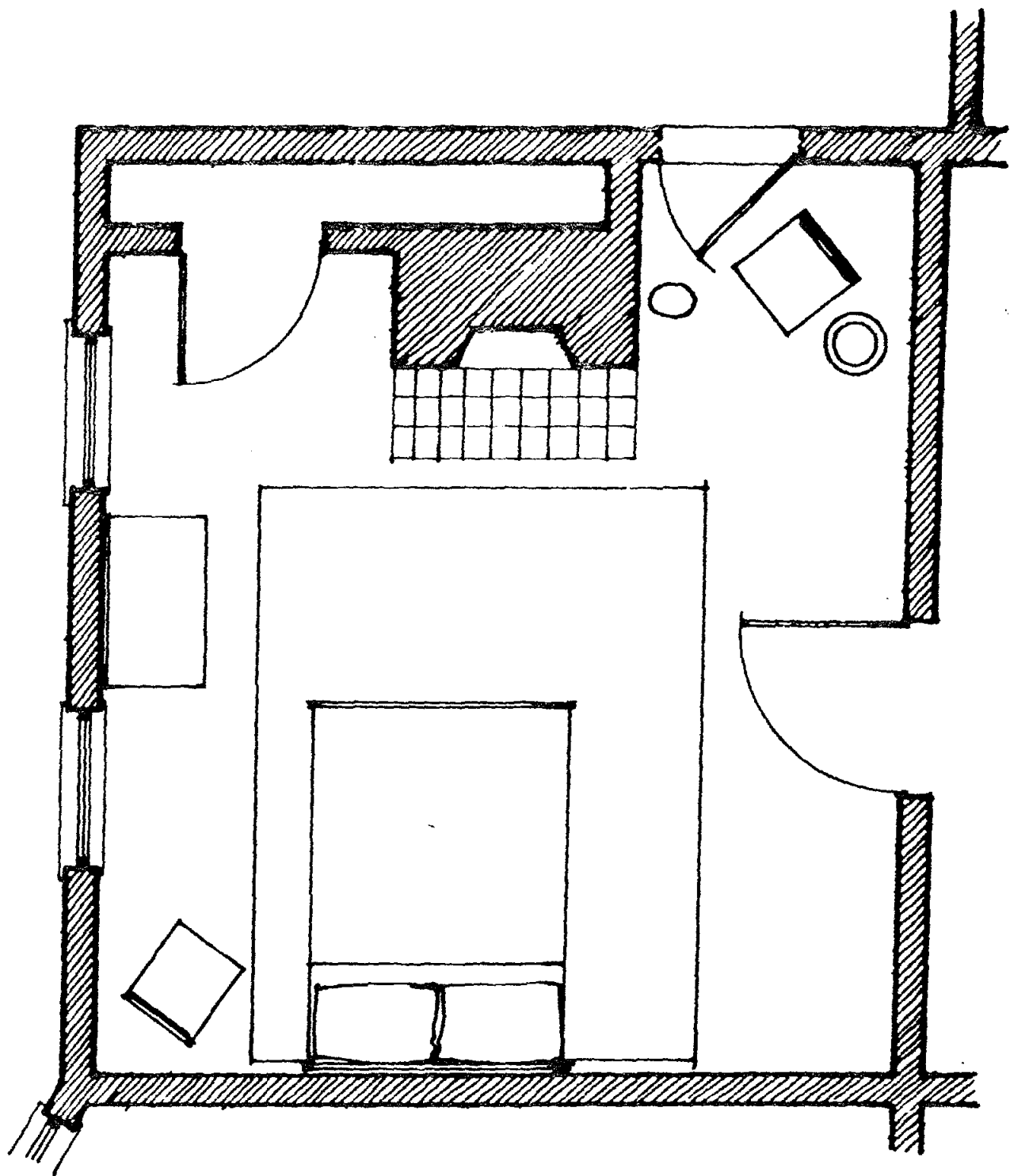


BIRTH ROOM

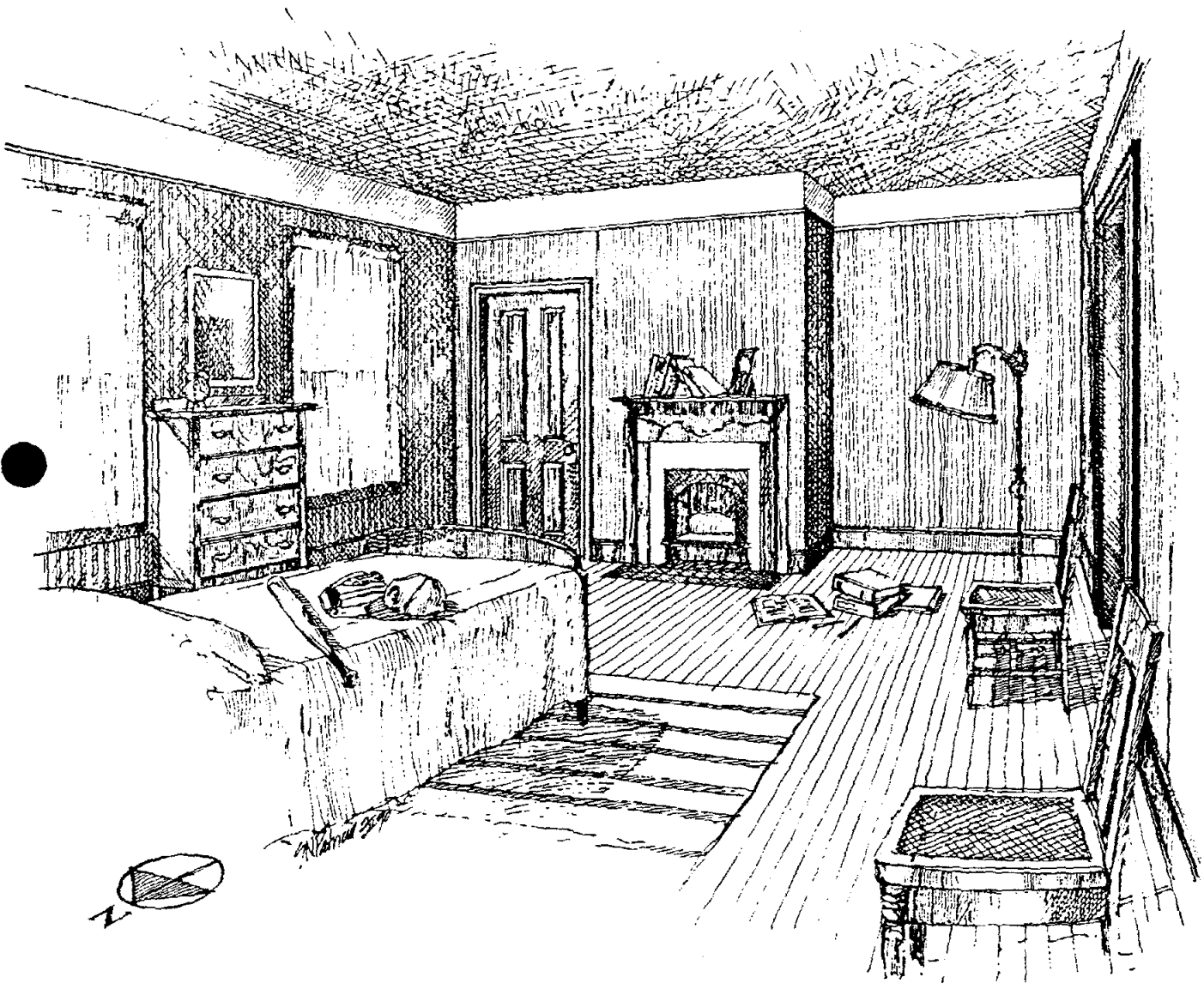




BIRTH ROOM



JOEL'S ROOM



JOEL'S ROOM

## LIST OF FURNISHINGS

Except for the birth room (1929), the recommended furnishings reflect conditions in the early to mid 1930s, before Joel King left home in 1937. The plan recommends few changes in the rooms furnished in 1974/75 under the direction of Mrs. Alberta Williams King and her daughter, Mrs. Christine King Farris, since they knew better than any later researcher how those rooms looked in the historic period. For information on the boys' hall bedroom and Joel's room, previously unfurnished, the plan leans heavily on Rev. Joel King's memories of the time before he married and left Auburn Avenue.

### Front Porch

Since the front porch is visible from the street, it will help to make the house look lived in if there are some furnishings on the porch, including live plants in the flower boxes in the summer. Although the King family had at least two rocking chairs on the porch, these will not be replaced. The park has provided modern oak benches for visitors to sit on while waiting for tours to begin; these are considered safer and more durable.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. PORCH SWING	Hanging from ceiling, left end of porch.	Original hooks in ceiling; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Retain similar swing acquired in 1970s; immobilize to prevent accidental injury to visitors.

## Front Porch, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
2. PLANTERS (2), wood, with metal hangers	Hanging from porch railing east of steps.	Cover illustration; "Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.	Fabricate planters, paint white; plant with petunias and coleus.
3. DOOR MAT, fiber	At front door.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Acquire modern cocoa mat similar to one in Sears, Roebuck 1930 catalog, p. 620.

Entrance Hall, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
5. CLOTHING	Hanging on costumer and hall rack.	Common usage; two of Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr.'s hats are on loan to MALU from MLK Center for Non-Violent Social Change.	Acquire two men's winter coats and hats, a woman's winter coat and hat of the mid-1930s, and a woman's and man's straw hats; display winter coats and hats from October to May; during the warm months leave woman's and man's straw hats; retain original hats in study collection.
6. END TABLE, dark finish, 1920-1930	West wall under window.	Common usage.	Retain non-original table acquired about 1975.
7. DOILY, VASE, and SILK FLOWERS	On table.	Common usage.	Retain period doily, acquire brass vase, and good quality silk roses.
8. PHOTOGRAPH of King family, 1939	On end table or south wall.	Common usage.	Reproduce photograph; acquire period frame.
9. RUG, about 6' x 11'		Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, mentions a carpet here, rather than linoleum.	Retain modern, synthetic rug, dark red.

## Entrance Hall (F-1)

The furnishings in the entrance hall reflect its primary function as an entry where the Kings' visitors could leave their coats and hats before going into the living room.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. SIDE CHAIRS (2), wooden seats, 1910-1920	Southwest corner.	Rev. Joel King, in his 1987 interview, mentioned only a chair just inside the front door.	Acquire period chairs.
2. HALL/RACK, wood, with mirror and metal hooks, 1910-20	Northwest corner.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, described this as "an old rack for coats to hang, and nobody used it very much"	Retain non-original hall rack donated by Mrs. Mamie Raiford Hamilton about 1975.
3. UMBRELLA STAND with UMBRELLA and CANE	Beside door, north wall.	Common usage.	Acquire period umbrella stand, umbrella, and cane.
4. COSTUMER, wood, with hooks, 1910-1930	Southwest corner.	Common usage.	Acquire period costumer.

**Entrance Hall, Continued**

<b>Object</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
10. DOOR CURTAIN, white, mounted on brass rod at top and bottom	Front door.	1975 restoration.	Retain curtain from 1975 restoration; acquire similar curtain for backup.
11. WINDOW CURTAINS (1 pair), white lace	West window.	1975 restoration.	Retain curtains from 1975 restoration; acquire similar backup set.
12. WINDOW SHADE, ivory	West window.	1975 restoration.	Retain shade from 1975 restoration.



## Stair Hall (F-2)

This narrow passageway held few furnishings, the most obvious being the hall rack used by family members. Although the cellar trapdoor in the floor under the stairs normally was kept closed, it is now left open so that modern visitors can see (in a mirror) the old coal furnace in the basement. A non-historic railing around the cellar opening keeps visitors from falling down the cellar stairs, but makes it impossible to place the hall rack in its historic location.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. HALL RUNNER	Extending down the hall from the French doors to the bathroom.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, recalled a green and white linoleum runner in the hall.	Since this hall receives heavy public use, retain modern synthetic carpeting.
2. TELEPHONE on STAND with matching SEAT, 1920-1930	Under staircase.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview. Rev. King said that the telephone was originally on the north wall, over the stair landing, but was later moved to the east wall, beside the door to the Kings' bedroom, and that there was neither a table nor a chair by the phone in either location.	Since a wall-mounted telephone would present a safety problem in this narrow hallway, use period instrument acquired by restoration committee, place on period telephone stand, with seat, in MALU collection.

## Living Room (F-3)

The living room served as a family sitting room, as a place to entertain guests, and as a meeting room for choir rehearsals and small civic groups. Its furnishings dated mostly from the mid-1920s. Of the original furnishings only the piano and whatnot have survived, but Mrs. King, Sr., was able to find in 1974 wallpaper, a rug, and a sofa, which were similar to those she had once had.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. PIANO, upright, Ricca & Son, ca. 1915 (original)	Northeast corner, angled.	"Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Retain original piano, given by Rev. and Mrs. Williams to their daughter Alberta about 1915, and donated to the Martin Luther King Memorial Center after her death in 1974.
2. PIANO STOOL with revolving seat, ca. 1915	At piano.	"Opening Tour" guidesheet (1975) says that "a roll-up type piano stool" was used when the King children were taking piano lessons; later Mrs. King acquired a piano bench, which was donated along with the piano in 1974.	Acquire period piano stool with revolving seat; retain Mrs. King's later bench in park collection.

Living Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
3. PIANO SCARF, VASES, and PHOTOGRAPH, 1915-1925	On top of piano.	Common usage.	Acquire period piano scarf; retain the pair of green pottery vases acquired by the 1975 restoration committee and reproduction of photograph of Rev. and Mrs. A.D. Williams.
4. RELIGIOUS SONGBOOKS or HYMNALS (up to 3), PIANO INSTRUCTION BOOK, and CHRISTMAS CAROL BOOK	On piano rack.	"Opening Tour": "Mrs. King, Sr., played and sang and worked with the church music, sometimes family sang spirituals and hymns together. The children all took piano lessons."	Retain songbooks acquired for 1975 restoration; acquire beginning piano book, ca. 1920-1935, and carol book (for display at Christmas).
5. ROCKING CHAIR, upholstered, ca. 1920	In front of east window.	Rev. Joel King, 1984 interview: "They had a rocker and a [sofa] in front of the windows."	Acquire period rocking chair.
6. PHONOGRAPH, 1915-1930	East wall, left of window.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview; Rev. King noted that there was no radio until after he left in 1937.	Acquire period phonograph.

Living Room, Continued

67

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
7. FLOOR LAMP, brass, with pleated silk or paper shade	Southeast corner, next to sofa.	"Opening Tour."	Retain similar lamp donated about 1975 by Miss James Dibble; acquire period shade.
8. SOFA TABLE, mahogany finish	South wall, behind sofa.	"Opening Tour."	Retain table acquired by 1975 refurnishing committee.
9. Art glass VASE, crocheted DOILY, and ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS	On sofa table.	Common usage and 1975 restoration.	Retain vase from 1975 restoration and crocheted doily donated by Miss James Dibble; acquire good quality silk rose.
10. SOFA, upholstered in maroon cut-velvet	In front of sofa table.	"Opening Tour"; Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Retain sofa acquired for 1975 restoration.
11. EASY CHAIR	West side of room.	"Opening Tour"; arrangement conjectural.	Retain period armchair.
12. ANTIMACASSARS (11), crocheted	On backs and arms of sofa and backs of two chairs.	Common usage; 1975 restoration.	Retain 6 antimacassars on sofa acquired for 1975 restoration; acquire 2 more of similar style for chair backs.

## Living Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
13. WHATNOT, corner type, dark wood ( <u>original</u> )	Southwest corner.	"Opening Tour": "What-not shelves—an original piece from the house."	Use original whatnot.
14. BRIC-A-BRAC	On shelves of whatnot.	"Opening Tour": "family and friends remember small pitchers and animals which stood on its shelves."	Use small objects (non-original) placed on the whatnot by the 1975 refurnishing committee.
15. END TABLES (2), dark wood, 1920s	At west end of sofa.	Common usage.	Retain non-original end tables acquired for 1975 restoration.
16. DOILIES (2), BOOK, and MAGAZINES	On end tables.	Common usage.	Acquire two period doilies; place on tables the book <i>Singers in the Dawn; a Brief Anthology of American Negro Poetry</i> (Atlanta 1939), and other period books and magazines.
17. COAL GRATE, iron, and COAL	In fireplace.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, stated that they burned both coal and wood in the living room fireplace.	Acquire period grate; place coal in it during winter months; leave empty in warm months.

Living Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
18. FIREPLACE COVER, wood ( <u>original</u> )	In front of fireplace.	Possibly original, since there were some fireplace covers in the house before the restoration began (HSR, p. 30).	Use original fireplace cover during warm months; remove in winter.
19. COAL HOD and SHOVEL or TONGS	On hearth.	Common usage.	Acquire period hod and tools.
20. VASES and FIGURINES	On mantel shelf.	Common usage.	Use the pair of brass vases and two china figurines placed in the room by the 1975 restoration committee.
21. FANS (3), hand	On end tables and chair or sofa.	Common usage.	Acquire period cardboard fans for summer display.
22. PRINT	East wall, over phonograph	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Acquire period framed print of Millet's <i>The Gleaners</i> .
23. ICE SIGN	In front window.	Common usage.	Acquire reproduction of period sign.

## Living Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
24. RUG, American oriental, 9' x 12'	Centered.	"Opening Tour"; "original rug was flowered pattern, room rug, with fringe."	Retain rug selected by Mrs. King, Sr., in 1974.
25. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		1975 restoration.	Retain shades acquired for the restoration.
26. CURTAINS (2 prs.), white lace		1975 restoration.	Retain curtains acquired by 1975 restoration committee; acquire backup set of similar curtains.

## Dining Room (F-5)

The dining room is set up for dinner, when "everybody had to be there around the table," as Mrs. Farris recalled. In 1937 this meant that there would have been at least seven chairs and place settings to accommodate the King parents and children, Grandmother Williams, and Joel King. The built-in china cabinet, the buffet, and several pieces of china and glassware are original King family possessions. As an occasional alternative, show the table uncovered, with one of the board games set up for four players.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. CHINA CABINET ( <u>original</u> )	Built-in, east wall.	Still in place at time of restoration; wallpaper behind shelves installed during the restoration, with Mrs. King's approval.	Retain as restored in 1975.
2. CONTENTS OF CHINA CABINET ( <u>original</u> )	On shelves, behind closed glass doors.	Common usage; 1975 restoration.	Use original table china and glass; acquire other original pieces, as available.
3. BUFFET, ca. 1925	West wall, centered.	Called "an original piece" in 1975 "Opening Tour" guidesheet, but identified by Mrs. Farris (1989) as "selected by Mrs. King, Sr. from an antique store."	Retain buffet.



## Dining Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
4. BUFFET SCARF, WATER PITCHER, BOWL, and COVERED PITCHER	On top of buffet.	Common usage; 1975 restoration.	Retain objects placed on buffet by 1975 committee, including crocheted runner and three pieces of original china and glass: pressed glass water pitcher, ceramic bowl, and china covered pitcher.
5. DINING TABLE, ca. 1925 ( <u>original</u> )	Center of room.	Mrs. Farris (1989) identified this as her mother's table, given to a church member who donated it to the Birth Home.	Use original table, fully extended.
6. DINING CHAIRS (7), ca. 1925 (of which 4 are <u>original</u> )	Around table, armchair at north end.	The four chairs now in the room are part of the original King dining room set, donated by the friend to whom Mrs. King, Sr. had given them, (Mrs. Farris, 1989). Three additional chairs would have been needed to accommodate the whole family in 1937.	Acquire three chairs which are original or similar to original set.
7. TABLECLOTHS (2), white linen		"Opening Tour"; "usually covered with white damask cloth."	Acquire two cloths, one plain, one similar to original in park study collection; use plain cloth as "silence cloth" under embroidered cloth.

Dining Room, Continued

73

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
8. TABLE SETTING	On dining table.	Common usage.	Use <u>original</u> glass WATER PITCHER, SUGAR, CREAMER and WATER GOBLETS (7); acquire the following: DINNER PLATES (7), ca. 1920, pattern with roses. KNIFE, FORK, and SPOON (7 sets), ca. 1920, silverplate. COFFEE CUPS and SAUCERS (4), ca. 1920-40. SALT and PEPPER SHAKERS, glass, ca. 1920. NAPKINS (7), linen.
9. FIREPLACE COVER (possibly <u>original</u> )	In front of fireplace.	Found in house, p.	Use one of the two existing fireplace covers.
10. CRUMBER ( <u>original</u> )	On mantel, left end.	Inventory 1975; Mrs. Bennett, interview.	Use Mrs. King's original crumber.
11. PITCHER, china	Lower shelf, left.	1975 restoration.	Retain pink and white pitcher acquired for the 1975 restoration.

## Dining Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
12. CHINA DISH with handle	Lower shelf, right.	1975 restoration.	Retain dish acquired for the 1975 restoration.
13. CHINA FIGURINES (boy and girl)	Upper shelf, left.	1975 restoration.	Retain figurines acquired for the 1975 restoration.
14. CHINA ROOSTERS	Upper shelf, right.	1975 restoration.	Retain roosters acquired for the 1975 restoration.
15. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		Common usage.	Retain cotton shades acquired for the 1975 restoration.
16. CURTAINS (2 prs.), white		Common usage.	Retain sheer white curtains acquired for the 1975 restoration; acquire backup set.
17 RUG, linoleum	Centered.	Mrs. Farris remembered a linoleum rug on this floor; Rev. Joel King thought the floor was bare.	Since it probably had Mrs. King, Sr.'s approval, retain the modern vinyl rug while trying to locate a period linoleum rug or a reproduction.
18. TABLE, occasional	Southwest corner.	Common usage.	Use non-original small table in park collection.

## Dining Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
19. GAMES (3)	On occasional table or on dining table.	Mrs. Farris, interview, 1984, mentioned Monopoly, Chinese Checkers, and Old Maid as games they played as a family. The dining room table seems the most likely place, since there was no center table in the living room. When not in use, they may have been on a side table.	Acquire period games remembered by Mrs. Farris.

## Kitchen (F-6)

Of the original kitchen furnishings only the sink and drainboard (and possibly the water heater) have survived, but family members recall a Roper gas range with several ovens, a Hoosier-type kitchen cabinet, a large icebox (replaced after 1937 by a Frigidaire refrigerator), and a kitchen table that did double duty as a work table and as a breakfast table for some of the family. The stove and table furnishings will suggest that dinner is being prepared.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. SINK, CUPBOARD, and DRAINBOARD (original)	West wall.	Original, probably little changed since the house was built.	Retain as restored in 1974, including oilcloth splash cloth over sink.
2. SINK DRAINER, corner type, ca. 1930	In sink.	Common usage.	Acquire period sink drainer, either enamel or agate ware.
3. DISHPAN, tin, ca. 1930	On drainboard, upside down.	Common usage and 1975 furnishing committee; Rev. Joel King (1987 interview) said that there was no dishpan.	Retain dishpan from 1975 restoration.
4. DISH CLOTH, SCRUBBER, POT BRUSH, BAR OF SOAP, DUTCH CLEANSER CAN, and SOAP FLAKES BOX	On drainboard.	Common usage.	Acquire period items or similar modern ones.

Kitchen, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
5. DISH TOWEL	Hanging from nail in side of drainboard.	Common usage.	Acquire period dish towel.
6. GARBAGE CAN	Beside sink.	Common usage.	Acquire period garbage can.
7. PICTURE	West wall, to right of sink.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "There was one...between the sink and the door."	Acquire a framed landscape or flower print of the period.
8. SMALL CALENDAR, 1935-1937	Over sink, between pipes.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "They kept a little old calendar in there always...between that picture [#3, above] and the sink. There was quite a space between [the pipes]...they come down and then there's a picture somewhere along up here. It's right over this sink here...."	Acquire small calendar of the period.

77

## Kitchen, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
9. LARGE CALENDAR, 1935-1937	West wall, next to south window.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: they had "a large calendar" next to the south window.	Acquire period calendar with Atlanta or Georgia advertisement.
10. KITCHEN RANGE, Roper gas range with 6 burners and 5 ovens, ca. 1925	South wall, left of window.	Mrs. Farris identified the model her mother had from a series of Roper advertisements of the mid-1920s; Rev. Joel King (1987 interview) said that it was on the south wall, with the stovepipe going "straight up" through the ceiling.	Acquire period Roper gas range (illus. 6) or similar period range.
11. COFFEEPOT, aluminum, and COFFEE CAN	On stove.	Common usage.	Acquire period coffeepot and coffee can.
12. BOX OF MATCHES, kitchen size	On range top.	Common usage.	Acquire period match box.
13. SOUP KETTLE, two aluminum SAUCE PANS, and POT HOLDER	On stove.	Common usage, related to dining table setting.	Acquire period soup kettle, saucepans, and pot holder.
14. FRYING PANS (2), cast iron	On or near oven.	Common usage; 1975 restoration (on east wall).	Use frying pans acquired for the restoration.

**Kitchen, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
15. WATER HEATER, coal or wood fired (possibly <u>original</u> )	Southeast corner	The existing stove was described in the "Opening Tour" guidesheet as a "typical one of the period," but it was not identified as original to the house. It is hooked up to pipes connecting it with the kitchen sink. From the apparent age of the piping it seems likely that this stove, or one like it, was in place when the Kings lived here, although Rev. Joel King (1987 interview) responded "No, no" when asked if they had a pot-bellied stove in the kitchen to heat water. Sears, Roebuck carried stoves of this type as late as 1930.	Retain water heater, pending further information.
16. WATER KETTLE, cast iron	On heater.	Common usage.	Retain kettle acquired for the restoration.
17. COAL HOD and SHOVEL	Beside heater.	Common usage.	Acquire period coal hod and shovel.



## Kitchen, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
18. KITCHEN CABINET, Hoosier, ca. 1925	East wall.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, said that the kitchen cabinet was against the east wall and that they kept glasses, dishes, and towels in it; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview, said that the Hoosier cabinet given by a neighbor "is very much like the cabinet that we had," although Joel King remembered it as having a glass-fronted upper section.	Retain cabinet donated by Miss Lillian Wright.
19. CONTENTS OF CABINET	On upper shelves and behind sliding workshelf.	Common usage.	Retain jars (empty) and other containers from the 1975 restoration; acquire additional period (1930-1940) containers for spices, condiments, and staples like baking soda, baking powder, etc.; leave upper doors open.
20. KEROSENE LAMP, glass, with chimney	On top of kitchen cabinet.	Common usage: stored here in case of electrical failure.	Retain lamp from 1975 restoration; half fill reservoir with colored water to simulate kerosene.

**Kitchen, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
21. WATERING CAN, ceramic	On top of kitchen cabinet.	Common usage.	Retain watering can from 1975 restoration.
22. ICEBOX, oak	North wall, next to window, facing south.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, described the icebox as "a large one," which stood in the northeast corner until it was replaced by a refrigerator after he left.	Retain period icebox donated for the 1975 restoration.
23. KITCHEN TABLE	North of center.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "This table was sitting out here [north side of kitchen]. You could go by here to the...sink"; the table was similar to, but smaller than the breakfast table from the Boulevard house placed here by the 1975 committee.	Acquire a 1920s white-painted kitchen table, smaller and plainer than the Kings' post-1941 table, which should be retained in study collection.
24. TABLE COVER, oilcloth		Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "It seems like it had an oilcloth, I believe, glued or nailed to it, and then they put a scarf on it.... I know it [the oilcloth] didn't move."	Use green and white check oilcloth from 1975 restoration, tacked down under the table top.

## Kitchen, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
25. SERVING DISHES (3) and PLATTER	On kitchen table.	Common usage, related to serving dinner.	Acquire period pieces similar to table china.
26. KITCHEN CHAIRS (2), cane seats	At east and north sides of table.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: There were two chairs, "maybe it was straw—cane bottomed chairs."	Acquire two matching cane-bottom chairs, 1920s.
27. SIDE CHAIR, spindle back	In front of south window.	Common usage.	Acquire period chair.
28. FLYSWATTER and FLY PAPER	Swatter on windowsill; paper hanging over table.	Common usage.	Acquire period swatter and modern flypaper.
29. MOUSETRAP	On floor near kitchen cabinet.	Common usage.	Acquire period mousetrap.
30. APRON	On chair.	Common usage.	Acquire period apron.

## Kitchen, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
31. RUG, linoleum, ca. 9 x 12	Placed so that it comes up to but not under range and sink.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview, remembered a pattern of green and white squares.	Acquire period linoleum or a similarly patterned vinyl rug.
32. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		Common usage.	Retain cotton shades installed in 1975.
33. CURTAINS (2 prs.), cottage type		1975 restoration.	Retain curtains acquired by 1975 committee; alternate with acquired backup set of white cottage curtains.

## Christine's Room (F-7)

Although Christine King had probably moved upstairs by 1937, this was her room earlier in the 1930s when her Grandmother Williams had the room across the hall and Christine's parents were still upstairs. The three-piece bedroom suite (#1-3, below) belonged originally to Christine's mother, who had this room when she was growing up. When the house was restored in 1974/75, Mrs. Christine King Farris returned the original furniture to her old room.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. BED, double, wood, painted white (original)	South wall, head against west wall.	Mrs. Farris, 1975 restoration; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview: "The suite that is in my room was an original..., it belonged to my mother; she passed it to me."	Retain original bed in location assigned by Mrs. Farris.
2. TALL CHEST OF DRAWERS, with detached MIRROR, wood, painted white (original)	East wall.	Mrs. Farris, 1975 restoration; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.	Retain original chest of drawers in location assigned by Mrs. Farris; hang mirror above chest.
3. DRESSING TABLE (VANITY), with three part mirror, wood, painted white (original), with BENCH	West wall, right of window.	Mrs. Farris, 1975 restoration; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.	Retain original dressing table in location assigned by Mrs. Farris; acquire period vanity bench.

Christine's Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
4. DOLL CHAIRS (2), wicker (original)	On dressing table.	Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview: "the little pieces of furniture on that dresser, those are things that I, that we actually played with."	Retain doll furniture in same location.
5. BOUDOIR LAMPS (2)	On dressing table.	Original (?)	Retain lamps.
6. BEDDING: MATTRESS, SHEETS (2), PILLOW, PILLOWCASE, and BLANKET		Common usage.	Retain mattress, pillow, sheets, pillowcase from 1975 restoration; acquire period blanket.
7. BEDSPREAD, cotton, embroidered in pink, and QUILT		Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview, said that she originally had a "Dutch girl spread"; the spread used since the restoration was a gift from a committee member.	Retain donated spread and quilt; acquire reproduction of a "Dutch girl spread" of the 1930s; use spread in summer, quilt in winter.
8. DOLL, ca. 1930	On bed, propped up against the pillow.	1975 restoration.	Retain non-original doll.

**Christine's Room, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
9. DRESSER SCARVES (2)	On top of dressing table and chest of drawers.	Common usage.	Acquire period dresser scarves.
10. RUG, linoleum	Centered.	Mrs. Farris.	Retain vinyl rug until a period linoleum rug can be acquired or reproduced.
11. THROW RUG	Beside bed.	Common usage.	Acquire period rag or cotton rug.
12. WINDOW SHADE, ivory		Common usage.	Retain cotton shade installed in 1975.
13. CURTAINS, sheer, princess style		1975 restoration.	Retain curtains installed in 1975; acquire a similar backup set.
14. WASTEBASKET	Under window.	Common usage.	Acquire period wastebasket.
15. TABLET, PENCIL CASE and PENCILS	On vanity.	Common usage.	Acquire period examples.

**Christine's Room, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
16. HEATING		There is no evidence for a stove in this room.	



## SECOND FLOOR

### Front Hall/Boys' Bedroom (S-2)

When M.L. and A.D. were little boys, their bedroom was this wide space at the north end of the hall, opposite Aunt Ida's room (S-3, front room) and their parents' room (S-4, birth room). Here they shared a single bed and a chest of drawers until M.L. was 8 years old and A.D. was about 6. It was probably during this time that M.L. took his tumble from the upstairs to the downstairs hall. The boys moved into the back bedroom (S-5) in 1937, after its previous occupant, their Uncle Joel, got married and left Auburn Avenue.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. BED, single, steel, ca. 1930	West wall, head against stair railing.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "A.D. and M.L. stayed in this room over here on the upstairs balcony" until they moved into the back bedroom he gave up when he got married.	Acquire period bed, brown enamel finish.
2. BEDDING		Common usage.	Acquire modern mattress, sheets, blanket, pillow, and pillowcase; period white or striped bedspread.

Second Floor—Front Hall/Boys' Bedroom, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
3. CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1910-1920	North wall.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "at the end there was a little small chest of drawers...that had been there for years."	Acquire period chest.
4. LAMP, electric, metal, with fabric shade	On top of chest.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "There was a light sitting on top of it [chest of drawers]."	Use period lamp placed in the birth room by the 1975 committee.
5. ENCYCLOPEDIA, 1920s	On top of chest of drawers.	Mrs. Farris (1984 interview) mentioned a "Book of Wisdom" encyclopedia from which her aunt read to the children about animals, fables, etc., probably <i>The Book of Knowledge</i> , a 20-volume children's encyclopedia featuring illustrated stories from history, mythology, natural history, and literature. Rev. Joel King (1987 interview) thought the encyclopedia "had to be on top of that chest of drawers" in the boy's hall bedroom.	Acquire period set of <i>The Book of Knowledge</i> .

**Second Floor--Front Hall/Boys' Bedroom, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
6. ROCKING CHAIR; SHAWL	In front of balcony window.	Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview, referring to her Great-aunt Ida reading to the King children from the "Book of Wisdom" encyclopedia.	Acquire period cane-seated rocker and shawl.
7. THROW RUG	Beside bed.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "they had a little throw rug."	Acquire a rectangular rag rug or oval braided rug, about 24 x 36 to 27 x 54 inches.
8. CHILDREN'S TOYS and BOOKS (up to 10)	On bed and floor.	Common usage.	Acquire period items such as marbles, storybooks, coloring book, crayons, small toys or games.
9. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		Common usage.	Retain cotton shades installed in 1975.
10. CURTAINS (2 prs.), sheer, white		1975 restoration.	Acquire sheer curtains (2 sets).

06

## Birth Room (S-4)

Rev. and Mrs. King occupied this room from the time of their marriage in 1926 until the mid-1930s, and all three of their children were born here. It is furnished approximately as it was at the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth on January 15, 1929. Only the chifforobe from the King's bedroom suite has survived; the other original pieces in the room are a cedar chest and hand mirror that belonged to Alberta King, and a Bible used by her husband.

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. CRIB and BEDDING; BABY POWDER; STUFFED ANIMAL	South wall to right of bed.	Common usage.	Acquire period crib and baby blanket, modern crib mattress and cover, period stuffed animal and powder can.
2. CHEST OF DRAWERS	West wall, to right of door.	The Kings received a bed- room suite as a wedding present; this would have included a chest of drawers.	Retain period chest of drawers acquired for 1975 restoration.
3. DRESSER SCARF	On top of chest of drawers.	Common usage.	Acquire period dresser scarf.
4. BED, double, ca. 1925, and BEDDING	South wall.	"Opening Tour": "Bed—not the original piece, but bow-foot type with paneled headboard like the bed in which Martin was born."	Retain bed and bedding acquired by 1975 committee.

**Birth Room, Continued**

26

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
5. BEDSPREAD		"Preliminary Inventory," 1975: "Bedspread in Birth Room—one belonging to Mrs. Crittenden and used at the time of Mrs. Williams' death [1941]."	Acquire period white spread; retain in the study the sun-damaged bedspread given by Mrs. India Crittenden.
6. PATCHWORK QUILT	Folded, at foot of bed.	"Preliminary Inventory," 1975: "Quilts 1. Handmade by Mrs. Scott (Coretta Scott King's mother)."	Retain Mrs. Scott's quilt.
7. SEWING MACHINE	South wall, between bed and window.	Common usage to keep sewing machine in the housewife's bedroom, next to a window.	Move non-original sewing machine from upstairs hall.
8. VANITY DRESSER and BENCH	East wall, between windows.	"Opening Tour": "...like the one which the family remembers."	Retain dresser and bench acquired for the restoration in 1975.

Birth Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
9. DRESSER ACCESSORIES: DOILIES, crocheted (2); DRESSER SET; BRACELET; ATOMIZER; STANDING MIRROR	On top of drawer sections of vanity.	Common usage; objects selected by 1975 committee.	Retain standing mirror, atomizer, and bracelet on left side. Since Mrs. King's hand mirror is too fragile to exhibit, acquire similar period mirror and dresser set; acquire two doilies.
JEWELRY BOX, POWDER BOX, and PILL BOX	On top of right drawer section.	Common usage.	Acquire period jewelry box, place bracelet in open box, dangling over edge; acquire period pill and powder boxes.
10. CHIFFOROBE ( <u>original</u> )	North wall, between window and fireplace.	"Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview.	Retain chifforobe, with doors closed.
11. HATBOX	On top of chifforobe.	Common usage.	Acquire period woman's hatbox.
12. CLOCK, 8-day	On mantel.	Common usage.	Retain period clock acquired for the 1975 restoration.
13. ROCKING CHAIR, upholstered seat	In front of fireplace.	Common usage, for nursing mother.	Retain chair acquired for 1975 restoration.

## Birth Room, Continued

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
14. SHAWL	Hanging over back of rocker.	Common usage.	Acquire period shawl.
15. CEDAR CHEST (original)	Center of room, at foot of bed.	"Opening Tour"; Mrs. Farris, 1984 interview; no evidence on location.	Move to indicated location, but without the washbowl and pitcher, not needed in a house with two bathrooms.
16. HOLY BIBLE (original)	On cedar chest.	The Bible used by Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. is in the site's study collection but too fragile to exhibit.	Acquire similar Bible, place open on chest at foot of bed, as if Rev. King had been reading it after he woke up.
17. WASTEBASKET	Left of vanity	Common usage.	Acquire period wastebasket.
18. RUG, linoleum, ca. 9' x 12'	Centered.	"Opening Tour."	Retain vinyl rug from 1975 restoration until a period linoleum rug or reproduction can be acquired.
19. THROW RUG	Beside bed, west side.	Common usage.	Retain rag rug from 1975 restoration.

**Birth Room, Continued**

<u>Object</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Evidence</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
20. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		Common usage.	Retain cotton shades from 1975 restoration.
21. CURTAINS (2 prs.), sheer, princess style		1975 restoration.	Retain curtains from 1975 restoration; acquire backup set.



## Joel's Room (S-5)

Until he got married in 1937, this back bedroom was Joel King's room. It was very simply furnished with a wooden single bed, a chest of drawers, a couple of chairs, and "half of a carpet," as Rev. Joel King remembered 50 years later. After their Uncle Joel left home, the King boys—M.L., aged 8, and A.D., about 6—moved into the room, probably taking with them the single bed they had shared in their hall bedroom (S-2), and using the same furniture Joel had been using for the past 10 years. Since the rest of the house is being furnished to the 1929-1937 period, this room will be furnished as it was when it was Uncle Joel's, thus drawing the visitor's attention to the extended family within which Martin, Jr., grew up.

96

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
1. BED, naturally finished wood, ca. 1925	North wall, centered.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Acquire period bed.
2. BEDDING		Common usage.	Acquire modern mattress, sheets, pillow, and pillowcase; acquire period bedspread and blanket.
3. CHEST OF DRAWERS, natural finish, ca. 1925	East wall, between windows.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Acquire period chest of drawers or chiffonier.
4. SAFETY RAZOR; DRESSER SCARF	On chest of drawers.	Common usage.	Acquire period razor and dresser scarf.

**Joel's Room, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
5. CHAIRS (2), cane seats, natural finish, 1900-1920	West wall, on either side of door.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview.	Acquire two period chairs.
6. RUG	Under bed, extending from north wall to center of room.	Rev. Joel King, 1987 interview: "...they had a carpet, half of a carpet... under the bed; it went all the way" from the north wall to the middle of the room, leaving bare floor around the east, west, and south sides of the room. It was a "real rug," not linoleum.	Use period rug in site collection.
7. BOOKS (up to 10), NOTEBOOK, PEN, and PENCILS	On mantel shelf and on floor beside chair next to fireplace.	Joel King was attending college in Atlanta during the mid-1930s and presumably did some of his studying in his own room.	Acquire college textbooks, a small Bible, and a dictionary of the period, along with a period notebook, pen, and pencils.
8. ALARM CLOCK	On chest of drawers.	Common usage.	Acquire period alarm clock.
9. BASEBALL BAT, GLOVE and BALL	Dropped on bed.	Common usage.	Acquire period bat, ball and glove.

**Joel's Room, Continued**

Object	Location	Evidence	Recommendation
10. PHOTOGRAPH	On mantel.	Common usage.	If available, reproduce a c.1937 photograph of the future Mrs. Joel King.
11. FLOOR LAMP, ca. 1930	Next to chair in southwest corner.	Common usage.	Acquire period lamp, with wood or metal pole, and period shade.
12. WASTEBASKET, 1930s	Next to lamp.	Common usage.	Acquire period wastebasket.
13. CALENDAR, 1930-1937	On closet Door.	Common usage.	Acquire period calendar.
14. WINDOW SHADES (2), ivory		Common usage.	Acquire modern cloth shades.
15. CURTAINS (2 prs.)		Common usage.	Acquire plain sheer curtains; hang straight.
16. WALLPAPER		Original wallpaper removed; no evidence recorded.	Acquire a modern wallpaper with a striped pattern similar to bedroom wallpapers of the 1920s.

86

**FURNISHINGS MAINTENANCE AND PROTECTION  
RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

This section is being prepared in collaboration with the Regional Curator, Southeast Regional Office, and will be issued separately, following implementation of the furnishings plan.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### MANUSCRIPTS

- Keune, Russell V., Director, Field Services, National Trust for Historic Preservation, field report of meeting on February 21, 1974, with officials of The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change and representatives of other organizations interested in restoring the Birth Home. Copy in MALU files.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Atlanta, historian's files: undated, unlabelled sketch plans of Birth Home
- "Opening Tour—Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home." Typed notes from files of Birth Home Committee, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change, February 1975 (see Appendix C)
- "Preliminary Draft of Inventory—MLK, Jr. Birth Home." Typed notes from files of Birth Home Committee, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Change, ca. 1975 (see Appendix B)
- "Restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home: Plan and Procedures." Typed notes from files of Birth Home Committee, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change, ca. 1975 (see Appendix A)
- Robinson, J.W., and Associates. *Plans for restoration of Birth Home* (1974). Reproduced in HSR, Appendix D.

### INTERVIEWS

- Bennett, Mrs. Benita, interviewed by MALU staff, Atlanta, January 6, 1984. Original tape at MALU.
- Farris, Mrs. Christine King, interviewed by National Park Service interpretive planning team, Atlanta, March 13, 1984. Original tape at Harpers Ferry Center. Members of the planning team included Superintendent Janet Wolf, Sarah Olson, and Dean Rowley.

King, Rev. Joel, Sr. Interviewed by Dr. David H. Wallace, Mansfield, Ohio, November 13, 1987. Original tape at MALU.

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REPORTS

"Historic Structure Report, The Martin Luther King Birth Home, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, Atlanta, Georgia." Prepared by the Eastern Team, Branch of Design and Cultural Resources, Denver Service Center, November 1986

"Interpretive Prospectus, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site." Prepared by Division of Interpretive Planning, Harpers Ferry Center, January 1987.

Plans and elevations, Birth Home, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site: NPS drawings 489/62,056-62,060, March 1984

## BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Bennett, Lerone, Jr. *What Manner of Man: a Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1964.

George D. Roper Corporation, Rockford, Illinois. Advertisements of gas ranges, 1920s, in files of Rockford Museum Association, Rockford, Illinois.

King, Coretta Scott. *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

King, Martin Luther, Sr., with Clayton Riley. *Daddy King, an autobiography.* New York: William Morrow Company, 1980.

"King Center Announces Opening of Birth Home," press release issued by Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change, February 6, 1975.

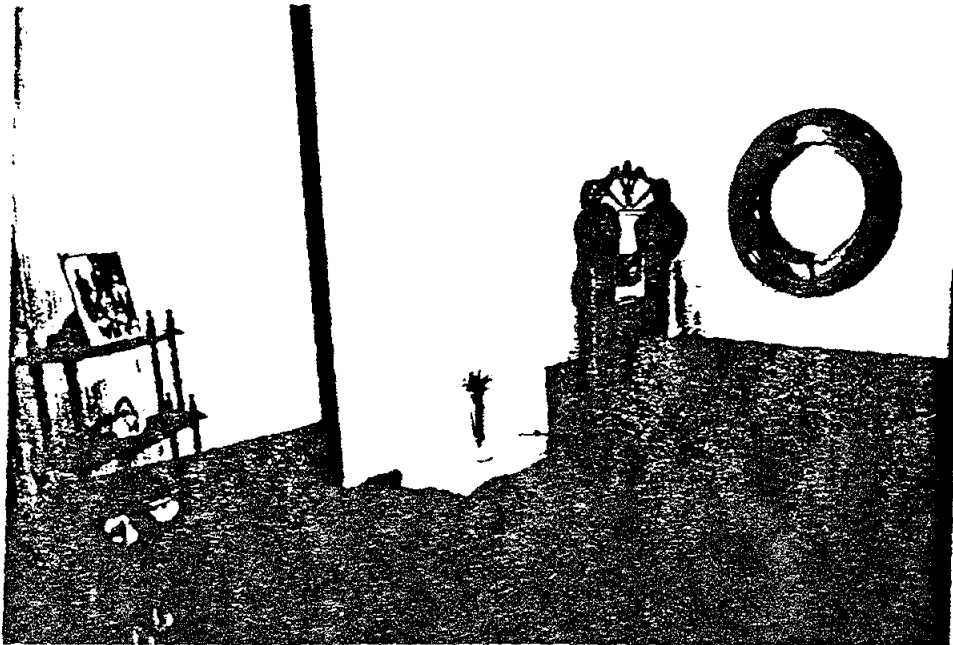
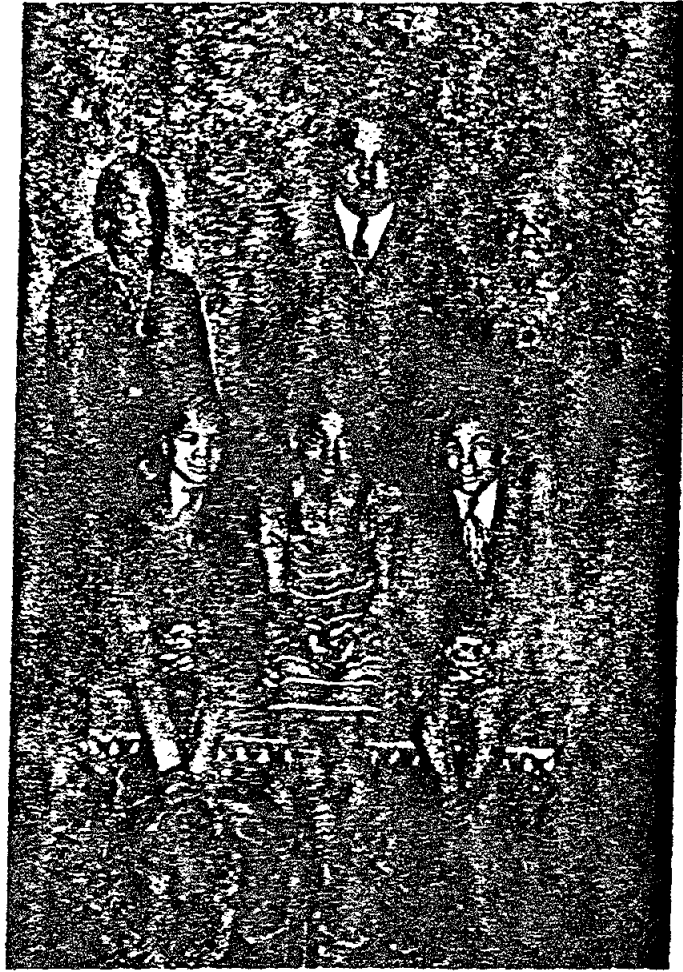
Oates, Stephen B. *Let the Trumpet Sound: the Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Harper and Row, ca.1982.

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

Illus. 1: King family, with Grandmother Williams, ca. 1939.

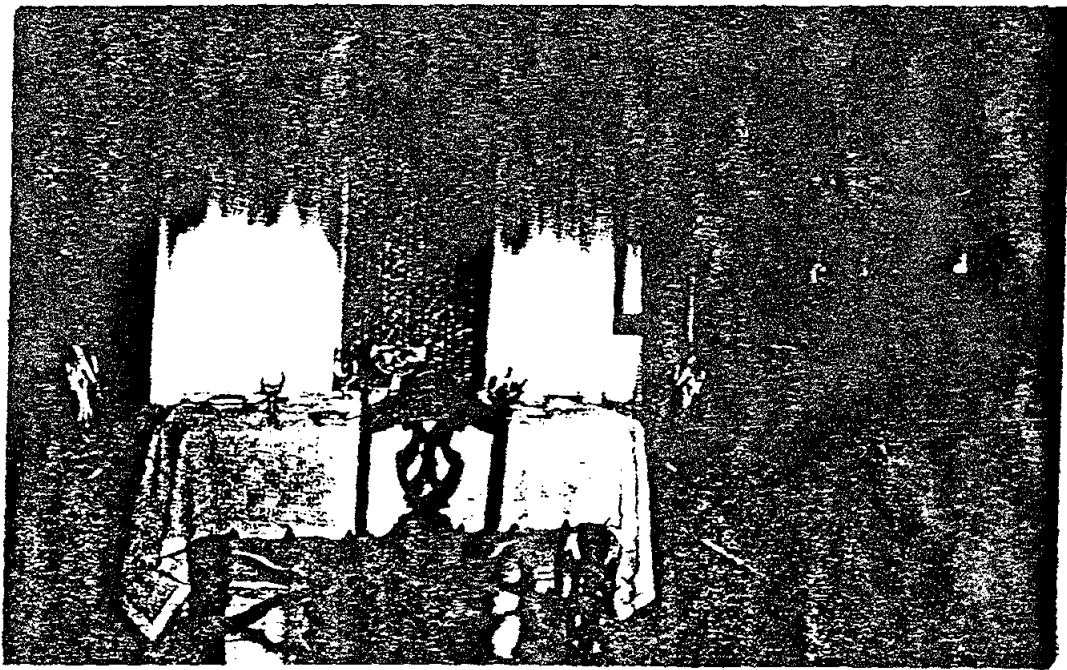
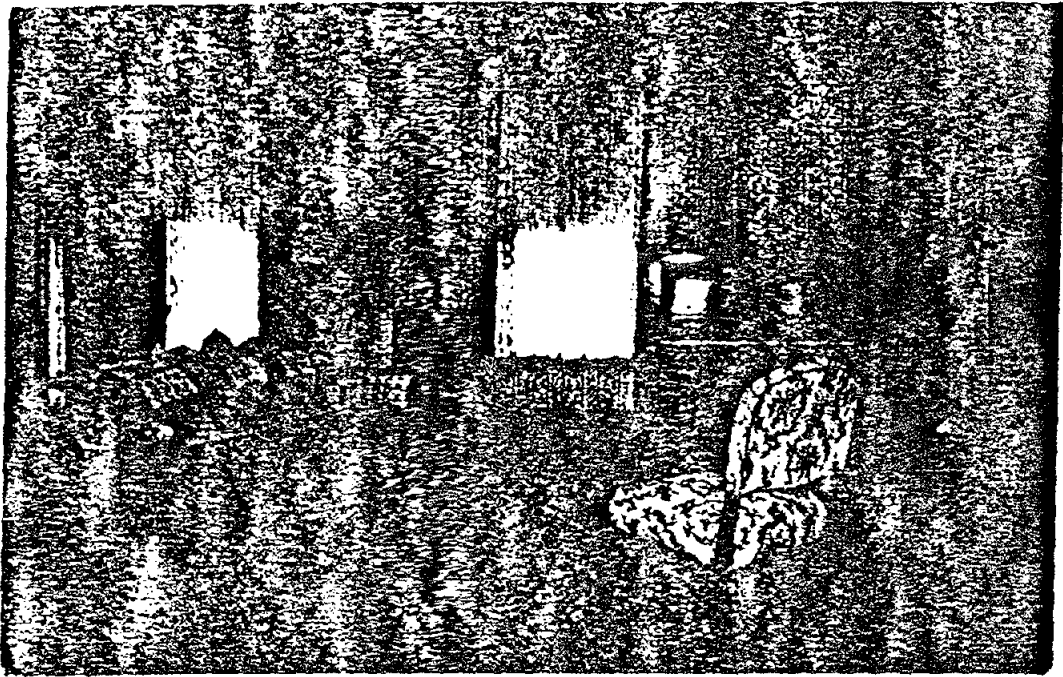
Illus. 2: Entrance hall, looking west, as refurbished in 1975. Note King family whatnot (left) and hats worn by Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., on the hall rack (right). 1990 photograph, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.





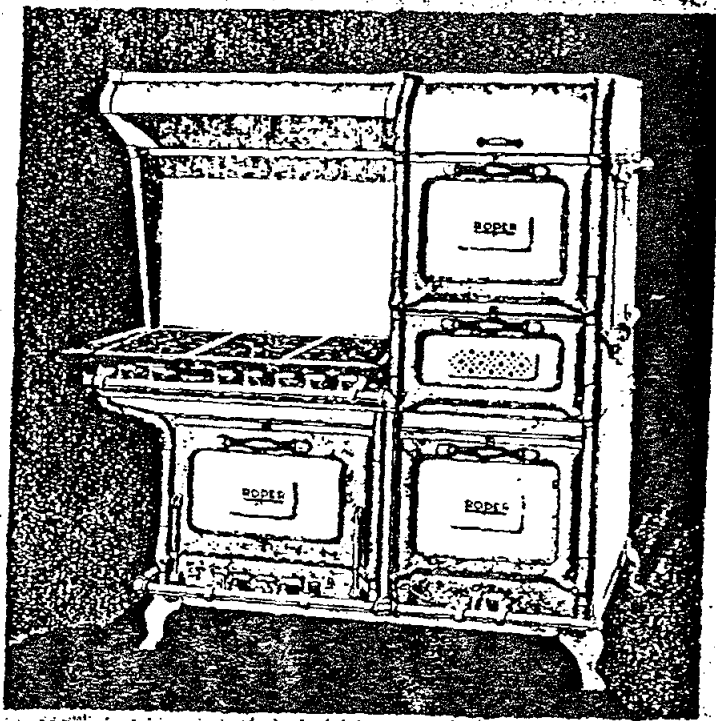
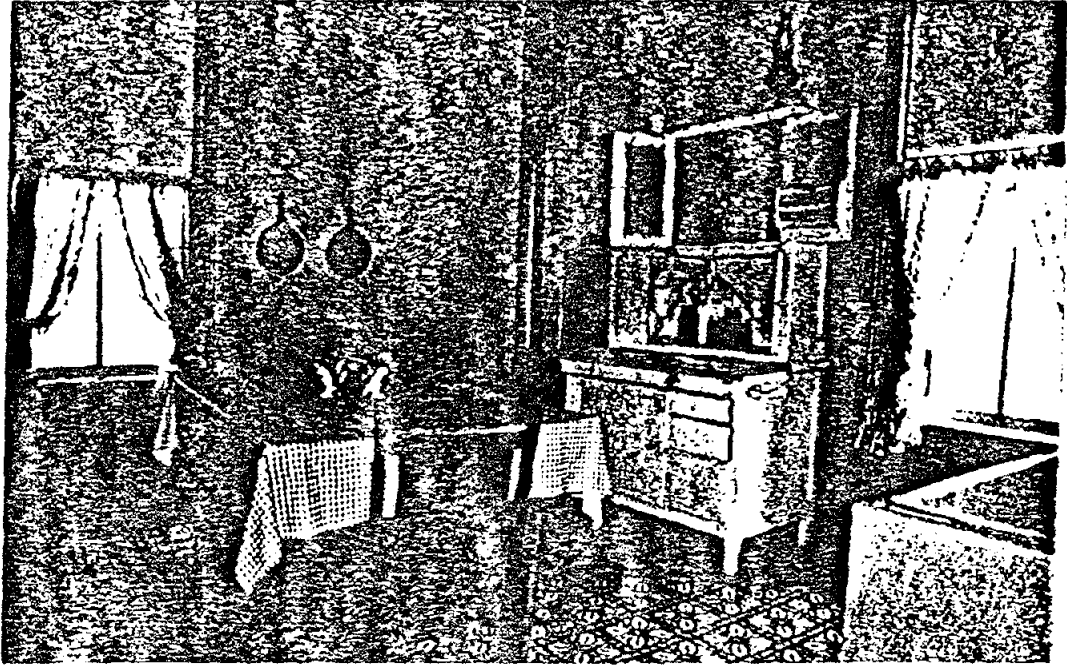
**Illus. 3:** Living room, looking east from entrance hall, as refurnished in 1975. M.L., A.D., and Christine King took piano lessons on their mother's piano (right). From a postcard, ca. 1975; courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

**Illus. 4:** Dining room, looking north, as refurnished in 1975. The table and chairs and most of the china and glassware are original. From a ca. 1975 postcard, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.



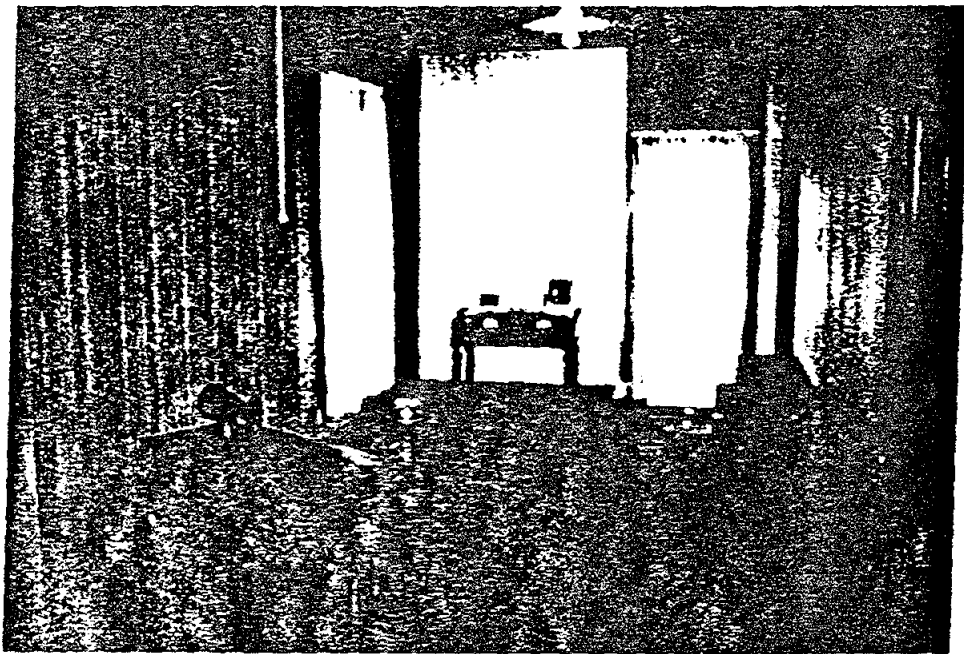
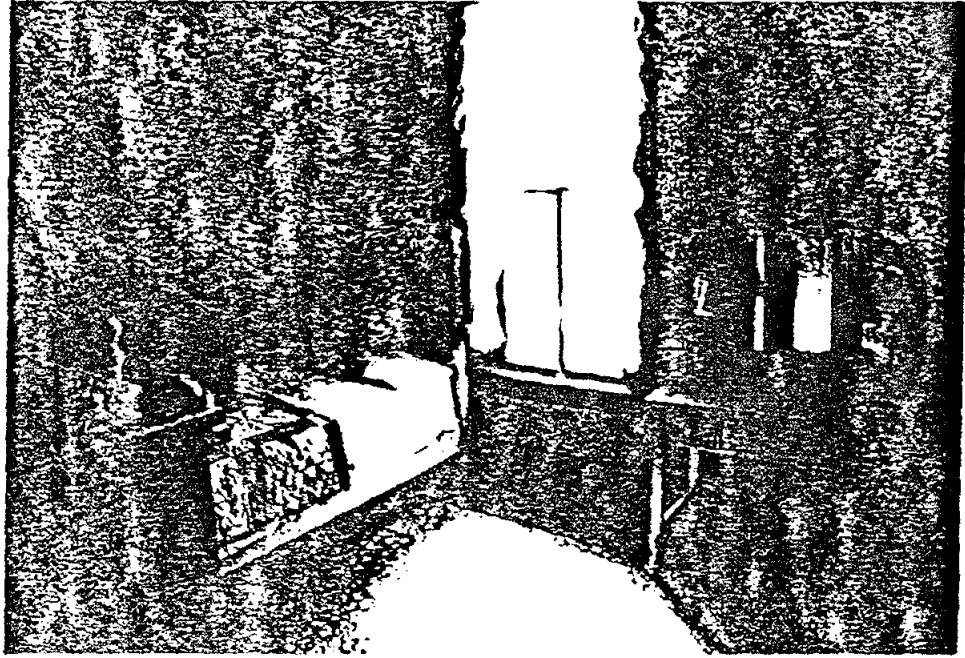
Illus. 5: Kitchen, looking southeast, as refurnished in 1975. The ca. 1940-45 maple table and chairs came from the Kings' second house, on Boulevard. From a ca. 1975 postcard, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

Illus. 6: Roper gas range, ca. 1923-25, like the one Mrs. King had in her kitchen. From *Brown's Directory of American Gas Companies and Gas Engineering and Appliance Catalogue*, 1924 Edition, p. 202.



Illus. 7: Christine's room, looking southwest, with its original bed, vanity, and bureau, as restored in 1975. 1984 photograph, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

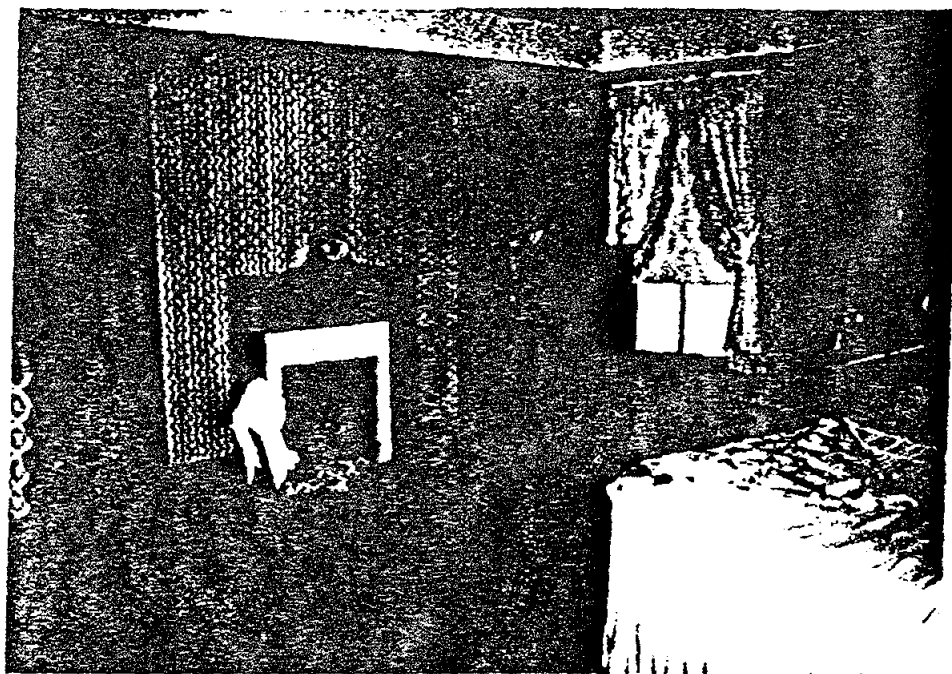
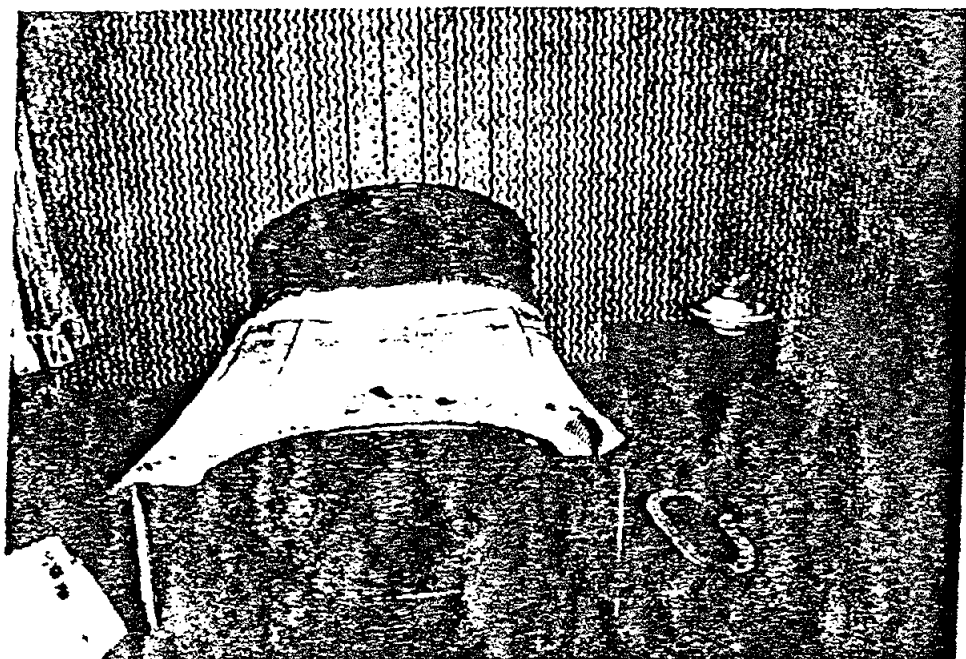
Illus. 8: Upstairs hall, looking north, as refurbished in 1975. 1984 photograph, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.



· Illus. 9: Birth room, looking northeast, as refurnished in 1975. The chifferobe (center) was part of the Kings' original bedroom set. 1984 photograph, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

Illus. 10: Birth room, south wall, as refurnished in 1975. The cedar chest (right) was Mrs. King's. 1984 photograph, courtesy Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.





**APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A

**“Restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home: Plan and Procedures.” Un-  
dated statement, ca. 1975, from the files of the Birth Home Committee, Martin  
Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Change.**

Restoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home  
Plan and Procedures

Financing- purchase of the property  
furnishing of individual rooms

other funds

future-

Approach- Goal has been to restore the building and furnish the rooms as they were during the time of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth and boyhood years. This is period between 1929 and 1948 after which the family moved to a house on Boulevard. Furnishings included those purchased by the Kings and many older pieces from the Williams' occupancy.

The committee views this goal as incomplete. Some rooms have not yet been furnished, and some details of those which have been opened are not yet complete.

The furnishing of the house and the yard will continue as time and money permit. Plans are also being developed for an exhibit in one of the downstairs rooms. This exhibit will show family history, period life-style-culture and possibly include some aspects of the movement which Martin Luther King, Jr. led.

Procedures- Photographic record of the house before and during restoration has been assembled. An outline of the work has also been compiled by the architect working with a Center staff member.

A plan for restoring the basic structure was prepared by the architects, J.W. Robinson & Assoc., Inc. and Edward C. Miller in consultation with the King family. Some family photographs showing the house were used for some details. In addition, some chips of various materials were sent to the Nation Trust for Historic Preservation Department of Field Services, for analysis.

Furnishings and interior details also developed through consultation with the family, especially the late Mrs. Martin Luther King, Sr. and Martin's sister, Mrs. Christine King Farris. In addition, Mrs. Nina King Miller, a close personal friend of Mrs. King, Sr. and of the family and long-time resident of the neighborhood, has been chairman of the furnishings committee. Assistance has been given by Mrs. India Crittenden, also a long-time family friend and neighbor. Taped interviews with these family members and friends have been conducted and will be continued to provide house, neighborhood and life-style information as a part of the future program for the home.

Many original pieces that came from the house were available from the family and friends. Style and form of the others has been determined from the associates of family and friends. These details were checked with sources such as the Sears Roebuck catalogs of the period for stylistic details.

House- Basic structure was intact.

Paint for exterior surfaces and interior trim. Colors remembered by Mrs. King, Sr. checked with those obtained from analysis of the old paint chips.

Exterior hardware, lights, etc. from old photographs.

Interior walls- wallpapers were chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. as those available patterns that were closest to those she remembered.

Mantels and fireplace tiles were exact. Also, built-in cupboard in the dining room.

Lights in ceilings with pull chain are the type remembered by Mrs. Farris as original to the house.

Fireplace grates, and heatrols or circulator heaters which were used before central heating will be researched and an attempt made to find examples.

Floor coverings- Living Room rug chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. as similar to the one she originally used.

Other rooms had linoleum, floor-size rugs. Since this material was not available, vinyl rugs with similar patterns were chosen. If some linoleum rugs can be found in the course of the continuing project they will be substituted.

**Appendix B**

**"Preliminary Draft of Inventory—MLK, Jr., Birth Home," January 11, 1975. From the files of the Birth Home Committee, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Change.**

Preliminary Draft of Inventory - R.L.K., Jr. Birth Home

Dining Room - Pieces belonging to Grandmother Williams and Mrs. King, Sr. (as listed on Saturday, January 11, 1975)

1. Pressed glass pitchers 1 white-diamond pattern pitcher  
1 " " " " pitcher  
1 sugar and creamer-saucer set  
-sandwich glass-type patterns  
1 vinegar cruet-roseattas  
1 sugar-daisy and bottom type pattern  
1 butter dish-round with halton pattern

2. Reproduction Glass

- 2 Dolls Robbin Fruit cooperes
- 4 Ice cream dishes
- 1 wine glass, cut glass pattern

3. Plates

- 1 plate-  
(Grandmother Williams)
- 1 plate-  
(belonged to Grandmother Williams)

4. Vases

1 tall brass effect type

5. One brass crumher for dining room table

6/6. Table clothes- 1 white linen(?) with attached pattern belonged to Mrs. King, Sr.  
Bedroom- 1 lace cloth of period used in home of Dr. Lyon's mother, Mrs. SGT

1 hand mirror-gilded type- to dresser set used by Mrs. King, Sr.

Bedspread in Birth Room- one belonging to Mrs. Crittenden and used at the time of Mrs. Williams' death.

Quilt- 1. Handmade by Mrs. Scott (Corretta Scott King's mother)

2.  
Bedspread in Christina's room- Cotton bedspread, hand embroidered birds and flowers with pink border.

Other Items- dolls (List by rooms in which they are being used)

Birth Room- Used in period by Mrs. Miss King Miller.  
Living Room Runner given by Miss James Dibble.

**Appendix C**

**"Opening Tour—Martin Luther King, Jr., Birth Home," February 11, 1975. From the files of the Birth Home Committee, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Change.**

Opening Tour-Martin Luther King, Jr. Birth Home, February 11, 1968

**INTRODUCTION** - Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in this house on January 15, 1929 and spent his boyhood years here.

The Birth Home is a Victorian Queen Anne Style house built about 1895

Originally the house belonged to one of the firemen from the Fire Station on the corner of Boulevard. In 1908 Martin's maternal Grandfather, Reverend Adam D. Williams, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, moved this family into the two-story frame structure. At this time the Williams family was one of the first black families to move into the residential neighborhood to the east of Boulevard which became one of the city's important black communities.

When Reverend Williams' daughter, Alberta married Martin Luther King, Sr. in 1926, the young couple lived in the family home. In addition to the Williams, other family members also lived with the Kings from time to time during Martin's childhood.

**Neighborhood** - The home is a part of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C.

The district includes the Birth Home and surrounding residential neighborhood, one of the oldest extant Atlanta neighborhoods.

Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Grave Site  
Fire Station #6 and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Mission on Boulevard, both sites connected with Martin's boyhood.

Neighborhood was mixed residential with many types of families and a few neighborhood stores. One store was located in house-like structure directly across the street from the Birth Home. The children could buy candy and ice cream there.

The King children, Christine, Martin (known affectionately to the family as M.L.) and Alfred (A.D.) were allowed to play within the block from the Firehouse to Howell Street, sometimes playing in the fire yard with the fireman.

**Restoration** - The goal has been to restore the building and furnish the rooms as they were during the time Martin was born and growing up there between 1929 and 1940 before the family moved to Boulevard. The committee recognizes the goal is incomplete, but regards the restoration as an ongoing project.

The major source of information and furnishings has been the King family who have tried to make the home very much as it was when Martin Luther King, Jr. was born, and to reproduce the physical and spiritual environment of the early days of his life.

**Porch** - A place where the family gathered, and where they could visit with neighbors and wave to passers-by. Neighborhood was a secure place in which there was no fear and doors were often left unlocked.

Furniture is known through a photograph of the house, wooden rockers with wicker seats and beds that are similar to the originals, provided by Mrs. Leann McCain.

Wooden porch swing, hang from original beams which were extant, found by one of the architects, Joe Robinson.

Photograph also showed metal porch chairs and wooden planters which were hung from porch railing and filled in season with geraniums and celosia. These will be added later.

**Entrance Hall** - Not back-original piece was a dark oak bench with a lift-up bench and mirror which stood near side entrance in stair-hall. Present piece is a similar piece given by Mrs. Marie Baiford Hamilton who lives in the neighborhood.



**Living Room-** Also a major gathering place for the family. Church meetings and choir rehearsals often held here.

Piano is the original piano from the house which sometimes stood in the hall and other times in the living room. Music an integral part of the household. Mrs. King, Sr. played and sang and worked with the church choir as well as with her children. Music in the home was mostly church music, sometimes family song spirituals and hymns together.

Children all took piano lessons. Martin's sister, Mrs. Patricia Bell, stories about the lessons, especially about a teacher who would strike the children's fingers when they hit a wrong note. At one time a roll-up type piano stool was being used. The children knew it was loose, but said nothing. One day while Christine was taking her lesson, and M.L. was lamed by waiting his turn, the piano teacher jurred the seat loose and landed on the floor, much to the children's enjoyment.

Choir rehearsals held in evenings in the front hall and living room. Cookies and hot chocolate were served, & children remember being allowed to help serve.

Sofa and two chairs- Original suite was purchased by Mrs. King, Sr. about 1924 when she first began teaching school. Upholstered, but not massive with ornamented head of wood across the back of the sofa. Maroon out-wet covering. Committee looking for similar pieces from the period for the room.

**Davenport Table-** Long narrow table which stood behind the coffee, and often had a vase of cut flowers on it.

**Floor lamp-** White shade and brass pole of this lamp is like original. Found in home of Mrs. James Bibble in North Carolina by committee member Mrs. Palmer.

**What-not shelves-** An original piece from the house. Family and friends remember small pitchers and vases which stood on its shelves. The pieces on it now are

**Radio-** This radio, donated by Mrs. Alwina Greene is like the one purchased by the family about 1930.

**Victrola-** Loaned by Mrs. Albert Hanley who found it in the president's home at Spelman college.

**Curtains-** Lace type which was placed on stretchers when needed. Light small shades are of type originally in house which were pulled down with a crocheted ring.

**Rug-** Original was flowered pattern, rose rug with fringe. This one chosen by Mrs. King, Sr. as similar to the one she originally had.

**Birth Room-** Room in which Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. Rev. King, Sr. remembers his excitement in birth of a son. He leaped with such joy that he touched the high ceiling.

**Furnishings-** Original suite was the King wedding furniture of 1926. Chiffonier - this is original piece that stood in the room.

**Dressing Table-** Bench enclosed in drawers and tall mirror is like one which the family remembers.

**Bed-** Not the original piece, but low-foot type with paneled head board like the bed in which Martin was born.  
Spread and bedding- (from family and friends who used in the period)

**Cedar Chest-** original which was in the house.

**Living Hall-** contains trap door which leads to basement and old furnace, the original still in place. In partially excavated spot, that was, and still is common to homes in this region. Furnace coal burning, Martin's job to fire the furnace once he was old enough. At the time of his birth the house did not have central heating. Later, automatic stoker installed. Trap door (closed at the time) scene of startling incident one evening when Martin was about seven years old. Rev. King, Sr. in bed in downstairs bedroom off this space, recovering from tonsillotomy and entertaining visitors. Mother had sent children to bed upstairs, but as Mrs. Farris reports, one did not always go right away. Martin sat on the banister upstairs apparently trying to see or hear what was going on below. Apparently fell asleep and tumbled over, landed on the trap door. Noise startled and frightened visitors and family. Mother rushed to find Martin with his eyes "walled back" and took him to the hospital. No serious injury.

**Down Bedroom-** (first room to the left off the hall) This room used for different function at different times... Was at one time the bedroom of Martin's grandparents, the A.B. Williams, also was occupied by the Kings and was later used as a den. The committee plans to develop an exhibit here which would include family history, events and ideas of the movement which Martin Luther King, Sr. led, and the life style and culture of the period of his youth.

The roll-top desk now here was Rev. Williams'.

**Bookhouse-**

**Bedroom -** (to the right off the hall beyond the side entrance) This room during Martin's boyhood belonged to his sister Christine. (Mrs. Farris) Earlier it had belonged to their mother, Mrs. Martin Luther King, Sr. Mrs. Alwina Hanley, who was the young Mrs. King's close friend, remembers visiting with her in this room. Before central heating, she reports, bedrooms were warm places and were used as living spaces.

The furniture is the original suite used by Christine which had earlier belonged to her mother. It was given to Mrs. King by her father as a birthday or Christmas gift.

Dining Room - Generally meals always in the dining room. Even children since breakfast sometimes allowed in kitchen, but here on Auburn Avenue even this morning meal was laid out family-style in the dining room. Eggs, grits and bacon all served on large platters. Mrs. King and Grandmother Williams served the meals. At one time an aunt, who is fondly remembered by the family, lived with them and helped with the housework. Mrs. King remembers that the signal for supper was the arrival of Rev. King home from the church and the children knew they must be ready to come down to the table. It was accepted without question that all of the family would eat together.

Furnishings-

Buffet- this is the original piece.

Table-

Usually covered by white duck cloth, brass scrubber is the original used to clean the surface after meals.

Pieces in the built-in cupboard- One plate in rose design is from original set that was given by Grandmother Williams to Mrs. King on the occasion of her finishing course work at Morris Brown.

Kitchen- In earliest days family did not eat here. Original table was here of a work surface than eating place. The table and chairs which are in the room now, are the set which the family used in a breakfast room after they moved to Boulevard from Auburn Avenue. Set placed here now because it was the setting for family meals and was actually used by Martin.

Furnishings-

Sink is the original.

Hot water heater is typical one from period, turned (see ?)

cupboard was type with built-in floor bin common to period- this one was given by a neighbor who lives on Howell street, Miss Lillian Wright.

Committee is assembling other furnishings: Stove- gas range, Roper brand with side oven.

Ice box used at first, later Frigidaire.

Back Porch- Place where washing and ironing done in good weather.

Before the wringer-type washing machine was put here, wash was done with rubboards and tin tub, washing done every day.

Back Yard- Vertical board fence is like the original which is represented in old photograph. Large open field to the rear was a play space used by neighborhood children who also used King's backyard as neighborhood playground. Martin, at one time very much interested in basketball and a basketball goal was put up in the yard.

## Appendix D

Interview with Mrs. Christine King Farris, Atlanta, March 13, 1984, conducted by members of the National Park Service interpretive planning team, including Janet C. Wolf, Superintendent, and Dean Rowley, Historian, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, and Sarah Olson, Chief, Division of Historic Furnishings, Harpers Ferry Center.

This is a partial transcript by David H. Wallace including only material relevant to this report. Q=questions from the interviewers; A=Mrs. Farris's answers.

124

Q: You were very involved in setting up the Home, originally. How did you go about doing that?

A: Well, we had some things that were original things. The suite that is in my room now was an original—came all the way through—it belonged to my mother, she passed it to me, and so forth, so that is original. The piano in the living room is the piano that we had and if you take a close look at it you can see where my brothers hammered on it. They didn't want to take music sometimes. So that is all original. There are several pieces that are original. I think in that little foyer or the hallway there's a table and...whatnot that is original. And there may be some little pieces I can't recall. The hats that are hanging on the rack belonged to my father, came all the way down through the years. And the room that we call the "birth room," the room where my brother was born, I think that there are two original pieces in that—that chiffonobe we called it and the cedar chest. And the dining room—I think there's one piece in there that's original. I just can't remember whether it's the table or that serving piece. What had happened, my mother gave it to one of the members at Ebenezer

and she had a piece of it and gave it back to us. I can't remember which piece it is. Might be both pieces. I'll have to check that out.... But from there—fortunately my mother was still living at the time so that she could remember much of the things and then there were several persons who were her friends and lived in the neighborhood, so they assisted in bringing back to mind some of the things. Additionally, we contacted Sears, the headquarters of Sears, Roebuck and got a catalogue, which I still have, because we had decided that we would restore it from the time he was born on, with that catalogue, I think from 1929, which we looked through and that gave us an idea, more vividly, of the kinds of things that were there and then we set out to acquire those kinds of things, went to all the antique stores, furniture stores, Salvation Army, anything to find those things. We really did a real search so we tried to duplicate as near as possible and I think that we did a pretty good job of getting things that were there. Then some of the neighbors in the community gave us several pieces. That icebox which is in the kitchen was given by a friend in the neighborhood and also the kitchen cabinet, a lady that lived in the neighborhood, gave us that cabinet

which is very much like the cabinet that we had. And also in the hall, that...hall tree, that was given by one of the neighbors in the neighborhood. So that the other things that we found in the stores, so that's how we did it. It was quite an experience.

Q: How close do you feel the house is now to your childhood memories?

A: It is very close.

Q: Including the little things? Did you try to get down to—well, I know that there were some small accessory items—

A: Yes. That was exactly what we did. As I said there were persons on there—for example, the spread that's on the bed in my room, one of the persons there gave it to us, because I remember we had what we called—and I'm still looking for that—a Dutch girl spread. They were made, people in the rural areas made those spreads and gave them, because we used to visit Ansonia[?] and Crockettville, and I remember that they made those spreads and I guess somebody's still making them, but that's what I was looking for, a Dutch girl spread. But in the meantime while I was looking for the Dutch girl spread, then one of the members on the committee—and she now is deceased—she came up with a spread that she had at that time and gave us the spread that's on the bed in the birth room and also the one in my room. Now in my room I see that someone has placed some clothing, items of clothing, in there; those are not—I don't know if some interested individual said, well they should be in there, so that's how they got there. I can claim no [credit] for those. But the little pieces of furniture, that are on that dresser, those are things that I, that we actually played with....

Q: Is there anything you think is missing from the house, from your memory of your childhood?

A: You mean small things?

Q: Anything.

Q: What about pictures, photographs on the walls? I notice there's hardly none.

A: Well, actually, there weren't that many pictures. I guess we didn't take that many pictures and I'm beginning to see that now because I don't have but very few pictures of that time.

Q: What about things on the wall? Paintings, mirrors?

A: Mirrors. I'm not sure about that many prints. There were some mirrors and just things. I guess if I could see some artifacts perhaps that would bring that back to mind.

Q: Do you have any photographs taken of the interiors at that time?

A: I really don't. We just didn't take that many pictures. I have some outside, but they are faded. They give you an idea of the outside of the house.

\*\*\*

Q: What do you feel is the most important room in that house? Is there an emphasis to be placed on certain areas of the house?

A: Visitors most often seem to be interested in the room [S-4] where he was born. And I understand there have been some inquiries as to where they actually stayed. As I told Lissimore the other day that room [S-5] right next to the birth room is the room where my brothers actually stayed. Now they moved from different points, but at the point of our moving from that house they were staying in that room.

\*\*\*

Q: Do you feel that the whole house should be furnished and open to visitors, or just certain portions of it?

A: Well, it's just some portions, because I think we could do something with the room where they stayed, but the other rooms were just rooms. As I was coming up there was always a roomer, someone who lived in the house, so that that front room upstairs [S-3] was used for a person who lived in the house and the room [S-6] right on the other side of the hall as you come upstairs, on the right hand side, that was just another bedroom, for guests or whoever, and from time to time it was used for different things because there was a point, sometimes I stayed upstairs in that room. My parents stayed in a room upstairs [S-4] and then at one time they stayed in the room downstairs [F-4] which is kind of used—what we would like to do there is use that room for exhibits.

Q: Which room?

A: Downstairs [F-4], under the birth room.

Q: The one that's now set up sort of like a study?

A: Right.

Q: That was used as a bedroom for a while?

A: Yes. It had different roles, a bedroom, finally kind of as a den.

Q: [Suggests they have been thinking of using one of upstairs rooms for exhibits on MLK or on other family members.]

A: [Had same thought for room downstairs.]

Q: Which room in the house do you remember the family gathering in the most? Were there one or two rooms where the family members got together frequently?

A: I guess in the bedroom, sometimes in the living room.

Q: Are you thinking that middle room [F-4] would be a good exhibit room because it changed functions so often?

A: Yes.

Q: It didn't have a definite identity.

A: Right. After the bedroom, then, as I said, it was used more or less as a den, because at a point then, I remember, dens started being very popular. In earlier years I didn't know anything about a den.

Q: Do you remember when the study was your grandparents' room?

A: Yes, it was my grandparents' room. That's where my grandfather died, he fell on the floor in that room.

Q: It was in the bedroom?

A: That room, yes. I was the one who found him.

Q: Do you remember the time when it was a bedroom and when it changed over to be the study?

A: You mean in terms of years? My memory's not that good. I never knew it would have significance, so I can't recall it in terms of years.

Q: Can you tell me if they ever had another room that was their bedroom?

- A: No, never, because—my grandmother eventually moved upstairs in what is now the birth room; she lived in that room for a while.
- Q: That would be when your parents moved downstairs?
- A: Right.
- Q: A lot of people are asking us why was the girl down on the first floor by herself, because it's set up with the one bedroom downstairs [F-7].
- A: OK, I can see—well, that was while my grandparents were living, when I was young. Then as I said my parents moved back downstairs—changed.
- Q: Most of the time that you were living in the house that [F-4] was used more as a bedroom than as a den?
- A: Which, the room where we now have it?
- Q: The den—was mostly a bedroom?
- A: Right.
- Q: What kind of an exhibit do you see in there?
- A: Well, things about the family, whatever we have—
- Q: What kind of materials do you have to illustrate that?
- A: [Family pictures, not necessarily taken in that house. Not released.]

\*\*\*

- A: The hedges seem to be the same ones where there's an opening there. As I was telling several people about it—I know that's original, it hasn't changed, because we used to take by grandmother's fur piece and put it on a stick and carry it out through those hedges to frighten people.

\*\*\*

- A: There are some flowers—and if I'd see them I could identify them—that should go there in front of the porch. I don't know flowers, I don't know the names but they would bloom—it was kind of a tall flower and they came out on the tall plant. That would certainly bring that back. And there were flower boxes—did we put flower boxes there, I'm not sure—wooden flower boxes that hung right outside there on the porch.

\*\*\*

- A: [Back of house. Iron stairs new.]
- Q: I bet that extension is new too. Did you enclose what appears to have been a small back porch?
- A: It wasn't a back porch. It was just a roof, it wasn't a back porch, it was an extended roof.

\*\*\*

- Q: On the first floor where the washing machine and ironing board are now [F-10], was that enclosed?
- A: Yes, it was there.
- Q: Upstairs, where you go through that kind of door—
- A: That was a window where the door is, a big window just like the one that's in front, a big window like that.

Q: What about potted plants and things in the interior? Did your mother or your grandmother—were they really into potted plants?

A: Not inside, I don't remember too many potted plants.

Q: What about cut flowers?

A: Yes, cut flowers, and there were also rose bushes in the back yard and the front yard, too. I remember those rose bushes stick.

\*\*\*

Q: Did you have a clothes line out in the back yard?

A: Yes, there was a clothes line.

Q: One of those wooden ones with a rope or pulleys.

A: No, not quite that fancy, just a rope.

\*\*\*

### Side 2

Q: Were there books in the house? Was your brother a reader?

A: Yes, there were books. We had an encyclopedia and everything, 'cause my aunt, my great-aunt, who was my grandmother's sister lived with us and she used to read to us all the time, out of the Book of Wisdom, encyclopedias, and I remember she used to point out to us about the gorillas and the apes and so forth. She used to read to us all the time, fables, things like that.

\*\*\*

Q: Was there a lot of activity in the kitchen?

A: Yes, the kitchen and the dining room, we used to have family meals all the time. That was a regular routine, breakfast and dinner.

Q: Did you always eat in the dining room or did you eat in the kitchen?

A: Dining room, always the dining room.

Q: Was it supposed to be the tradition that the adults ate first and the children....

A: No, no, sat around the table. And that was the time for the family really to get together and my father was the pastor at Ebenezer and I remember we would be waiting a lot of days for him to walk up the street for dinner. We had to be there at dinnertime and everybody had to be there around the table.

Q: Were any other rooms used for meetings or gatherings?

A: Yes, the living room, definitely. My mother had choir rehearsals all the time. And church meetings were held there.

Q: Do you remember in the kitchen, especially in the period we're talking about, the stove that was there? Would you not have had a gas range?

A: Yes, there was gas. See a lot of people have been trying to say that it was a coal stove. I never knew a coal stove. It was a gas stove.

Q: Was that wood stove used for heating water?

A: Which wood stove? It's not a stove, that's a water heater. I mean, for the water, it's not a stove.

Q: So, you're saying that it had a gas line running through it.

A: I'd assume it would, because that's what we used—gas. But I can identify one, 'cause I've seen it in the Sears catalogue that we had. And one of the members of our advisory committee told me that she saw one at a place and we never did get it. I'm sure they don't have it. It was a stove place down here on Whitehall Street.

Q: And this is the gas range.

A: Yes, but I don't know if they still have it 'cause that was a couple of years ago and we never did get it. A lot of people think that is a stove but it is not.

\*\*\*

Q: Do you remember any particular incidents in that house, involving your brother which would have forecast his future?

A: No, there's nothing that would have forecast his future, because he was just a normal boy. The only thing that might have given some inkling was—I don't know when it was—but my father often said that my grandmother said she just couldn't stand to see him get a whipping or spanking. But other than that he just had a normal boyhood. He played, he tussled, he did everything else that other boys did. He wasn't quite as mischievous as my younger brother, but he did things—there was nothing at that stage that would suggest anything about his future.

Q: Did you have bikes or skates?

A: Yes. Skates, bikes, yes. Even once he was knocked off of a bike...a car knocked him off of a bike, but it wasn't a serious kind of a thing. So that's something that he looked forward to at Christmas—skates, he looked forward to that and he'd go down to Powell Street and skate, 'cause there were little

like hills. And of course we had tricycles and then later, he'd get a bicycle.

Q: Where did you keep those?

A: On the back porch [F-10] and also on that back porch—...on that rear porch, what we now use as a kind of storage closet [F-9], we called that a pantry, but it wasn't a food pantry. It was a storage pantry and that's where different things stayed that you weren't using.

Q: So that's where the tricycles and the bikes and that kind of thing would have been.

A: Right....

Q: We know that one chore of Dr. King's was to stoke the furnace. What were some of the other things that you all had to do?

A: Well, the regular things: Wash dishes.

Q: Bring in the coal, I bet.

A: Yes, we had to do that.

Q: Did they make you [help wash?] the dishes?

A: They tried to. [When] it was time to wash the dishes, of course, I hate to say it, but my brother had to go to the rest room, to the bathroom, each time it was time for the dishes to be washed. That's one thing that he did, he didn't want to wash those dishes, neither of them wanted to do that. And my mother tried all kinds of things, she would give us a rotating system, she'd set up a schedule, you know this is your week to wash the dishes, but it always ended up being my week—because there was something that would happen.



So they didn't do much washing of dishes. That was a great chore, but then we would have to clean the house, dust and sweep and she would kind of corral them to do some of those things if she stood over them more or less. Like typical boys their room always was in great disarray—always constantly on the lookout picking things up and I remember once my brother got sick, that is, my younger brother, and as sick as he was, he knew the doctor had to come to the house, so he said "you all clean up the room now, get the room clean" 'cause he knew they could hardly get in with it looking like it was.

Q: Were there any games that you all played as children?

A: OK, we finally learned to play Chinese Checkers, that was a family game. My father taught us—we played that as a family. Of course my father would always try to win and we learned a lot from him. And then we also played Monopoly, and my kids laugh at me now, my kids, when I say "You know, Monopoly's an interesting game," 'cause Dr. King loved Monopoly. We played that as a family and with friends, and that went on for years. Even after we were going to college, we were still playing Monopoly.

Q: Where in the house, which room did you play, these two games.

A: Down in that room that was the den....and you played Old Maid too. That came to me yesterday, I was talking to my class about work with children and thinking of games—Old Maid....

Q: Do you know how your grandfather got his wealth?

A: Wealth! He wasn't a wealthy man. He owned that house and he owned several other pieces of property, but he wasn't what you would call a wealthy man. I guess he was just

frugal. He had a sense of direction, of looking forward, but he hadn't amassed a lot of wealth.

Q: His primary job was being a pastor?

A: That was his job. I have a picture of him sitting in the back yard, up at the house, of him just sitting out in the back yard.

\*\*\*

A: [Story of M.L.'s fall from the upper hall] He fell from upstairs. He was sitting on the banister upstairs, when he should have been in bed. My father was ill; he had had his tonsils removed, and he was recuperating, and I think there probably were some visitors in the room. So now he's sitting upstairs in front of the birth room on the banisters and I think he fell asleep and then of course he tumbled over and fell down—not in the basement, because that door was closed, but that's the place where he fell. And then when my mother ran to him, you know, she said his eyes were [?] and of course it was frightening, and then I guess mother kind of shook him and he came to; I don't even think they carried him to the hospital. They examined him but nothing, just a fall. It was really a miracle. And he fell on his head, I understand. My Uncle Joel was coming in the house, because he lived with us. That's another thing I didn't mention. My father's brother, youngest brother, lived with us a good deal of the time. Now he's about, he's much older than we are, but yet he was young enough for my father to bring him up like a son.... But anyway the time that M.L. fell, Joel was coming in the house and he had some groceries, a bag of groceries, that he had, and I can recall I heard and I got up and I saw that Joel had dropped the groceries and went to M.L. and I saw these two different forms and I thought that maybe M.L. had come apart. I couldn't figure it out for a while.

\*\*\*

## Appendix E

### Interview with Rev. Joel King, Sr., Mansfield, Ohio, November 13, 1987, conducted by David H. Wallace, Staff Curator, Division of Historic Furnishings, Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service.

This is a partial transcript by David H. Wallace, including only material relevant to the subject of this report.

Q: You were a young boy when you first came to Auburn Avenue?

A: Yes.

Q: About how old would you have been?

A: About 13, I think.

Q: So you were there when—may I call the children M.L., A.D., and Christine?

A: Yes. I was there before any of them were born.... I was born in 1915, 29th of October.

Q: So, where did you—what was your room?

A: My room was the third room [S-5], it would be on the left, the last room on the left.

Q: That one behind where Mr. and Mrs. King were. Did you always have that room?

A: Always.

Q: Until you left—and when was that?

A: I think I left in thirty-seven, I believe, when I got married.

Q: So who had the room in the front [S-3]?

A: Nobody. The room in the front. There was a little room right out here. What is this?

Q: Well this is the balcony; this is the front part of the hall and then this is the front bedroom.

A: But this was a bedroom in here [S-3].

Q: Is this the one they rented?

A: That's where Sister Williams' sister lived.

Q: What was her name?

A: Ida.

Q: So she would be Great-aunt Ida to M.L. and A.D. and all. And she lived there at the same time that you did?

A: Yes, she did, till she passed.

Q: Do you have any idea when that was?

A: No. Christine ought to have that....

Q: Sometime in the 30s I suppose?

A: Yes.

Q: And when you were in the room at the back, this is where Rev. and Mrs. King...?

A: That's right. That's where M.L. was born, in that room [S-4].

Q: And how was the room [S-6] on the other side of the hall used?

A: It was vacant.

Q: That was vacant?

A: For company....

Q: A spare room?

A: And the one downstairs [F-7] the same.

Q: That would be the one they now call Christine's room?

A: I guess so; it's downstairs, isn't it?

Q: That's downstairs across from the dining room.

A: Yes. And this is the bath back here.

Q: That's right. And the Williams' were in this room [F-4] behind the parlor?

A: Downstairs, yes.

Q: Do you remember after Rev. Williams died, Mrs. Williams some time moved upstairs?

A: She moved into the same room where M.L. and them was born in.

Q: And the Kings moved downstairs?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any idea when that was?

A: It was right after his death, not long after his death.

Q: So most of the time when the children were growing up their parents were downstairs?

A: Yes.

Q: Their grandmother was upstairs in the Birth Room.... During the time you lived in the house, did they have seminary students who rented a room?

A: No, there'd be no room for them to rent.

Q: It was just family living in the house?

A: It was just family. We—we had a lot of old friends who would come in occasionally, but nobody rented or lived there.

Q: Can I ask you to try to take yourself back and imagine that you are walking up to the house at the time that you were

there, say in the early 30s, and ask you some questions about what you would see on the porch and in each of the rooms as I go through?

A: All right.

Q: Which door would you go in? You came up on the porch—

A: [Beside] the walk there was an old tree; we finally cut that down, a big oak tree; the stump is still there, I think that was what you'd see in the little yard, 'cause I did all that work, you know.... And you come on the porch, there was a swing, had a swing up, next to that side rail over here on the porch. And nothing but chairs over here and nothing around on the side.

Q: Were those rocking chairs with cane seats, sort of?

A: Yes, they had that; there were two of those on the front porch, as I recall.

Q: Anything on the side porch?

A: Nothing on the side porch. We used to play [around there—the children?]

Q: Anything on the floor of the porch?

A: No.

Q: No matting or anything?

A: No, no matting. Once we had a little foot mat right as you enter.

Q: Door mat, sort of?

A: Something like that. And you'd go in and there was a hallway there.

Q: So you went in the front door, not the side door?

A: Always—not the side door. Very rarely the side door was used, because you'd have to come around.

Q: So what did they call the room you went into when you went inside the front door? Did it have a name?

A: It was the hallway.

Q: Just called it the hallway?

A: And that first room was what they called the living room.

Q: Not the parlor?

A: No. They had a little chair here in this little parlor.... You could set down there...just inside the door.

Q: Was there a coatrack or anything of that sort?

A: Yes, there was...that's all was there. That rarely was used. Along under the steps there was where we kept our clothes.

Q: Oh, I see, you went past the stairs?

A: Yes, there was a little place.

Q: Under the stairs?

A: Kind of like that, where you go down in the basement. We had a door that you raised to go down the steps.

Q: And the coatrack was behind that little trap door?

A: Yes.

Q: Someone had said there was a coatrack back there, so that made me think people maybe came in there, but you say they came through the front door?

A: Always. I don't remember any—Only time that door was used sometimes when we keep up a lot of noise. Well, we'd come out there to get [away when they'd] try to whip us, for something we were doing. It was just open for the family. I don't ever remember anybody going in and out of that door on the side. Then the next room [F-4] there was Rev. Williams'.

Q: That was a bedroom?

A: Yes, that was a bedroom.

Q: Did he ever use that as a study or did he have his—

A: He had his study at the church. He always had his study at the church and his office was there at the church.

Q: So it was just a bedroom?

A: Just a bedroom. It had a bed, a chest—

Q: So after Rev. Williams died, not too long after he died, Mrs. Williams moved upstairs and your brother and his wife moved downstairs and it remained a bedroom. Later—they call it the den now—do you remember when it ceased to be a bedroom? How would it have become a den?

A: I don't remember that, because all the time I remember my brother and his wife were there.

Q: Certainly up through 1937 when you—

A: They may have turned something after I left. But they did—they probably have the wrong room—we used the dining room for a den there for a while, I remember that.

Q: Where did they put the dining table?

A: Well, they had it turned—

Q: Oh, they kept it in the same room?

A: You see that's a pretty large room.

Q: And then do you remember when Christine had that room?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: That would be when she was a little older, I suppose?

A: Yes. I'm trying to remember how did they have those children. A.D. and M.L. they stayed in this room over here on the upstairs balcony here [S-2].

Q: They had this room, the spare room for a—yes, you had this room in the back [S-5].

A: And this is the room they had upstairs, this room here [S-2].

Q: The hallway?

A: They stayed right out there.

Q: The little boys?

A: Yes.

- Q: Till about what—as long as you were there, and then they moved into this room [S-5] after you left? Apparently this is where A.D. and M.L. were the last couple of years.
- A: Yes, the last couple of years. And by the way I'd come back every so often.... And that's what I say, that's when I said they changed this dining room.
- Q: So the dining room became a combination den and dining room.
- A: They even moved the TV in there.
- Q: They never had the TV in the parlor or the living room?
- A: No.
- Q: Did they have a radio there?
- A: No. There was a piano in there, an old piano.
- Q: That's still there.
- A: And I'm trying to see what was in the corner. They had a rocker and a kind of a, something like this.
- Q: A sofa in front of the windows, was it?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And the piano was back in this [southeast] corner?
- A: Back in that corner, right back in here somewhere. You see the door opened, the door right here.... That piano usually was sitting right over here.
- Q: Was it sort of catty-cornered? The piano?
- A: Yes.
- Q: So this is a door? On to the porch? [referring to front window, right]
- A: No, there was a door coming out of this hall here.
- Q: That would be over here. This is the hall here. See, the front door and the hall—
- A: Oh, yeah. This is the hall right here. And the door right here.
- Q: So, the piano was—
- A: Was [?] What is this right here?
- Q: The piano, or the sofa?
- A: They had a chair sitting over here.
- Q: Rocking chair, did you say?
- A: Uh, huh.
- Q: Can you picture that corner?
- A: They had an old-fashioned—not a record player—what you call them?
- Q: Victrola?
- A: Victrola, and [that] was always in that room.
- Q: How about a radio?
- A: All the radios was in the rooms.

Q: Little radios?

A: Well, they didn't have any.

Q: No radios?

A: I didn't have any in my room.

Q: And none in the living room?

A: No.

Q: What about pictures on the wall in the living room?

A: Oh, they had pictures.

Q: Remember what kind?

A: Oh, no, they had a big large picture like this [points to picture on wall above him, about 20" x 30" horizontal].

Q: Would they be religious pictures, or—

A: Oh, yes, they were religious pictures.

Q: Landscapes?

A: They had one landscape. That was a farm, old-fashioned picture like they were gathering wheat.

Q: Oh, "the Angelus"? Listening to the church bells in the distance. [More likely "The Gleaners"] Any mirrors do you remember? In the living room?

A: No, no mirror.

Q: Not over the fireplace?

A: No.

Q: How did they heat the room?

A: They had a—I made all the fires..that was my job. There was a stove, there was a fireplace in the living room. There was a fireplace over there, too.

Q: Yes, both the living room and the Williams' room had a fireplace. Did they burn coal in it or wood?

A: Burn wood and sometimes coal, both.

Q: But they didn't have little gas stoves?

A: No, nothing like that.

Q: Were you there when they put in the furnace?

A: Yes. I think I was there when they put up the furnace [?]. I had to put the stove coal in that thing. That's been quite a while.... Anyway it burned a—slack, we called it, little stuff looked like dirt—

Q: In the stoker?

A: Yes, in the stoker. And that heated the whole house then.

Q: But it wasn't like that when you first moved there?

A: No, by no means.

Q: That came in later?

A: I made the fires... I can remember firing brother's room and the Williams' room and my room if I had any.

Q: And there was a fireplace in the dining room, too, apparently.

A: Yes.

Q: And then your bedroom?

A: There was a fireplace there.

Q: And they all burned coal?

A: Coal, yes.

Q: In a grate?

A: These old fashioned grates.

Q: I think there's a couple of those still there, if I remember. Later on they put in gas.

A: I've been through the house since they remodelled it. Place is [?] changed [?] because I had no reason at that particular time to remember. I know in my room there was some pictures in there, the bed and—

Q: Was that a metal bed or a wooden bed?

A: A wooden bed.

Q: Painted?

A: No, I don't think it was painted.

Q: Natural finish, like a maple?

A: Yes. And the fireplace and a chair. It used to sit up front of me and they had in this room, they had a little closet back here somewhere.

Q: Right. You'd come in the door here. Where would the bed be?

A: The bed would be right here [north wall].

Q: Sticking out?

A: Yes.

Q: And the chest?

A: The chest would be right here. That's the window, isn't it?

Q: That's the fireplace.

A: Fireplace.

Q: Window's here.

A: Window right here.

Q: So it would be in front of, between the windows?

A: Yes. Now [?] the chair set here by the—

Q: With a mirror or without a mirror?

A: I don't know about a mirror [?] There were very few mirrors in the house.

Q: Was this like a washstand or just a chest of drawers, a little chest?

A: A chest of drawers, you know, like they have where you put your shirts in the drawers, with a vanity like and you set things on top of it.



Q: And this was a bigger chest over here?

A: No, this was a chair.

Q: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you said chest.

A: Chair always sat there. And there was a small chair right over here.

Q: Would those be painted chairs or natural finish?

A: Natural finish.

Q: With hard wood seats or caned seats?

A: Caned seats.... And somewhere right in here was where you put your clothes.

Q: A closet?

A: A closet.

Q: I think that's there now. What was on the floor?

A: They had a carpet, half of a carpet. The rest was a plain floor.

Q: That would be out here?

A: It covered from here [?] by the bed.

Q: Like in here, just beside the bed?

A: No, under the bed; it went all the way.

Q: I should let you draw it.

A: You see, it came—the carpet started back here, but it left a space back there where the chest is—that was wood. This right in here was wood.... [?]

Q: So the bed was sitting on it?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that a linoleum or—

A: It was a rug.

Q: It was a real rug?

A: A real rug.

Q: With a pattern on it?

A: The only [room] where linoleum was in the kitchen and the bathrooms, because I had to mop those...and in the dining room there was plain natural floor, hardwood floor. And a small rug in both room, bedrooms.

Q: Sort of like the one in your room?

A: Yes.

Q: So that when you stepped out of bed you weren't on the cold floor. How about in the living room?

A: A carpet in there. A real carpet in there.

Q: And the spare bedrooms?

A: When you asked me about that—it's coming to me now. It was a—out there in that hall [F-1] which you asked me about, it was a thing stood there, an old rack for coats to hang, and

nobody used it very much, always went out there in the back. I remember that now.

Q: That was an oak rack—not a wardrobe?

A: Yes. No, just a rack....

Q: ...Was there anything on the floor out there [upstairs hall]?

A: Yes, they had a little—I would call it a throw rug.

Q: Getting back to the living room, I think in your brother's autobiography he talks about how his wife had choir practice sometimes in the living room?

A: Yes, but that was—they sat out in this little hall and then the room.

Q: Both rooms?

A: Because of the piano.

Q: Was the piano ever out in the hall?

A: No, it never was.

Q: It was always in the living room?

A: Yes.

Q: How many were in the choir? Sounds like it was pretty big.

A: Oh yes, they always had a large membership of the choir.

Q: When they had choir practice what did they use for chairs for that number of people?

A: They pushed those stools and those chairs over the house.

Q: Brought them from all over the house?

A: All over the house.

Q: They didn't have folding chairs stashed away....?

A: No. Back then when I came up I rarely ever saw a folding chair [?].

Q: Well, they had them in Sunday School when I was a kid, but there were usually three together or something like that.

A: Yes, I remember that, but I mean—

Q: But not in the house?

A: Not in the house.

Q: Did they have any other kind of meetings in that living room?

A: No—that was for her, because of the children, you know, where she'd be with the children, because going to church in the evening there, you know, they didn't dare to leave the children alone and she could be there with them [during choir practice?]. And that was the only thing that they ever—occasionally sometimes she might have a women's meeting there [?].

Q: But mostly it was for the family and friends when they were visiting, they sat in the living room?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Did they sing around the piano much?

A: Oh yes, they sang there....

Q: She taught some music too, I guess?

A: Oh yes, she was very competent.

Q: So I understand. Did all the children learn to play the piano?

A: M.L. learned it better than any of them; the other two didn't—Christine and A.D. didn't play too much. Like myself. I wish to God I had...[someone] make me take music. I don't know why I missed that....

A: And you know later on he built on at the back of this house steps that go downstairs from the outside. Is this still there?

Q: They're still there. Was that after they converted it to duplex apartments?

A: No, that was when I was there, they put those steps back there.

Q: Was that for safety reasons?

A: I think it was more for comfort getting out.... I think they had that in mind.

Q: Did they ever use the balcony? This little—'cause you know now it's a window and the architects say that was originally a door out onto the balcony? Do you remember anything about that?

A: Where, from the back?

Q: No, in the front. There's a little balcony in front of the house right off this hallway.

A: Oh, no, the most use of that was the children, they'd get out there; you know, play and hop around and that sort of thing. We never did anything but [?].

Q: There wouldn't be any chairs?

A: No chairs, nothing like that. And you wanted to see things and overhear [?]. Yeah, I remember that now. That thing, it was a tin on the floor; I don't think it had been completed.

Q: Really part of the roof? The porch roof?

A: Well, that's right—because that's nothing but tin and they have a little old balcony around.

Q: So it really was for appearance?

A: Yes, it never was for use.

Q: Which window did M.L. jump out of when he thought he'd killed his grandmother?

A: I can't—I guess—he had two falls. Well, that was—it wasn't a window, he fell from upstairs.

Q: Oh, off the railing?

A: Off the railing, right down here—and he knocked himself out.

Q: And according to Christine you were just coming in the door with a bag of groceries.

A: [laughs] And Mrs. Williams ran out there but he was out, because I picked him up. You know how children play on—[laughs] I remember that.

Q: How old was he then?

A: [?] He's young.

Q: Four, five, six?

A: Yeah, somewhere around that. He got a good fall out of that.

Q: And then one time they say he and A.D. were sliding down the banisters and knocked Grandmother Williams over.

A: Yes, you see they came down—see these are railings.

Q: This is the first floor steps. This is the second floor. This would be the railings on the second floor.

A: You see, they'd come on down this way and Mrs. Williams standing along there and he couldn't stop here and she's standing there and he hit her.

Q: Well that time he's supposed to have run upstairs and jumped out a window. Do you remember that?

A: No.

Q: And then when—also when she died he's supposed to have jumped out a second floor window.

A: I was away from—I was pastoring.

Q: Of course that was in '41.

A: I was pastor in Griffin then and they called me here....

Q: Where in the downstairs hall was the telephone?....

A: The telephone, it was on...it was right here where you see the first steps are.

Q: These are the steps going up to the second floor; this is the first floor hall, the side porch door.

A: Between this step and the railing along in here was a—the telephone was nailed to the wall.

Q: Right at the foot of the steps?

A: Yes.

Q: It was on the wall? Was it hanging or was it on a stand?

A: No, it was nailed—you know, they have a clear wall right here.

Q: Right. Mounted on the wall?

A: Right. Mounted on the wall.

Q: Do you remember anything on these walls next to the Williams' bedroom?

A: No. He moved that phone from that side to that side. I remember that, over here to over there.

Q: This would be—you'd almost have to be standing on the steps to use it there because you have that swinging door.

A: Yeah, but there's quite a space between this step—they had a landing. It'd be on the landing like.

Q: Oh, on the landing.

A: But you used to stand on the landing to use the phone. You had a kind of space there.

Q: Did they have any sort of table or anything on the landing?

- A: No, it was clear.
- Q: There are French doors here. Did they keep those open or closed?
- A: Most times these were open, right in here. But you had some—going into this—these French doors stood between this entrance here.
- Q: They were there when you started to live there?
- A: Yes, they were there....
- Q: Was there any carpeting on the floor in the hall? Or was that bare?
- A: No, in here you had linoleum.
- Q: Linoleum along—out here too?
- A: No, no. It was carpet up here.
- Q: Carpet in the front hall?
- A: And right here leading from those French doors back to the—on back to the bathroom, you stepped down [?] I don't know, but I remember mopping that so often.
- Q: Do you have any memory of what color it might have been?
- A: It was green and white.
- Q: Block pattern?
- A: Yes.
- Q: How about in the kitchen?
- A: The same thing.
- Q: And the bathroom?
- A: Yeah. Hallway, bathroom, kitchen.
- Q: Sort of like a checkerboard, in green and white?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Where was the stove, the kitchen range, in the kitchen?
- A: It was—
- Q: See, this is the back wall.
- A: Back wall, back there against this wall.
- Q: And the sink was over here.
- A: And they had a table, a breakfast table.
- Q: Like that?
- A: Uh-huh.
- Q: Did anyone eat breakfast there?
- A: Well, I guess I ate more than them, 'cause they all most ate in the dining room all the time. Mrs. Williams herself [?]. I never see the whole family [eat on this table?].
- Q: Not the three of them?
- A: No, 'cause usually Dr. Williams had his breakfast there on the table. We all [?] not enough room back there.

Q: You took all your meals with the family?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: But some people had breakfast in the kitchen?

A: Usually Mrs. Williams just fixed something [?] when I was going to school [?] just put it on the table. Sometimes she'd eat there.

Q: How about the Kings?

A: I don't remember them.

Q: Too many of them. How about the icebox? Remember where that was?

A: Yes. It was sitting right in here.

Q: By the window? And was there anything in that corner?

A: I'm trying to think. They had something sitting in there where they put dishes, glasses.

Q: Like a kitchen cabinet?

A: Yeah, but it wasn't a kitchen cabinet.

Q: It was a dish cabinet?

A: Small—

Q: With glass front or—?

A: Yes, it was glass front. They kept dishes in there.

Q: That would be against the back wall beside the stove?

A: Let's see, I'm trying to get this space. You see this—you had a lot of room after you've got this stove in that kitchen.

Q: I have a picture of it the way it is now,... This is the window and they have an icebox there.

A: This is the thing I'm talking about over there, see that right there?

Q: Kitchen cabinet. They have it now where the stove should be I think.

A: Let's see.

Q: That's looking in the kitchen door. You don't see the sink 'cause it's to your right.

A: They've got that thing sitting where the stove is.

Q: That's what I thought. And then they have a little pot-bellied stove to heat water—now. Did they have that then?

A: No, no.

Q: They heated water right on the range?

A: Now, what is this here?

Q: That's an icebox, but a pretty small one.

A: I don't [?] but it was a large one. This is a window. And this thing here was sitting right in here.

Q: Yeah, that makes sense. You need the light beside it.

- A: You see what I mean. That was sitting right over here. And this thing here, this table was sitting out here. Is that supposed to be in the middle now.
- Q: I think they have it in the middle now. But it should be closer to the wall?
- A: Yeah. You could go by here to the washer, to the sink. And over there would have been the stove. That was all was in there.
- Q: Do you remember what kind of table it was? A drop-leaf or porcelain top?
- A: It was like this but it wasn't near this large.
- Q: Actually this one is from the other house over on Boulevard, from their breakfast nook, so it's really not a kitchen table at all. But it didn't have a porcelain top, it had a wood top?
- A: Wood top.
- Q: Did it have a cloth on it or something?
- A: Yes, it had a cloth on it.
- Q: Did Mrs. Williams or Mrs. King use that as a work table also?
- A: Yeah. They did a lot of work there where they had—
- Q: But of course this cabinet has a work surface too....
- A: But most of that work was done on Sundays [?] and that's about all that's in there.
- Q: And there was linoleum on that floor.
- A: Yes....
- Q: Would it have been oilcloth on that table or cotton cloth?
- A: They had both. It seems like it had an oil cloth, I believe glued or nailed to it. And then they always put a scarf on it.
- Q: So you could use the oilcloth if you were going to work on the table and it was tacked on underneath or something?
- A: I know it didn't move. Most of the time I'd be the last one getting out to school, so Mrs. Williams would fix me some cocoa and breakfast, and she'd sit right at that end of table.
- Q: What kind of chairs were there?
- A: They had maybe it was straw, cane-bottom chairs.
- Q: [There were] just two of them?
- A: Two chairs.
- Q: Would there be any pictures on the walls in there, or a calendar or anything of that sort?
- A: Yeah, they had some pictures. I remember two. There was one over in that corner over there. It wasn't as [far?] as the sink but right near, between the sink and the door in the wall there, there was a picture.
- Q: Any idea what it was?
- A: No.
- Q: And how about a calendar?

- A: Oh yes, they kept a little old calendar in there, always. [Hanging?] between that picture and the sink. There was quite a space there between them sink—
- Q: I may have a picture of that.
- A: All right. You see this space—
- Q: That would be the door right there.
- A: Where's the sink? Right here.
- Q: Yes.
- A: See right up here was a picture.
- Q: Between the pipes?
- A: See these pipes here. And they come down and then there's a picture somewhere along up here. It's right over this sink here.
- Q: This would be where the stove was and the cabinet's round the corner on this wall. See this is the back window. The stove was there, wasn't it?
- A: Yeah.
- Q: And then the cabinet was just around the corner, like here, and the stove there?
- A: They had three pictures in that room. They had a little thing hanging right up here over the cabinet. And they had a large calendar.
- Q: A large calendar next to the window?
- A: Yes.
- Q: OK, that would be the...the south window, the back window, anyway.
- Q: With the stove was there a stovepipe that went out the wall or out the window or did it go right up?
- A: Straight up.
- Q: Through the ceiling?
- A: Yes.
- Q: That's the way they have the little wood stove now. Did they get a gas or electric refrigerator while you were still there? Or did they always have the icebox?
- A: They had the icebox.
- Q: Just the icebox? Was there any kind of a roller towel, do you remember, on the door or anything like that?
- A: No.
- Q: Where were the towels, dish towels and things?
- A: They placed them in this thing here.
- Q: Oh, in the cabinet? Do you remember any kind of dishpan or dish drainer on the drain board?
- A: No.
- Q: They just laid them on the board itself.... Back to this room. This [F-7] is downstairs across from the dining room. That was usually a spare room until Christine got older?



A: Yeah.

Q: And she had that when she was a teenager, I suppose?

A: This is the room that I married in.

Q: Your brother married you?

A: Yes. He married me [?].

Q: And that was '37?

#### Side 2

Q: I was asking you about books.

A: Most of the books was in the rooms.

Q: In the bedrooms?

A: In the bedrooms. There was no special place.

Q: Where would the encyclopedia have been? You don't remember that? It may have been later.

A: It must have been—it had to be up there in that front room [S-2] on the top of that chest of drawers or whatever.

Q: Was there any sort of chest of drawers with the room where the boys slept?

A: No, at the end there was a little small chest of drawers [?] and that had been there for years. There was a light sitting on top of it.

I believe this here is the same old thing they had when I was there.

Q: The washing machine?

A: Yeah, that's it. You see there I was telling you about—something you asked me about is in this corner; see back up there that [stool?] where...right along here.

Q: This is in the back hall.

A: This is in the hall now.

Q: Yeah, the back porch, they called it [F-10].

A: [?] what did we call that room? That little thing stood off from that bathroom.

Q: Did they have coal oil lamps? Or did the electricity never go off?

A: I don't remember.

Q: I guess in the city it wasn't that much of a problem?

A: I don't remember...any lamps. I don't remember when the electricity ever went off.... I don't think we ever had that trouble.

Q: Any pictures that you remember other than the gathering wheat?

A: No, I don't. There was no pictures of the family.

Q: No pictures of the family?

A: In the house.

Q: Even Dr. Williams after he died? That would be in Mrs. Williams' room I suppose if there was one?

A: The only picture that I realize of him was the one in the church window, that I remember. I was never in Mrs. Williams' room. That's the reason—I've been trying to locate my mother's picture. That's my dad there, and him—and there's only one picture of my mother and I can't—nobody—I've been—I tried to buy from the people down in Stockbridge a [ ] that had a little picture of her cause I wanted one. And I haven't been able to get— There's only one picture of her. Back then they didn't make many pictures.

Q: And I guess even the King children didn't—I don't know if they had a Brownie camera, but there just don't seem to be family snapshots, except outdoors, like on the front porch....

A: You know, one thing...the older people was the kind of people—they didn't go for this kind of [?] and I wonder where is the pictures—I don't know if they have any pictures of the children when they were babies.

Q: I've just seen one or two pictures and they were taken out on the porch, when they were six, seven, eight years old, but nothing inside.... But at least there weren't framed pictures of your parents or the Williamses hanging on the walls?

A: No, no....

Q: Would there have been a print of "the last supper" anywhere in the house?

A: No, no no.

Q: A picture of Jesus?

A: No. They were very homely people. You know, both Dr. Williams and my brother being preachers....

Q: But they didn't go in for things like that? And I suppose having their offices in the church you wouldn't have things at home?

A: Yeah, but see you always.... [I have an office at church?] but I always kept a little desk of books...I'm called on to speak a lot and I have a lot of those things right there in my bedroom, books and all....

Q: Would either your brother or Dr. Williams have had a desk in their bedroom?

A: No.

Q: They were so close to the church?

A: Dr. Williams got up early in the morning, he used to go to the church and he'd stay there till about four, come home and eat and go back there. They did very little reading at night.

Q: Did people get around in the living room and read at night?

A: No. All your reading was done in the bedroom.

Q: Were there any particular games they played?

A: No, they never—Dr. Williams...no I didn't see them ever play a game in there. One of the strong—[my brother] never did believe in smoking or drinking and when I grew up I came home one day—he got me a little job with Dr. Drellis—and I came home smoking a cigarette.... My brother waited till I got up on the porch, he was ahead of me, and he hit me a back hand and [laughs]—

Q: Wiped it right out?

A: And that cigarette—[laughs].... He was a strict man. I tell people he was one of the most—I guess brother really lived what he preached. Any man I know, probably, he ought to have went to heaven. Because he believed in that Bible. He

lived by it. I never seen my brother do anything wrong, all the time...never.

\*\*\*

## Appendix F

### Interview with Mrs. Benita Bennett, friend of the King family and tour guide at the Birth Home, January 6, 1984, conducted in the Birth Home by staff members, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

This is a partial transcript by David H. Wallace, including only material relevant to the subject of this report.

A: ...I was not a part of the original committee that refurnished the house. These pieces were purchased and matched to the recollection of Mrs. King who really supervised the restoration of the house...Mrs. Alberta King who grew up in this house. She was not born in this house because, Mrs. King, if I remember correctly, was five years old when the family moved here. And so, the wallpapers throughout the house and the furnishings are as best she could recall them being in 1929. This is what you were trying to match.

The piano is the original. That was hers. Because Mrs. King was an accomplished musician. That was her piano and when the family moved from here she took the piano with her and then she even had it, fortunately stored in her basement on [?] Street. So when they got ready to refurnish, it was no problem to pick it up.

Q: Do you know any history behind it as far as whether she got it as a Christmas gift from her father?

A: No, I don't know when it was given to her, whether it was a gift or at what time. It's just that I know she got it at a time when she was in her teens and...she grew up with that....

So all of the other pieces in here would be pieces possibly that...would be pieces of the period but not original to the house. Now, I understand from Mrs. Farris that this whatnot stand and this desk are original and were in the house. But now I don't know whether or not they were where you see them. And of course you know that's out of place [the telephone]....

Q: We will probably move this....

And you know about this photograph. This photograph was taken in January of '41. It was taken just before they moved out of here. The grandmother died in May of 1941 and it was in '41 that the family moved away, so you have—this is Martin on your right and then Christine and AD...and this is Mrs. King, Rev. King, and Mrs. Jennie Williams, Mrs. King's mother.

These are Daddy King's hats, but this [hall stand] is not an original.

[At this point Mrs. Bennett begins to give her house tour.]

In the living room the piano is original. Mrs. Alberta King was an accomplished musician. She studied at Hampton Institute and each of the three King children learned to play on that piano.

Then we move into the next room [F-4], which sometimes served as a study, sometimes a bedroom, and in later years as a playroom. The original piece in there is the desk. The desk belonged to the Rev. Williams.

And then we move on down to the dining room. Note the 1929 vintage telephone, because they did have a telephone, that is, the Kings and the Williams.

In the dining room the buffet is an original piece. So are the plates and the glasses on the table. If you look on the mantel, you will see a crumber and that was used by the family. Now we have to remember that the Rev. Williams was a formal individual and in his day ministers were not as informal as they are today, therefore it was important that the family sit down together for their meals, and the family did sit down first under the Rev. Williams' direction and later under Rev. King, Sr.'s direction. So the meals were eaten in this dining room.

Now, we go from the dining room to the kitchen. The only original piece in the kitchen is the sink which was built in when the house was constructed. The table that you see was a table which the King family had when the family lived on Boulevard.... The family moved to Boulevard in 1941 after the grandmother, Mrs. Jennie Williams, had died.

This is the laundry area [F-10] and here we just have examples of the kinds of progression for laundry, the old type washboard, the old fluting iron, and one of the early electric irons, an early electric washer, and of course, the standby, the tubs and the board.

Now this house has two baths, and this is one [F-8], down here, a complete bath. And you also see this closet here [F-9], sort of storage indoors.

Now we'll go back along the hall, if you will, and this is a bedroom [F-7]. This was Christine's bedroom, Christine being the oldest of the three children and the only girl. This furniture belonged to her mother, it was her mother's when her mother was in her teens and her mother bequeathed it to Christine and Christine has subsequently bequeathed it to the King Center.

The wallpaper that you see in the hall and each of the rooms has been matched or was matched to Mrs. King's recollection. Mrs. Alberta King was—Alberta Williams King—was five when the family moved here and when the house was being restored she recalled as best she could how it looked when she moved here and certainly when her son was born in this house....

I have no idea about that trunk. I do know it's empty. I don't know whether they just put it in....

Q: When was the back of the house added?

A: I asked Christine about that. Christine does not recall this being added. Christine has said to me that they never had—she never heard her mother speak of any outdoor lavatories, that as far as she recalls there was always this bathroom down here and the one upstairs.

Q: That's possible, because we know from other sources...that there were sewers in this area by 1895 so this could have been one of the first houses built from the ground up with indoor plumbing.

\*\*\*

A: When Martin was a youngster one of the things that he was responsible for was filling that with coal. Now in the winter-time it seems that they closed this because you get nothing but a draft—but in the summer it's usually open and of course you can see that the new furnace has been installed for the renovation, because the house is now air conditioned. But it was not at the time they lived here. And this railing was not here at the time that they lived here....

Now in all probability there were blowers in this house, that went in front of the fireplaces so that you could close it off when you weren't using it and to keep the draft from coming down.

Q: Explain to me what is a blower.

A: It's a piece of metal and it was usually decorative...and it even helped you get the fire started. It would be back, like this outline is here [in living room fireplace] and it would fit in this area and it would have handles on it, so that you could pull it out and also push it in when you got ready to start it. But this [fire board] is a piece that would have come along later in order to...make it very decorative. But this would have nothing to do with the fire; in fact this is wood, so it would have to be....

Q: Did other members of the King or Williams families live in the house?

A: Yes. Mrs. Williams had a sister whose name was Eve [Ida] and she lived here during the time that Martin—

Q: Do you know how long Daddy King's sister Woody King...while she was going to school.

A: No, I don't know how long. At that time, of course, she was staying here with the Williams. And I guess at this juncture she might be the only one.

Q: She's still living?

A: Yes, she's still living. Now Rev. King might remember how long she stayed here.

Now this is the room [S-4] in which he was born. And the original pieces of furniture in here are this chest that is by the door and the chifforobe. And this cedar chest, which belonged to his mother, that was a common piece of furniture at that time.

Q: Is the bed a bed that was in the house or just a period—

A: I think it's just a period—

Now this area [S-2] and this table too are something that was put in here. This area was sometimes used as a bedroom. You see it's large enough to have put a single bed out here. And then later it was used as a play area for the children. This is a machine like the one from that period but not an original piece.

Q: Was that window ever a door?

A: No, this has always been like this. Full window. This is the window from which Martin jumped at one time when he heard I think, that his grandmother had died.

And then this is a bedroom [S-3], this was a bedroom. And I understand that this room was often rented to beginning ministers. There are four bedrooms on this floor.

Q: Did AD and Martin share a bedroom always.

A: Now that I don't really know authentically....

I think there's more storage than anything else now there is a Center. There was a time prior to the Center being constructed that this [S-5] was the room from which the non-violence program was conducted and then there were times when the person, whoever was here conducting the tours, did work from this room. So you have lots of old stuff in here. This is a chair like the kind that would have been on the front porch and I had it brought up here because it's broken and was very unsightly.

Q: This piece is part of the furnishings that were acquired by the AKAs or is this another piece that basically is a remembrance piece?

A: This was a piece that would have been acquired.

Q: The reason I ask is that when we do a furnishings study we need to make sure we take into consideration every piece that may have been either acquired or original....

Now let me get this straight. The AKAs [Alpha Kappa Alphas] acquired the furnishings?

A: No, the AKAs bought the house from Mrs. Alberta King and deeded it to the King Center. And then, as you look on the doors, you will see the names of the other sororities that made some contribution toward—for example—who is this?

Q: Sigma Gamma Rho

A: All right, Sigma Gamma Rho was large responsible for refurbishing of the Birth Room. The Atlanta Chapter of Delta [Sigma Theta] was responsible for the refurbishing of the living room.

\*\*\*

Here is the bathroom [S-7].

Q: Yes, this is a later sink? I'm not sure.

A: I would doubt that.

Q: You think it may be the sink that was here?

\*\*\*

A: The Rev. Williams, Martin's maternal grandfather, was one of the presidents of the Atlanta branch of the NAACP. Therefore it is conceivable that meetings for the formation of the organization, plus some of the other involvements that he had to bring about a kind of parity in the city, those meetings were held here. We know that church circles met here. In fact there was a choir at Ebenezer that was formed by Mrs. King in 1932 and they often rehearsed here. So the house, from what I have been able to glean, was a happy home....

Q: You know I never hear much about Mama King, about her life. I've read Daddy King's book, but I don't know a whole lot about her life and her history.

A: I feel very bad when you say that because I was supposed to have worked with her on getting her story told. And I had only one interview with her. I began in '73 and of course she was killed in '74. But she was shy and quiet, but she had an excellent sense of humor. And whereas she would never have struck out against all of this segregation the way that Rev. King did, she supported him but she was afraid. She did not have the bravado that he had. She could walk up to you and very quietly tell you something and make you laugh and then they'd be wondering, Gosh, what's going on over there. And she did hers I think through the music.... In

addition to her formal training she had a lot of innate ability, because she could sit to the piano and just play.

Q: I've heard some biographical information about Dr. King that said that he also sort of played the piano.

A: All of them had lessons.

Q: As far as you know, did he inherit or did he have any of that kind of musical talent himself or were his talents other.

A: I think his talents were other, because what would happen is that Martin could sit to the piano and the piece that really stands out in my mind and I guess in the minds of most people would be Moonlight Sonata and you could settle back think-

ing you were going to hear it and after about the first page that would be the end of it. Now he sang beautifully. He had a beautiful rich baritone voice, but nothing on the piano as opposed to—

Q: Most Victorian houses of this era you'd find a number of portraits and pictures, largely pictures of pastoral scenes hanging on the wall, but I see nothing in this house..there's a picture rail.

A: Well, you see, they may have and that's something that was not followed through on during the restoration.

\*\*\*