

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Rapp Road Community Historic District
other name/site number n/a

2. Location

street & town Rapp Road not for publication
city or town Albany vicinity
state New York code NY county Albany code 001 zip code 12207

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
[Signature] SNPO 10/02/02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Commissioner, NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
New York State Historic Preservation Officer
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Rapp Road Community Historic District
Name of Property

Albany, Albany County
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
19	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
2		objects
21	2	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/
Craftsman/Bungalow

foundation Brick/Concrete
walls Wood/Brick
roof Asphalt
other

Narrative Description

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

Rapp Road Historic District
*Albany, Albany County***NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**
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The Rapp Road Historic District is situated at the southwestern edge of the city of Albany along its boarder with the Town of Guilderland. The nominated district is located on both sides of Rapp Road, a narrow lane that connects Gipp Road to the south with Washington Avenue Extension (a major east west commercial highway) on the north.

The nominated district is composed of a portion of the original large rectangular lot of land purchased by Rev. Louis Parson in 1930. Parson later subdivided this larger lot, as he sold irregular shaped lots to members of his church. This seemingly haphazard development is a unique character-defining feature of the district. In the mid-twentieth century the north section of the development was acquired by the State of New York for the extension of Washington Avenue. The few homes that existed in the development zone were either destroyed or relocated and the original parson's lot truncated.

The nominated district includes the remaining acreage associated with the development by Rev. Parson. It is bounded on the north by a feeder/access road connected to Washington Avenue Extension, on the south by a Niagara Mohawk transmission line right of way, on the west by the Daughters of Sarah Jewish Nursing Home and on the east by commercial development and the Crossgates Mall. The surviving portion of the parson's property has been included in the nomination with the exception of one lot, which is the site of a condominium development. This single lot has been excluded from the nomination due to the incompatible size and scale of the building.

The district contains 27 lots, which include fifteen (15) homes erected during the period of significance, two (2) modern homes¹, and four (4) vacant lots.² The twenty-seven lots that comprise the district are irregular in shape with several crossing over Rapp Road. The road itself is a narrow lane, with a brand extending from a point midway in the district to provide a second connection with Washington Avenue Extension. Despite the narrow early twentieth century character of the Rapp Road, it has evolved over the past two decades into a heavily traveled bypass by motorist coming from and going to Crossgates mall.

Due to the fact that the district is being nominated under National Register Criteria A in the area of social history and community development, the following building list provides a historical rather than architectural description of each of the properties within the district.

¹ Of these modern homes two were constructed in the district by second-generation members of the original families, a first generation family constructed one in 1956 (outside the period of significance), and one is a modern building that replaced an original home destroyed by fire.

² Four of these lots have never been built upon. Two lots once contained homes, which were demolished.

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5 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling with single car garage (2 contributing buildings)*

The Owens family purchased the property in the 1940s when they arrived in Albany. Mr. Owens worked for the Tobin Packing Company. He constructed the present home in 1945. The house remains in the family today.

8 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. (1 contributing building)*

Libbie and William Toliver purchased a lot on Rapp Road and constructed this home in the early 1930s. This house originally sat where Washington Ave. Ext. is now located. During the construction of Washington Avenue extension the family was given the option of selling the home or relocating it. The house was moved to its present site in late twentieth century. It is the oldest house on Rapp Road. Mrs. Toliver lived in this house until her death in 1970. Libbie and William Toliver, along with Louis and Francis Parson, bought the first tract of Rapp Road land from Charles Smith on 2 May 1930. Currently the house is vacant.

12 Rapp Road. Non-contributing modern home constructed in the 1970s. A second-generation member of the Owens family constructed the home.

14 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling with small frame shed (2 contributing buildings)*

Original owners and residents were Samuel and Isabel Coleman. The Coleman's moved to Albany before 1933. The couple was originally from Savannah, Georgia, but moved to New York because Samuel had a brother in Brooklyn. The couple resided on Green Street when they first moved to Albany. Samuel Coleman built the house in the early 1940s. The land was purchased from Francis Parson (Louis Parson's wife) on January 27, 1942. It was the wishes of the Coleman family that their home survive after their deaths. As a result of this request the community sought out a local buyer for the property. A second-generation member of the community purchased the home.

18 Rapp Road. Originally owned by a second generation Rapp Road resident. There was never a house on it. The property is now owned by Albany County.

22 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. (2 contributing buildings)*

Original builders and residents were Alfred and Leola Woodard. Alfred Woodard was born in Clarke County, Mississippi and Leola was born in Wayne County, Mississippi. The couple moved to Albany in the early 1940s because Leola's brothers, Daniel and Willie McCann were already there. The Woodard's came via Greyhound bus to Albany and lived with her brothers on Dongan Avenue. Alfred and Leola bought land on Rapp Road on July 8, 1946 although they started building in 1944. Because of WWII it was difficult to get materials and building the house was a slow process for Alfred. As a result, Leola started building a smaller shotgun style house so the family would not have to pay rent in Albany. The family lived in the little house

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until 1949 when the big house was finally livable. The Woodard's had eight children and lived in the house until their deaths. Alfred died in 1994 and Leola died in 1991. A second-generation member of the family occupies the home today.

Also located on property is a mid twentieth century cook house. This single story wood frame structure has served as the center of activities for the annual family reunion on the street for the past several decades.

23 Rapp Road. *Wood frame ranch style home with partial brick facing. (1 contributing building)*

Original residents Willie and Tempie McCann. The McCann family arrived in Albany, New York from Shubuta, Mississippi in 1937. When they arrived they lived at 30 Dongan Avenue and then at 39 Dongan Avenue. Willie McCann purchased land from Francis Parson on July 17, 1944 and immediately began building the house while the family continued to live in the South End of Albany. When the family finally moved to Rapp Road only the kitchen and bathroom were completed. Willie McCann had masonry skills; he built 29 Rapp Road, and helped to build 22 Rapp Road, 39 Rapp Road, and 38 Rapp Road. 23 Rapp Road was one of the houses used for collateral when the First Church of God and Christ (Wilborn Temple) bought 121 Jay Street, Albany, New York for the new church site in the 1960s. The home today is occupied by the McCann's daughter.

28 Rapp Road. Non-contributing modern home constructed in 1978. The land was subdivided from Alfred Woodard's property at 22 Rapp Road. Prior to the construction of the home the land was open field. The daughter of Alfred and Leola Woodard owns the home.

29 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. Later expended with a garage extension. Home faced with brick. Stone piers mark drive. (1 contributing building, 2 contributing objects)*

Willie McCann built this house between 1950 and 1952 for his son. This house sits on the lot bought by McCann in 1950 from the original Louis Parson land purchase. The house is currently occupied by McCann's granddaughter.

31 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling with rear and side wings. (1 contributing building)*

Albert Farley, bought this lot from Benjamin Nixon and his wife in 1946. Benjamin Nixon was an original Rapp Road resident from Florida. He purchased his land directly from Francis Parson in 1944. Nixon never completed a home on the property. In 1946 the lot was sold to Albert and Susie Farley. The Farley family constructed the current home on the lot in 1947. Albert and Susie Farley migrated to Albany from Greenwood, Mississippi. The son of Albert and Susie Farley now occupies the home.

38 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story ranch style home. (1 contributing building)*

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The McCann family constructed this home. Daniel and Sarah Elizabeth McCann were from Shubuta, Mississippi. They were "recruited" to move to Albany by Daniel's brother Willie in 1940. Daniel and Sarah lived on Dongan Avenue in Albany, New York before purchasing land on Rapp Road on March 10, 1944. Daniel and his three oldest sons, Frederick Douglass, James Earl, and Samuel Lewis along with Willie McCann and Labor Johnson helped build the house piece by piece beginning in spring 1949. The family moved into the unfinished house in the fall of 1949. The oldest brother, Frederick Douglass, drew the blue prints for the house. The support beams in the house were from logs on their parcel of land. The home is currently occupied by one of the McCann children.

39 Rapp Road. *Brick and wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. (1 contributing building)*

The home was constructed and remains occupied by Labor Johnson. Mr. Johnson and his wife, Clara, moved to Albany in 1933 from Shubuta, Mississippi. The couple came with Louis Parson on his fourth trip back down to Mississippi. They traveled with ten other adults and one baby in Louis Parson's seven-seat Buick. Labor Johnson remembers traveling to Albany with only \$0.75 for both he and his wife. Upon arrival in Albany the Johnson's lived in the South End on Bleecker Street, Van Zandt, and Dongan Avenue. Johnson bought land on Rapp Road in 1944 and began building in 1945. He brought building materials in his car trunk everyday and never worked on the house on Sundays. By 1947, the house was built and Labor Johnson still lives there today. He is the oldest resident on Rapp Road.

50 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, two story dwelling with single car garage (2 contributing buildings)*

Jessie and Malinda Garrett originally owned this home. The Garrett family bought their property from Frances Parson Wilborn in 1956 and built their house shortly after. The home remained in the Garrett family until 1996 when one of the districts few new residents purchased the home.

53 Rapp Road. Members of the Nabors family originally owned this property. Although no home was constructed on the lot until a second-generation member of the family acquired it.**54 Rapp Road.** *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling (1 contributing building)*

Butler Corley Sr. and his wife, Effie, bought this land from Parson in 1943 and began building the house shortly after. They lived here until their deaths, Butler Corley Sr. died in 1968. The Corley family moved to Albany from Georgia. When the Corley's first moved to Albany, they lived on Market Street. The home remains in the ownership of the Butler family.

59 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. (1 contributing building)*

Charles Smith originally occupied this home. When Charles Smith sold the original land tract to Louis and Frances Parson, the couple lived here. After Parson died in 1940 Frances Parson and her second husband, William Wilborn resided at 59 Rapp Road until their deaths. Frances Parson Wilborn died in 1982. A nephew of Frances Parson Wilborn currently owns the home.

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62 Rapp Road. Currently there is currently no house on this property. This property used to be owner by the Rivers family. The Rivers were first generation Rapp Road residents and one of the first families that moved to Rapp Road. Their house was demolished in 1999.

66 Rapp Road. There has never been a house on this property. It is part of the original Parson Purchase.

67 Rapp Road. *Wood frame, single story bungalow style dwelling. (1 contributing building)*
This home was constructed by the Fantroy family. Mr. Fantroy was born in Evergreen, Alabama in 1922. His wife was born in Pine Land, South Carolina around the same time as her husband. Sammie and Henrietta moved to Albany in 1943 and lived on 55 Bleecker St., at this time Sammie joined the service. The couple bought Rapp Road property from Deacon Caesar Moore in 1946, when Sammie came home from the service. Sammie began building the house in 1949. One year later, in 1950 the family moved into their house. The Fantroy's raised five children on Rapp Road, the oldest was born in South Carolina, while the remaining four were born in Albany.

68 Rapp Road. *(1 contributing building)*
Lester McCoy constructed the home in the early 1940s. McCoy's nephew, whose great-grandfather owned 62 Rapp Road, now occupies the house.

69 Rapp Road. *(1 contributing building)*
Rev. James Hunt, who purchased the lot from Caesar Moore, constructed the home. Hunt was one of the original members of The First Church of God and Christ at 79 Hamilton. The home is currently occupied a third generation Rapp Road family member.

70 Rapp Road. There is no house on this lot. During the 1930s, Caesar Moore had a house made out of cardboard and crate boards on this property. Caesar Moore was one of the original land owners on Rapp Road, an original member of the First Church of God and Christ at 79 Hamilton, and a Deacon at the Wilborn Temple. Moore had no children. It is estimated that he moved to Albany in the early 1930s.

71 Rapp Road. Currently there is no house on this lot. Caesar Moore bought this lot on August 31, 1944. Moore and his wife built their house on this lot and lived their until they both died. The house was then given to Moore's cousin. The home was subsequently demolished.

Rapp Road Community Historic District
Name of Property

Albany, Albany County
County and State

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Community Planning and Development

Ethnic History/Black

Period of Significance

1930-1952

Significant Dates

1930, 1940

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Parson, Reverend Louis W.

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

n/a

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018, NPS Form

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Albany, Albany County*

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The Rapp Road Community Historic District, located in Albany, Albany County, New York, meets the guidelines for Criterion A in the areas of social and cultural history through its association with the movement of African Americans from the South to the North in the beginning of the twentieth century, known as the Great Migration. The Rapp Road Community is significant as a rare example of a rural African American chain-migration community that is still intact and flourishing. Because of this Albany, New York community, its residents were able to replicate much of their life in rural Mississippi and pass their values and culture on to future generations. The Rapp Road Community is a positive end product of the Great Migration, thus demonstrating generational cultural patterns that make the Rapp Road community eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

The Rapp Road Community is also significant under Criterion B because it illustrates the end product of one person's personal accomplishments. It was established by and home of Louis W. Parson, pastor of Albany's First Church of God and Christ. He was responsible for recruiting the majority of Rapp Road's families from the South. In both 1930 and 1933, Elder Louis W. Parson, bought a fourteen acre tract of land in the western extension of the city of Albany in the Pine Bush. Parson sold tracts of land to members of his congregation, many of whom were recent black migrants from the South. Between 1942 and 1963, twenty-three African American families bought tracks of land from Parson's original land purchases. In 2001, seventeen of the original families, including three first generation residents, still live on Rapp Road.

Albany, New York and the Great Migration:

The Great Migration was a period between 1910 and 1940 of rapid population shift when hundreds of thousands of southern African Americans resettled in the North. Blacks from the South believed the North was the land of opportunity. It is estimated that 400,000 blacks left the southern United States before the end of World War I and headed to cities in the North.³ The migration did not stop with the end of the war; it continued steadily until the 1940s. Some sources concluded that by 1930, over one million African Americans had migrated north.⁴ Both push and pull factors encouraged southern blacks to relocate. Wages in the northern factories were higher than the agricultural based wages in the south. When the United States government closed immigration in 1916, shortly after the start of World War I, northern employers hired blacks so their companies could fill wartime production orders. Furthermore,

³Milton Sernett, *Bound For the Promised Land - African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Duke University Press: North Carolina, 1997) 37-40.

⁴Thomas C. Holt and Elsa Barkley Brown, *Major Problems in African-American History Volume II: From Freedom to "Freedom Now," 1865-1990s* (Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 2000) 126.

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southern agriculture experienced several setbacks including Boll weevil infestations (the most serious cotton pest in North America), floods, storms, and the tightening of credit.⁵ These economic factors occurred simultaneously and resulted in a push out of the South and a pull into the North for southern blacks. In addition, the North's reputation of racial equality and the attraction of a new urban environment influenced many to migrate north.

Albany, New York was affected by the Great Migration in terms of population, residential development, and employment opportunities for blacks. In essence, the Great Migration affected Albany, New York in similar ways it affected other northern cities, just on a smaller scale. Albany's black population, as with other northern cities, increased during the first half of the twentieth century partially as a result of the new employment opportunities, especially for blacks. Albany's African American population almost doubled during three separate decades: 1920 to 1930, 1940 to 1950, and 1950 to 1960. Each of the increases can be partly attributed to the migration of southern blacks to the North. (See Appendix A based on information from the United States Censuses between the years 1890 and 1970.) Albany, New York was not an exception to this chain-migration phenomenon. Southern migrants could easily have reached Albany from a large number of railroad lines. Peter Gottlieb, a renowned historian, maintains that railroads were instrumental in helping spread information between the North and the South. Most likely, pre-existing railroad lines dictated where many migrants settled. Many of the major lines ran in a North/South direction. For example, the Delaware Hudson Railroad had several routes and connections running North and South of Albany. Railroads were responsible for transporting information, as well as migrants, North. The flow of information was essential to families and communities because many relocated in a chain-migration fashion. P. Neal Ritchey, a noted sociologist, defined chain-migration as, "...the movement of one or several family members to a distant location, then through the migrant's aid and support, other family members follow until most are relocated at the distant area."⁶

The migration from Shubuta, Mississippi began when Louis W. Parson, a local preacher and ex-railroad worker, and his wife, Frances, migrated to Albany, New York during the Great Migration. While in Albany, Parson established his own church, a branch of the First Church of God and Christ, and recruited church members by traveling to Shubuta, Mississippi to bring families back to Albany.⁷ Eventually a majority of the Shubuta, Mississippi community moved to Albany. Although many Shubuta families came to Albany as a direct result of Parson's

⁵ James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope - Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989) 14.

⁶ P. Neal Ritchey, "Explanations of Migration," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Volume 2 (1976), 389.

⁷ Orlean Rucker, interview by author, tape recording, Albany, N.Y. 19 April 2000.

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recruitment measures, some came as part of the chain-migration phenomenon. Once a few families moved to Albany, word of mouth spread between Albany, Shubuta, and all points South. For example, the Woodard family lived in Hattiesburg, Mississippi when they received word from family members Daniel and Willie McCann, who were both brought to Albany by Parson, that Albany was the land of opportunity. Upon arrival in the North it was common practice for many migrants to stay with family and friends who were already settled in. Girly Ferguson, a migrant from Mississippi described the situation of her arrival in Albany in 1939 during an interview.

When I was about eleven, almost twelve, my Uncle Dan and Uncle Willie, sometime in the late twenties or early thirties had moved to Albany. They sent for my grandmother and my grandfather. Wherever my grandfather and grandmother went, my mom and dad went, too. So we all packed up and got ready to come to Albany....When we got to Albany, my Uncle Willie and Uncle Dan were there to pick us up.... My grandmother, grandfather, and two cousins, Mary and Catherine, lived with my Uncle Dan at 30 Dongan Avenue. My mother, my father, my brother, Woody, my sister, Huttie, and my brother, Sonny, lived with my Uncle Willie at 39 Dongan Avenue.⁸

Several historical monographs based on the Great Migration discuss similar stories of migrants meeting their families or friends upon arrival in the North.⁹

Louis W. Parson and the Establishment of the First Church of God and Christ

In 1927, Louis W. Parsons and his wife, Frances Parsons, migrated North. The couple settled in Albany, New York after meeting a group of deeply devoted religious women who had created their own prayer group. Parsons and the women joined forces and established the First Church of God and Christ, which was originally located on 40 Franklin Street. After a short time the church moved to 79 Hamilton Street.¹⁰

Once the Church was established, Parson traveled to Mississippi to recruit members for his congregation. He convinced several of his family and friends from Shubuta and surrounding Mississippi areas that life would be better in Albany. Many of the people Parson brought to

⁸Girly Ferguson, interview by author, tape recording,

⁹For example, *Land of Hope- Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* by James Grossman. *The Promised Land - The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* by Nicholas Lemann. *Making Their Own Way - Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* by Peter Gottlieb. *A Ghetto Takes Shape, Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* by Kenneth Kusmer.

¹⁰Rucker, interview.

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Albany were sharecroppers. Sharecropping was a landlord-tenant relationship in which the tenant cultivated the owner's land. Often the tenants had to buy or rent seeds, equipment, and animals from the landowners. Sharecroppers were constantly in debt to the land owner because of high mark-ups on goods bought from the owner.¹¹ Because of this indebtedness to landlords, it was necessary for Parson to pick migrants up on Saturday nights. They would not be missed until Monday morning because landlords knew most attended church all day on Sunday. Parson was helping these people escape from their bonds of debt, albeit in an illegal manner. Louis W. Parson was repeatedly told by Albany authorities to stop bringing blacks to the area who did not have money, jobs, or houses.¹² Not only did Parson continue bringing people to Albany until his death on 11 January 1940, he recruited Jack Johnson to help him in this endeavor. Between 1937 and 1957, Jack Johnson was responsible for "rescuing" at least one hundred blacks from the South and driving them to Albany.¹³

For many of the families that Parson and Johnson brought from the South, church was a major part of their daily lives. According to Milton Sernett, the Church of God and Christ is a predominantly black Pentecostal church. The Church of God and Christ is characterized by the belief that all Christians should seek a post conversion religious experience called the baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Followers of this church also emphasize biblical literalism, conversion, and moral rigor. Originally, these churches were mainly located in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.

These beliefs and the realities of life in urban Albany caused some internal conflicts for the newly-settled people from the South. The environment in Albany's South End distressed many of the migrants. During the first half of the twentieth century, the South End area was occupied by several gambling houses, bars, and houses of prostitution. As a result, many families did not want to raise their children in this type of neighborhood. Also, most of the southern migrants had been sharecroppers in the South. They were used to working the land, raising animals, and building what they needed. Some migrants decided to move back South after living in the South End, Albany for a short while.

Louis W. Parson and the establishment of the Rapp Road Community

¹¹Vernon Lane Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965) 62.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Albany Times Union*, 13 July 1997.

¹⁴Sernett, *Bound For The Promised Land*, 96-98.

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Louis W. Parson realized that members of his congregation were unhappy with the living situation in the South End of Albany. He set out to remedy the situation. On 2 May 1930, Louis Parson and William Toliver purchased a fourteen-acre tract of land from Charles Smith.¹⁵ On 30 March 1933, Louis Parson, and his wife, Frances, purchased another fourteen-acre tract of land from Smith.¹⁶ This land was located in the western extension of the City of Albany in the Pine Bush. The land Parson purchased was rural, surrounded by farms. Parson's plan was to sell tracts of land to members in his congregation so they could get away from city life. It is possible that Parson allowed the members of his congregation to begin clearing land before the transfer of land was official because Rapp Road Community members remember Louis Parson living on Rapp Road.¹⁷ Parson died on 11 January 1940, before the sale of land was official.

After Louis W. Parson's death, Frances Parson married William Wilborn who was appointed Louis Parson's successor as pastor to the First Church of God and Christ.¹⁸ Frances Parson Wilborn continued to make her first husband's hopes and plans a reality. She continued to sell the Pine Bush land to members of the congregation. The names, Frances Parson and Frances Wilborn, both appear on the original list of land deeds. Officially, between 1942 and 1963, twenty-three families bought tracts of land from Parson's original land purchases. (See Appendix C.) Only members of the First Church of God and Christ were offered this land. The road that traversed this area was named Rapp Road.

Before families could move to Rapp Road, the land had to be cleared and houses had to be built. Houses were usually built on a "pay as you go system" and as a result, most of the families built their own houses with the help of neighbors and other family members. Many of the residents on Rapp Road stayed in their Albany City apartments until their houses were at least partially built. (See Appendix D for interviews pertaining to building of houses on Rapp Road.) Most of the people who moved from the South were farmers. Once families settled on Rapp Road, they began growing crops and raising animals. Many of the families became practically self-sufficient.

The residents on Rapp Road worshiped in the same church, had moved to Albany from the same part of the country, had similar upbringings, and moved to Rapp Road around the same

¹⁵Land Accession Deed, 2 May 1930, Albany County Clerk's Office.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Dickson, Nabors, Rucker, McCann interviews.

¹⁸Rucker interview.

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time. As a result, the community on Rapp Road was a tight-knit one. Essentially, the Rapp Road families recreated their southern life in Albany.

Rapp Road and the surrounding areas were slow to change until 1971 when the Washington Avenue Extension was built. This road opened up the entire area to new development. The new road cut into the Rapp Road community. At one point Libbie Toliver's house sat in the middle of where the Washington Avenue Extension is today. New York State officials told her she had two options: sell it, or move it. She opted for the latter. Her house was moved forward about one hundred yards. It now sits on the end of Rapp Road, house number 8.¹⁹

The Washington Avenue Extension brought further development from several different commercial enterprises, and yet through it all the Rapp Road community has stayed intact. Second and third generation Rapp Road families are moving back to Rapp Road to live and raise their children. In 2001, sixteen of the original twenty-three families, including three first generation residents, still live on Rapp Road. Fourteen out of the sixteen houses on Rapp Road are still owned by the original families who built them. Each year since 1957, the Rapp Road community celebrates at a giant family reunion held on Rapp Road and several members of the community maintain ties with family and friends who still live in Mississippi. Every other year a "home coming" reunion is celebrated in Shubuta, Mississippi for those who moved away. Rapp Road members are usually present at the bi-annual event.

The Rapp Road Community is historically significant because it is a rare example of a rural chain-migration community resulting from the Great Migration. The members of this close-knit community share similar beliefs in church, family, and society, in general perhaps for two reasons: the Rapp Road Community mirrors rural Mississippi, the area from which many of the residents migrated and initially, only members of The First Church of God and Christ were offered land on Rapp Road. The Rapp Road Community can be considered a unique microcosm resulting from the Great Migration. Each of the remaining seventeen families currently living on Rapp Road can be traced back to the rural South, and the majority of them to Shubuta, Mississippi. The residents of the Rapp Road area, through the forethought of Elder Louis W. Parson found a better life in the North.

¹⁹Emma Dickson, interview by Jennifer Lemak, tape recording, Albany, New York, 16 April 2000.

Walter Merchant House
Name of Property

Albany, Albany County
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 14 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer A. Lemak ed. by: John A. Bonafide, Historic Preservation Program Analyst, NYSOPRHP, Waterford, NY

organization State University Of New York at Albany, Doctoral Program date April, 2000

street & number Washington Avenue telephone _____

city or town Albany state NY zip code _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

Photographs

Representative black and **white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name/title n/a

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number APPENDICIES

Appendix A

Albany's Black Population 1890-1970		
Year	Total Population	Black
1890	94,923	1,122
1900	94,151	1,178
1910	100,253	1,037
1920	113,344	1,239
1930	127,412	2,324
1940	130,577	2,929
1950	134,325	5,785
1960	129,726	10,972
1970	115,781	14,930

*Data taken from the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th United States Census's.
Department of Commerce - Bureau of the Census. Washington D.C. Printing office.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number APPENDICIES

Appendix C

List of original landowners, and purchase dates of land on Rapp Road, Albany, New York.

Samuel Coleman - January 27, 1942
Esco Nelson - November 9, 1942
Joshua Burney - August 24, 1943, October 15, 1945
Butler Corley - August 25, 1943, January 4, 1956
Sam Franklin - September 29, 1943
Daniel McCann - March 10, 1944
Clarence Jackson - March 19, 1945
Javan Owens - March 28, 1945
Abbie Johnson - May 11, 1945
Walter H. Woods - June 20, 1945
Daisy Kimball - August 11, 1943
Jesse C. Harmon - February 24, 1944
William McCann and Wife - July 17, 1944, May 25, 1950, July 17, 1950
Labor Johnson - August 31, 1944, October 15, 1962
Theodore Woodard - August 31, 1944
Benjamin Nixon - August 31, 1944
Caesar Moore - August 31, 1944
Alfred Woodard - July 8, 1946
Fonella Franklin - January 24, 1953
Jessie Garrett and Wife - January 4, 1956
Libbie Toliver - April 3, 1958
William Wilborn - October 17, 1958
Sammie Fantroy and Wife - October 3, 1962, September 5, 1963

*This data was taken from the Accession Land Deeds located at the Albany County Clerk Office.

*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number APPENDICIES

Appendix D

Ralph McCann, a second generation resident, recalled moving into his family's new house on 38 Rapp Road in the mid-1940s.

"We lived in the South End until our house was livable, but it wasn't really livable. When we first moved here, you could look right through the walls, it was just the structure...the structure in the basement, the beams, came from the out in back [the backyard]. My father [Daniel McCann] used to cut down the trees, took the trees to the mill, and brought them back here....When we first came out here my father dug a well for water."²⁰

Juanita Nabors' parents, Willie and Tempie McCann, moved to Rapp Road in 1945. In an interview Nabors recalled the following.

"We lived in the South End while my father was building the house. The kitchen was completed and the bathroom was completed. Everything else was not completed. Everything was built by hand. He [Willie McCann] not only built this house [at 23 Rapp Road], but he built Javan Owens' house [at 5 Rapp Road], he had a hand in the Woodard's house [at 22 Rapp Road], he help build Dan McCann's house[38 Rapp Road], he built the house at 29 [Rapp Road]. My father was a carpenter by trade, but it was just a pastime for him."²¹

When Alfred and Leola Woodard and their children moved to Rapp Road in 1944, they did things a bit differently. Girly Ferguson, the oldest of the Woodard children, reminisced about the building of her family's house.

"In late 1944, my mom and dad started building their house out on Rapp Road. My mom worked for Watervliet Arsenal, and they would buy materials to build the house as they got the money enough to buy. It seemed that there were timbers or something that they needed, but because it was the war time it was hard to get certain materials. So they had certain things laying around, like some lumber that you wouldn't put in a house. So my mom said to my dad, 'let's build a shotgun house. And we'll live in the shotgun house. That way we can save money to buy materials.' At that time they [the Woodard family] were living on Market Street and of course that had to pay utilities and such. My mom felt we could save if we built a shotgun house....My dad said, 'No, I'm building the new house.' ...My Uncle Dan and Uncle Willie were living out there already, and they helped my dad lay the bricks or concrete blocks. That's how they got the big house started. Then my mom said, 'OK I'm gonna build the shotgun house,' or

²⁰ Ralph McCann, interview by author, tape recording, Albany, N.Y., 19 April 2000.

²¹ Juanita Nabors, interview by author, tape recoding, Albany, N.Y., 17 April 2000.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018, NPS Form

*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number APPENDICIES

the little house, that's what we called it. And she started building it...and then she started to get so far ahead on the little house that dad stopped building on the new house and started helping her. And that's where ma and dad and my brothers and sisters were living when Emma, my sister, was born. My mom did everything my grandfather and her brothers did....They lived in the little house until 1949. At that point the big house was livable. February of 1949, my mom and dad and siblings moved into the big house."²²

²² Dickson interview.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

9. Bibliographical References

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-

Rapp Road Community Historic District
Name of Property

Albany, Albany County
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 14 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 594116 4727574
Zone Easting Northing
3 18 593707 4727319
Zone Easting Northing
5 18 594082 4727717
Zone Easting Northing

2 18 593870 4727204
Zone Easting Northing
4 18 594013 4727770
Zone Easting Northing
6
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer A. Lemak ed. by: John A. Bonafide, Historic Preservation Program Analyst, NYSOPRHP, Waterford, NY

organization State University Of New York at Albany, Doctoral Program date April, 2000

street & number Washington Avenue telephone _____

city or town Albany state NY zip code _____

Additional Documentation

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Continuation Sheets

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- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name/title n/a

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018, NPS Form

*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the nominated property is shown as the heavy black outline on the accompanying map entitled "Rapp Road Historic District, Albany, Albany County, New York."

Boundary Justification

The boundary for the nomination has been drawn to coincide with the surviving boundary associated with the acreage purchased by Louis Parson in 1930.

United States Department of the Interior
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*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number PHOTOGRAPHS

Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County

Photo by: John A. Bonafide, 2002
NYSOPRHP, PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Neg. at: NYSOPRHP, PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Photographs

1. View North (intersection of Rapp Road and Gipp Road)
2. View East (intersection of Rapp Road and Gipp Road)
3. View West (intersection of Rapp Road and Gipp Road)
4. 69 Rapp Road
5. 59 Rapp Road
6. 54 Rapp Road
7. 53 Rapp Road (Vacant lot)
8. 37 Rapp Road (Vacant lot)
9. 38 Rapp Road
10. 39 Rapp Road
11. 31 Rapp Road
12. The "Cook House"
13. 28 Rapp Road
14. 29 Rapp Road
15. 29 Rapp Road (detail of driveway walls and planters)
16. 14 Rapp Road
17. 12 Rapp Road
18. View east across Washington Avenue to Commercial development

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

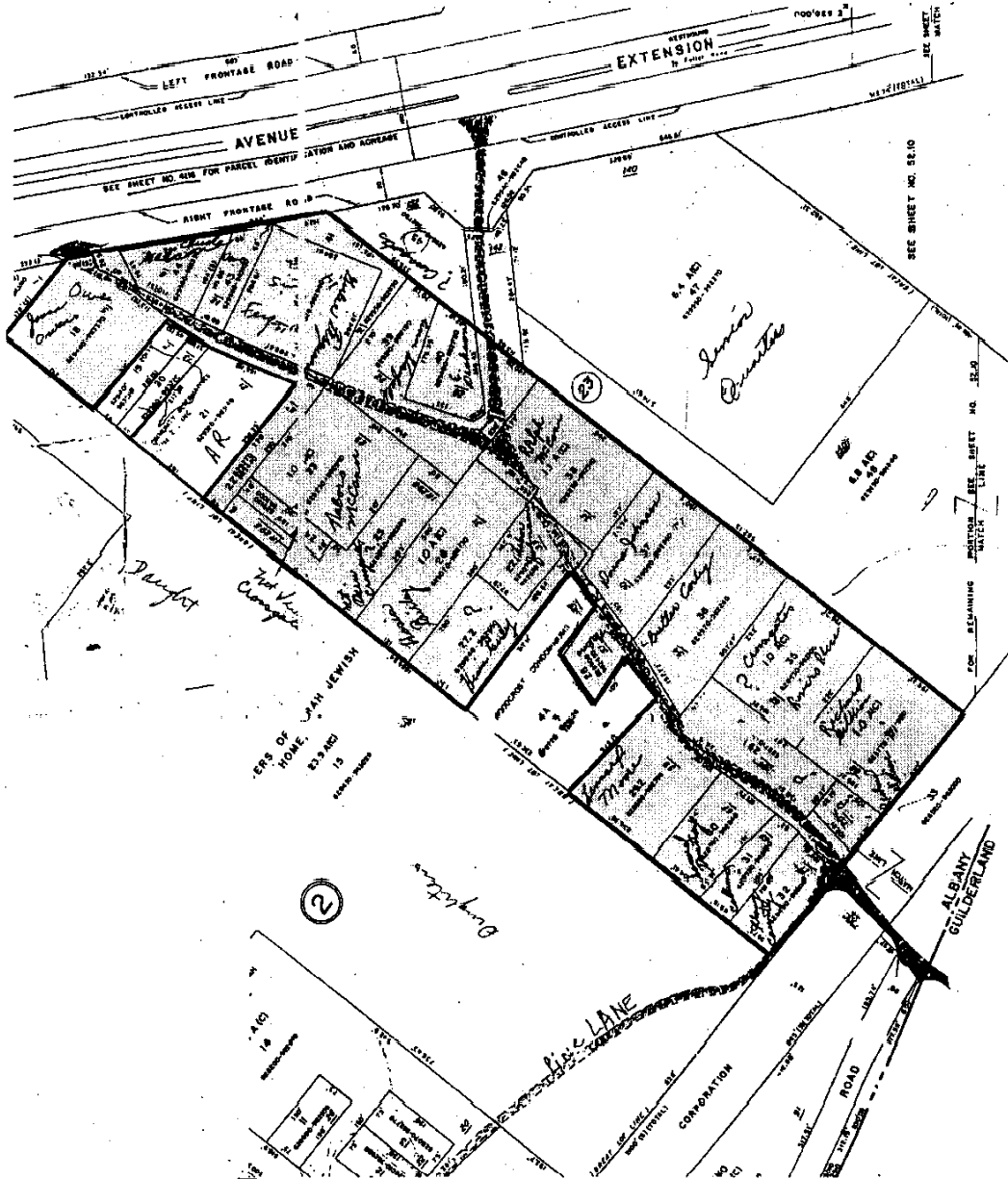
OMB No. 1024-0018, NPS Form

Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County

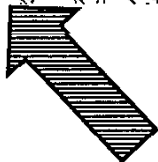
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number MAP

Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County



NORTH



scale
boundary
photo key

1 inch equals 282 feet



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*Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number MAP

**Rapp Road Historic District
Albany, Albany County
Ariel View of District**

