

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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. 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 Dreer, Dr. Herman S., House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

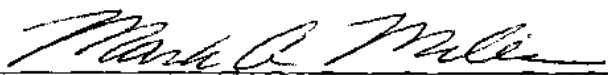
street & number 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Saint Louis vicinity N/A

state Missouri code MO county Saint Louis [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63113

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.)



DECEMBER 31, 2008

Signature of certifying official Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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 Keeper

Date of Action

8. Statement of Significance

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

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

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.)

See Continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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

See Continuation Sheet for Section No. 9

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage-Black

Education

Period of Significance

1930-1952

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Dreer, Dr. Herman S.

Cultural Affiliation

Black

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Number: 7 Page 1

Dreer, Dr. Herman S., House	St. Louis [Independent City], MO	Historic and Architectural Resources of The Ville, St. Louis [Independent City], MO
name of property	county and state	name of multiple property document

SUMMARY:

The Herman Dreer House, at 4335 Cote Brilliante, was the residence of Herman Dreer, a nationally-known educator, author and civil rights activist, during the most prolific period of his long career. It fits within the definition of the associated property types contained the National Register Multiple Property Document Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville [Independent City], Missouri," under Associated Property Type No. 5, Craftsman style Residences – single and multi-family (1905-1935).

Placed on a high terraced lot, the two-story, two-family building with low-sloped roof is constructed of common bond red brick above a rubble limestone foundation. A shaped parapet vernacular building, it exhibits the influence of the Craftsman style. The building is one of a small planned development of very similar two-family buildings erected on the block in 1930, and was purchased by Dreer and his wife from the developer prior to construction. Dreer, with his family, resided in one of the units from 1930 to 1952, and his children retained ownership of it until 2000.¹

EXTERIOR FEATURES:

Highlighting the three-bay, symmetrical front facade is a variegated brick veneer laid in Flemish stretcher bond. The building is surmounted by a distinctive shaped parapet with center segmental arch and simple pinnacles, and capped by a molded terra cotta coping. A false bracketed gable that once crowned the elevation has been removed; its silhouette can be seen in shadow lines above the building's second story windows.

In the central bay, the first story displays a center tripartite window under a steel lintel with limestone lugsill. The center six-over-one sash is flanked by narrower four-over-one windows. Color-finished aluminum storm windows have been installed over the openings. In each side bay, a single leaf entry is placed under steel lintels. Both original multi-light doors have been replaced with flush wood doors. At the second story, another single leaf entry is flanked by four-over-four windows, reflecting the proportions of the openings below. A flat arch of soldier brick runs above both door and windows. The entry has been altered to install a shorter, flush wood door in place of the original multi-light door, and storms installed over the windows. At each flanking bay, a small six-light casement window, also under a flat soldier arch, has a limestone lugsill.

The front facade is dominated by a full width brick porch with battered brick columns that extend above the first story from a base of random-coursed ashlar limestone. The columns are accented and capped

¹ A construction permit to build a "2-story tenement" was issued on June 20, 1930 to owner Sophie Lerner. City records show that one day later, the property was purchased by Herman and Mary Dreer.

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with limestone. The porch's entablature and corner brackets are extant but have been wrapped in aluminum. At the porch's first story, a brick railing that continues down to grade, is capped with ashlar limestone; the second story carries the original wrought-iron balustrade, with its heavy top rail, slender balusters, and central decorative circle motif. The centered concrete steps are replacements: remnants of the original pyramidal stair profile can be seen to either side. A contemporary wrought iron handrail runs down the west side of the steps.

Windows on the remainder of the building are consistently one-over-one with steel lintels and rowlock sills and their arrangement at each story is nearly identical. On the five-bay east facade, two high casement windows flank an interior chimney in the two southernmost bays. Original art glass remains in one. Paired doublehung windows occupy the center bay, while the fourth, containing the building's secondary stair hall, has a single leaf door at the first story and a single doublehung window above at the level of the stair landing. The northern bay has a single doublehung window at each story.

The west facade, with four bays, has a stair window in the southernmost, placed at the level of the main stair landing. This is the only deviation from the regular arrangement of a single doublehung window at first and second story in each bay. An exterior chimney bisects the elevation.

On the three-bay rear elevation, an entry door is centered at each story, with single doublehung windows in the flanking bays. A below-grade basement entry pierces the foundation wall on the west. A two-story frame addition on brick piers obscures over half of this facade, and is likely an open porch that was later enclosed. It has a low-sloped roof and is sheathed in vinyl horizontal lap siding. The addition has paired windows on east and west elevations; at the rear, triple doublehung windows are set at the second story, and at the first, paired windows beside a single leaf entry with short transom. The rear door is paneled and multi-light, and may be original to the building.

The Herman Dreer House, while slightly altered, retains its historic character and feeling. The building is very well maintained and retains its original use as an owner-occupied two-family structure.

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**Historic and Architectural Resources of
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Dreer, Dr. Herman S., House St. Louis [Independent City], MO

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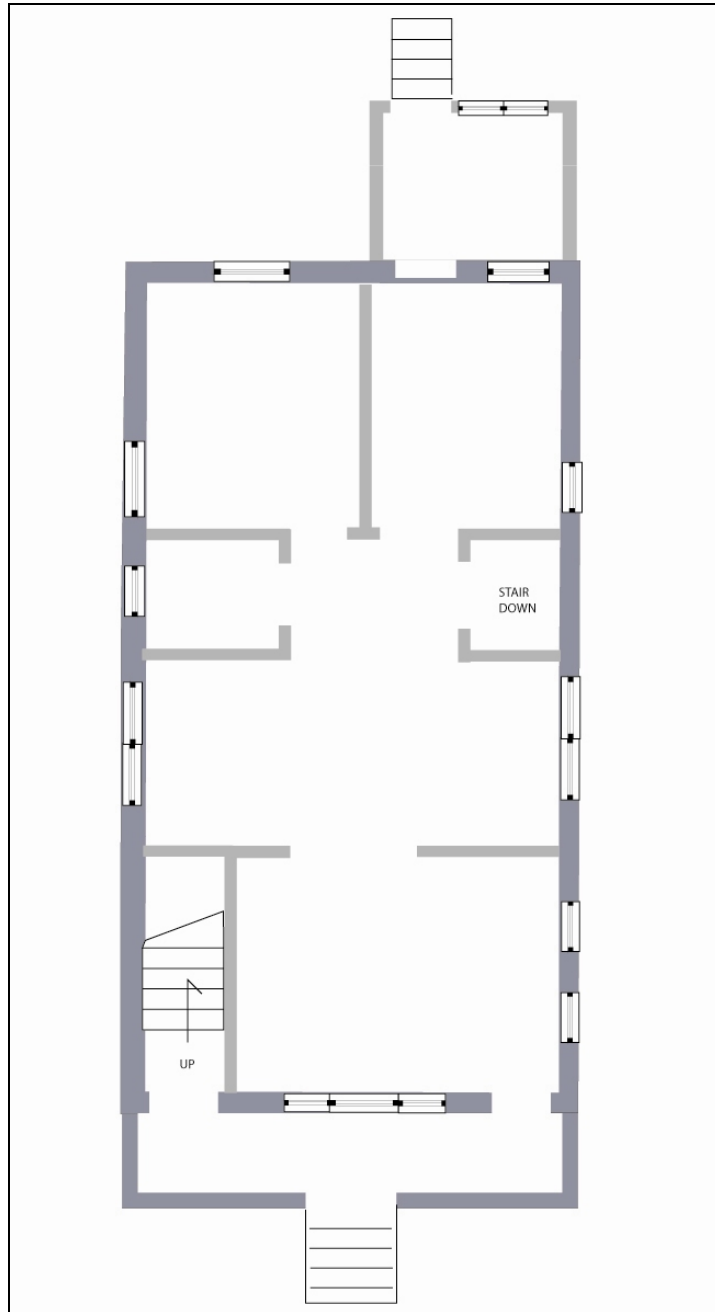


Fig. 1 — First story floor plan

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Historic and Architectural Resources of The Ville, St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Dreer, Dr. Herman S., House	St. Louis [Independent City], MO	Historic and Architectural Resources of The Ville, St. Louis [Independent City], MO
name of property	county and state	name of multiple property document

Summary:

The house at 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue is the extant building most closely associated with the professional life of Dr. Herman S. Dreer (1888-1981), a prominent St. Louis educator and a nationally-recognized author and proponent of African-American history and its dissemination.² The building is significant under Criterion A in the area of ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK and Criterion B: EDUCATION, and is associated with Historic Context No. II: The Ville as a Center for Black Culture, 1910-1950, as defined in the Multiple Property Document Form "Historic and Architectural Resources of The Ville, St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri." The building appears to be the first that Dreer ever owned: he and his wife purchased the house in 1930 and lived there until 1952, afterwards retaining the building as an income property. Six years before Dreer's death, he conveyed it to his daughters, who held ownership until the current owners purchased it in 2000. The 22 years Dreer resided at 4335 Cote Brilliante were the most active and important of his long life. They incorporate nearly his entire teaching career in St. Louis and his efforts to promote the study and teaching of African American history. The bulk of his non-fiction writing was produced during that time.³

BIOGRAPHY

Herman Dreer was born in Washington, D. C. on 12 September 1888,⁴ the grandson of slaves,⁵ and one of seven children of Thomas and Emma Dreer: Thomas was a driver for an oil company and Emma worked in a laundry.⁶ Dreer graduated from the M Street High School in Washington, where he ranked first in his class; was captain of the school's cadet corps; and won a Teacher's Scholarship Award at graduation for the highest grade on a "four-year-college" entrance exam, sponsored by Amherst

² After coming to St. Louis, the Dreers lived for short periods in other buildings still extant in The Ville; however 4335 Cote Brilliante was the first purchased by Dr. Dreer and the first where the family stayed for more than a year or two.

³ In 1952, Dreer and his wife moved to 4903 Maffitt Place (extant) and then in 1955 purchased a house at 4435 Enright (extant). They lived in the latter property off and on throughout Dreer's later career, where he taught in Kansas and Illinois, and returned to it in 1968 when Dreer finally retired from teaching. Dreer lived there until shortly before his death in 1981. City of St. Louis Assessor's Office records, Book 1330, 60.

⁴ The Social Security Death Index says Dreer was born on 12 September 1888. *Social Security Death Index* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2008. Original data: Social Security Administration. *Social Security Death Index, Master File*. Social Security Administration.

⁵ Herman Dreer (1889-1981) Papers; sl box 201; folder 41, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis.

⁶ The children were: Mabel, 17, Horace, 15, Herman, 13, Dora, 9, Blanch, 5, Albert, 2 and Emma, less than a year old. 1900 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), Washington, D. C., ED 108, Sheet 7B, Dwelling 76, Family 85, Thomas Dreer household, jpeg image, (Online: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2005), subscription database, [Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC], <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed 27 June 2005.

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College.⁷ He was accepted at Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine and within three years, had graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa.⁸

In 1910, Dreer began his teaching career at the Virginia Theological Seminary and College in Lynchburg, Virginia, where he taught chemistry, physics and Latin and directed the Laymen’s Lyceum and the college choir. He also wrote, produced and directed plays for amateur student theatrical presentations. Writing and producing plays became a life-long avocation. While in Lynchburg, Dreer received a Master’s Degree from the College, with a thesis entitled “Lyricism: Ancient, Medieval and Modern.” A year after receiving his MA, Dreer was ordained a minister in the Baptist Church.

At Lynchburg, Dreer met his future wife, Mary Thomas, a student at the College. Married in 1912, Herman and Mary Thomas Dreer eventually had two daughters, Clarice and Vivian.⁹

In 1914 the Dreer family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where Dreer had accepted a position as a teacher at Sumner High School in The Ville. City directories show the family in lodgings at 4258A Cote Brillante (extant) in 1916,¹⁰ and at 4268A Lucky — now Aldine (extant) in 1918.¹¹ In 1920, the Dreers, their two daughters, along with Mary’s sister and a lodger, were renting 2413 Goode Avenue — now Annie Malone Drive (demolished).¹² By the time of the 1930 Census, Dreer and his family were renting

⁷ Homer Dreer, ed., *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Directory*, Herman Dreer (1889-1981) Papers, sl, box 84; Western Historical Manuscript Collection; University of Missouri-St. Louis

⁸ Dreer, *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Directory*. Bowdoin College was established in 1794 by Massachusetts Governor Samuel Adams. It was the college of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Franklin Pierce and Oliver Otis Howard, the founder of Howard University. In 1826, John Brown Russwurm, one of the first African Americans to graduate from college, was the first Black graduate of Bowdoin. He went on to found the abolitionist newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal*. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s husband was on the faculty of the College during the years that “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” was written. Stowe wrote much of the book in Appleton Hall on the College campus.

⁹ Dr. Vivian Dreer, interviewed by Doris Wesley, University of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview, T-609.22, St. Louis African-American Heritage Oral History Project, 1995. <<http://www.umsl.edu/~whmc/guides/t609-22.htm>> (accessed 22 September 2008).

¹⁰ *Gould’s St. Louis Blue Book*, (St. Louis: Gould’s Directory Company, 1916).

¹¹ *Gould’s St. Louis Blue Book*, (St. Louis: Gould’s Directory Company, 1916 and 1918).

¹² The site is now part of the Antioch Baptist Church campus. 1920 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, ED 431, Sheet 1B, Dwelling 17, Family 22, Herman Dreer household, jpg image, Online: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2005, subscription database, [Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC], <<http://www.ancestry.com>>, 19 July 2005.

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4237 Cote Brilliante for \$60.00/month.¹³ Vivian Dreer remembered: "I was born on Cote Brilliante. That was the street that a lot of blacks lived who were interested in improving their lifestyles and moving upward, becoming upwardly mobile, I suppose and active in the community. And...we had a rather cohesive group of people who lived in the 4200 west block, particularly of Cote Brilliante where I lived in about 4 or 5 different houses."¹⁴

In 1930 Dreer and his wife purchased the lot at 4335 Cote Brilliante.¹⁵ A building permit was issued in June 1930 for the construction of a two-story, two-family house to Jerry Lloyd Investment Company, Inc., for a cost of \$6,000.¹⁶ (At the time, the Dreer family was living nearby at 4237 Cote Brilliante.)¹⁷

Dreer had been attracted to St. Louis because of the national reputation of Sumner High School as the premier educational facility for African Americans, where many prominent African Americans chose to teach. Daughter Vivian, an outstanding educator herself, remembered:

My father brought his family here [in] 1914...to teach at Sumner High and at that time he taught several subjects. He...was supposed to be teaching English and some of the social sciences, but he [also]taught languages and he was the kind of person who never seemed to forget anything he learned....[H]e was a real scholar and they could place him in any subject area and he could handle it quite well in teaching. So he taught at Sumner for awhile and then he became the assistant principal.¹⁸

In addition to his career as an educator, Dreer also served as Assistant Pastor for several Baptist congregations, including, in 1933, Central Baptist Church (2843 Washington Avenue). His daughter Vivian remembered that her father "always wanted to be a minister."¹⁹ In 1950, he became pastor of Kings Way Baptist Church at 4152 Finney, serving in that capacity for nineteen years. Dreer devoted the proceeds from *The Tie That Binds*, his last novel, to the support of that church.

¹³ 1930 U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule), St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, ED 96-78, Sheet 12A, Dwelling 184, Family 258, Herman Dreer household, jpg image, Online: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2005, subscription database, [Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC], <<http://www.ancestry.com>>, 19 July 2005.

¹⁴ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview.

¹⁵ City of St. Louis Assessor's Office, Book 820.F, date filed 6/23/30. The amount paid is listed as \$100.00.

¹⁶ City of St. Louis Comptroller's Office, building permit microfilm records, permit F8360.

¹⁷ In 1964 Herman and Mary Dreer transferred the property to their daughter Vivian. The property was transferred back to Herman and Mary in 1966 and then again to daughters Vivian and Clarice Dreer Davis in 1974. Clarice and Vivian sold the building to Ralph and Sara Banks in 2000.

¹⁸ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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In 1942, while still at Sumner, Dreer received his second MA, this time in Sociology, from the University of Chicago. Dreer remained at Sumner until 1945, when he left to accept the position of Principal at Stowe Teachers College.²⁰ In 1955, at the age of 67, Dreer received a PhD. in Sociology from the University of Chicago. His dissertation was entitled, *Negro Leadership in St. Louis, a Study in Race Relations*.²¹

Dreer continued his teaching career at Stowe College until 1959 when he retired from the St. Louis Board of Education system—apparently unwillingly. A biographical sketch from a program of a dinner in Dreer's honor appears to express his sentiments when it says that he didn't retire, he "was retired" by the St. Louis Board of Education.²² At any rate, this nominal retirement did not slow Dreer down. From 1960-62, he taught Sociology and Anthropology at Kansas Wesleyan University; English at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1963; and at MacMurray College, also in Jacksonville, in 1964. He ended his peripatetic university career at Kansas Wesleyan University in 1968 at the age of 80, returning to St. Louis where he spent the next eight years working to promote African American history through a popular newspaper column.

In 1966, in recognition of his public service and accomplishments, City of St. Louis Mayor A. J. Cervantes appointed Dreer to the prestigious City of St. Louis Landmarks Commission, its first African American member. He served on that board for two years.²³ Three years later, Dr. Dreer was honored by citizens of St. Louis with a testimonial dinner at the Gateway Hotel.²⁴ The program of the dinner shows Mayor A.J. Cervantes, Rev. William Collins, Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, and Rev. Conn, Pastor of the First Baptist Church as guests. In the program Dreer is described:

²⁰ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview. Stowe Teachers College began as Sumner Normal, a segregated training program established in 1890 by the St. Louis Public Schools to provide teachers for black elementary schools; originally it was an extension of Sumner High School. In 1924, when it became a four-year program, its name was changed to Sumner Teachers College, and four years later, renamed Stowe Teachers College in honor of Harriet Beecher Stowe. The school merged in 1954 with Harris Teachers College (a white institution) and is now Harris-Stowe State College. "African American Registry," 14 August 2008, <http://www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1618/HarrisStowe_St_College_a_St_Louis_positive> (accessed 11 August 2008).

²¹ Herman Dreer, "Negro Leadership in St. Louis, A Study In Race Relations," PhD. Diss, University of Chicago, 1955. Dreer interviewed both Black and white St. Louisans to determine which well-known Black leaders were perceived to be the most influential. He then compiled a questionnaire for over fifty Black community leaders. From the answers, he was able to construct a model of effective Black leadership.

²² Committee of Fifty Program "Testimonial Dinner in Honor of the Rev. Herman H. Dreer, PhD." Sunday, February 23, 1969. Herman Dreer Papers (1889-1981), 1933-1976; sl box 167; Western Historical Manuscript Collection; University of Missouri-St. Louis.

²³ Herman Dreer Papers (1889-1981), 1933-1976; sl box 167; Western Historical Manuscript Collection; University of Missouri-St. Louis.

²⁴ Committee of Fifty Program.

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To St. Louis Dr. Dreer has brought a distinct way of life, which highlights the preservation of the family, Christian living, and the high place of Negro History in the growth and progress of America. His lofty ideals, his Christian spirit, and his humanitarian philosophy provide fulfillment not only for those near and dear to him, but to all citizens of the great society.

Herman Dreer died in St. Louis in 1981 at the age of 92.²⁵ After his death, several scholarships were created in his honor, including the Herman S. Dreer Scholarship and Leadership Award.²⁶

EDUCATION

When Herman Dreer came to teach at Sumner High School (NR-listed 19 April 1988) in St. Louis in 1914, Sumner was the premier high school for African American students in the country.²⁷ It soon became clear to Dreer that there was a serious omission in its curricula: no effort was being made to include the study of achievements of African Americans and the history of the race. Dreer was to make this his preeminent concern throughout his teaching career. He began to promote the study of African American history in several innovative ways. First, he went back to his love of theatre and began to write and produce plays for student theatrical productions on little-known African Americans and historical events. In 1932, for example, he produced "Sunrise", a dramatization of the life of Madison Washington, who led a famous rebellion aboard the slave ship *Creole* in 1841.²⁸ He wrote at least two full length, and six one act plays every year on similar subjects for Sumner students to perform. Through the plays, his students—and their audiences—gained knowledge of black achievement and pride in their heritage.

Dreer was a friend of author, publisher and historian Dr. Carter Woodson,²⁹ the initiator of Negro History Week, and was instrumental in bringing Woodson to St. Louis for speaking engagements.³⁰ He

²⁵ "Rev. Herman S. Dreer Dies," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sunday, 9 August 1981, 10.

²⁶ Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., "The Massive and Progressive 12th District," <http://www.omegapsiphi12thdistrict.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=127&Itemid=173&ed=30>

²⁷ Cynthia Longwisch and others, "Charles Sumner High School," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form; St. Louis (Independent) City; 1987.

²⁸ Herman Dreer, "The Education of the Negro with Respect to His Background," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 1934), 52.

²⁹ Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH); founded the *Journal of Negro History* (1916) and the *Negro History Bulletin* (1936). See: Rayford Logan and Michael Winston, *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982).

³⁰ Ann Morris, ed., Doris Wesley, and Wiley Price, *Lift Every Voice and Sing, St. Louis African Americans in the Twentieth Century*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1999; 1915,

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assisted Woodson in the research and compilation for Woodson's ground-breaking work, *The Negro in Our History*,³¹ the first history of Blacks in America. Dreer, with educator Julia Davis, founded the local chapter of the National Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (NASALH), a national organization founded by Woodson. Dreer became the first president of the chapter.³² In an effort to disseminate the work of Woodson and other African American writers, Dreer started Pushkin Publishing Company. While it attracted a few investors, the venture ultimately failed, to Dreer's financial loss.³³

His relationship with Woodson augmented Dreer's passion for Black history: he made African American history part of every course he taught, and in 1934, created the Carter Woodson School of Negro History. Housed in the Poro College building (demolished) in the heart of The Ville neighborhood, history classes were held on Saturday and children and adults attended. Dreer also established a "Saturday School" at Poro to assist teachers in integrating African American studies to their class curriculum.³⁴ Dreer wrote: "The trouble is this. Too much of our training has come from the experiences of white people; too little has come from the experiences of the Negro."³⁵

In 1934, Dreer, intending to pursue a second Master's Degree, applied to St. Louis University³⁶ which never responded. He also applied to Washington University, considered a bastion of liberal principles and thought, and co-founded by abolitionist William Greenleaf Eliot.³⁷ The University had accepted a few African American students. Years later, Dreer wrote about the experience in one of his Negro

³¹ Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History*, (Washington: Associated Publishers: 1922).

³² Julia Davis, "Lest We Forget," *St. Louis Sentinel*; December 15, 1977

³³ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview.

³⁴ John A. Wilson, Sr., *The Ville St. Louis*, Black America Series (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 74.

³⁵ Dreer, "The Education of the Negro with Respect to His Background," 46.

³⁶ St. Louis University was founded in 1818 as the St. Louis College by Reverend Louis William Du Bourg, the newly appointed Catholic Bishop of Louisiana; in 1826 he requested that the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) to assume control of the struggling St. Louis College. The University has been a Jesuit Institution ever since. "St. Louis University" <http://www.slu.edu/academics.html> (accessed 22 September 2008).

³⁷ Washington University was co-founded in 1853 as a nonsectarian, private institution by St. Louis leader Wayman Crow and Unitarian minister William Greenleaf Eliot, (grandfather of poet T. S. Eliot). Crow, who had introduced the charter creating the school, named it Eliot Seminary; Eliot, however, was against the name and in 1854, the Board of Trustees changed it to "Washington Institute in St. Louis" because its charter, by coincidence was passed on Washington's birthday and because the name Washington was free from any political partisanship. It became Washington University in 1857. The institution had the reputation of being a liberal, free-thinking community. "Historical Facts about Washington University in St. Louis," Washington University Libraries, Washington University in St. Louis, <<http://library.wustl.edu/units/spec/archives/facts/>> (accessed 22 September 2008).

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history columns for the *St. Louis Argus*. As a member of Phi Beta Kappa, he had for years received invitations to ceremonies and receptions for Phi Beta Kappa members at Washington University. Whenever he attended, he noticed he was always the only person of color present. Upon his application, the registrar of Washington University sent Dreer a letter that said although he was qualified to be accepted, the University could not admit him because the University of Missouri would not accept Negroes, and Washington University was following the State University's policy. (Dreer also notes that after his application was received, he was never again invited to a Phi Beta Kappa event.)³⁸

This brusque refusal by both the State and local private universities to admit black students, no matter how qualified, inspired Dreer to organize and help fund the re-opening of Douglass College for African Americans. Douglass had been founded in The Ville in 1926 by Benjamin Bowles, the retired principal of Lincoln High School in East St. Louis, Illinois. The original school had been granted a charter from the State of Missouri, but had closed after a few years because of the declining health of its founder.³⁹ Dreer, by then Assistant Principal at Sumner, had solicited his fellow teachers to staff a private summer school for high school students, because the St. Louis School Board, due to limited funds, had closed theirs. The school was financially rewarding, and Dreer hoped that its fees could help fund a full-time school of higher education for Black students. At the time, an African American student hoping for a college degree had to leave the area; the only institution open to them in the State was Lincoln University, in Jefferson City.⁴⁰

Dreer re-opened Douglass College in 1934. He recruited trustees from local businessmen, professionals, and teachers and held the first classes at the school in a rented building located at 4300 West Belle Avenue (demolished).⁴¹ The College offered degrees in Liberal Arts, Religion and Business Administration. Dreer was elected President of the College by the Board of Trustees⁴² and served in

³⁸ Herman Dreer, "Highlights of Negro History: the Debt St. Louis Owes to Douglass University," *St. Louis Argus*; 8 April, 15 April, and 22 April, 1966.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Lincoln University, founded by black Civil War veterans in 1866 as an institution for the benefit of freed African Americans. By 1877, it offered college-level work and a Normal School for the training of Missouri teachers. The four-year college of arts and sciences was accredited in 1934, and a graduate school in 1940. "About Lincoln: A History of Lincoln University," Lincoln University of Missouri <<http://www.lincolnu.edu/pages/211.asp>> (accessed 22 September 2008).

⁴¹ The building was demolished sometime before 1988 when City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office began to keep records regarding demolition permits reviewed by the Office. In 1994 the Rankin Institute constructed a new single family house on the site as part of a larger development; City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office review database

⁴² The Board of Trustees included: John Steel, chairman, Freeman Martin, vice chairman, Ulysses Donaldson, secretary, Ms. Aretha Hankal, treasurer, Rev. B.F. Abbott, Mrs. Birdie Beal Anderson, W.F. Bufkin, Arthur Dryer, Rev. John Moreland, Ms. Sedonia Parker, Mrs. Lizzie Turner, John Wilkerson, and Mrs. Marie Richardson, registrar.

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that position throughout the life of the school. Dreer and other trustees not only ran the school, they taught many of the classes and provided financial support when funding ran out. The school eventually purchased a building at 3628 Finny Avenue.⁴³

The school operated from 1934 through 1942 and lost money every year, despite contributions from its trustees and the refusal of its teachers to accept a salary. Tuition fees were kept low to allow more students to attend. Dreer, who had had to give up private teaching for the College, put more than \$12,000.00 of his own money into the school, though at the time he made less than \$6,000.00 a year at Sumner. Dreer would plead for donations at local churches on Sunday mornings to keep the school going.⁴⁴ In the end, however, the College could not support itself. In 1942, Dreer was refused personal life insurance because of a medical examination that said he had high blood pressure and would be dead in ten years. As a result, he resigned the presidency of Douglass because he thought he could not risk his family's financial security for the liability of running the College.⁴⁵ It closed within the year.

While the failure of Douglass was difficult for Dreer, he continued to pursue his goal of higher education for African American St. Louisans. Many of the Douglass teachers had come from Sumner; but Dreer had also been able to recruit white college professors and local religious leaders, including the Dean of Washington University's College of Liberal Arts; the pastor of St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church; an influential local rabbi and the Bishop of the Missouri Diocese of the Episcopal Church. Dreer worked with these leaders and the Douglass trustees to influence local politicians. Using a position paper Dreer wrote containing an analysis of the impact of the lack of higher education on Blacks in Missouri, these prominent local citizens approached the St. Louis School Board, and in 1940, Stowe Teachers College for African Americans opened in The Ville. Two years later, St. Louis University changed its admission policy and began to accept African Americans.

Dreer was able to enlist the assistance of the St. Louis branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons, which filed a suit *amicus curiae* ("as a Friend of the Court") that contended because the University received public funding, Black citizens were forced to support the educations of non-resident and foreign students but were unable to benefit from the investment of their tax dollars. The suit asked that Washington University pay \$687,000 to the City in taxes or agree to admit African Americans. The University began once again to admit Black students in 1948.⁴⁶

⁴³ Neither the building, nor the real estate parcel at 3628 Finney exists. The building was demolished before 1988, and the parcel was consolidated into the adjacent parcel at 3826 Finney. Both are the site of a surface parking lot for the adjacent St. Luke's Memorial Baptist Church.

⁴⁴ Dreer, "Highlights of Negro History."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dreer, "Highlights of Negro History."

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CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITY

A major problem for middle class and upwardly mobile African Americans in the years between the World Wars in St. Louis grew out of the increasing residential segregation of the City. The prejudice they faced in housing was augmented by an inability to obtain financing for the purchase of property. Segregated Black areas did not appraise well in the eyes of banks controlled by whites; and Black citizens looking to invest in a house were increasingly limited by the use of restrictive racial covenants to selected, generally less desirable, areas of the City. While flats and tenement apartments were available in the Mill Creek Valley and other crowded, segregated areas, few places outside of The Ville offered a chance for new homeowners. The New Age Federal Savings and Loan Association was founded in 1915 by a group of black community leaders to provide loans to black St. Louisans to build or purchase homes at a time when St. Louis banks and financial institutions consistently refused to make loans to minority individuals. The association is still in existence today and has played a major role in extending credit to individuals, organizations, businesses and churches in St. Louis.⁴⁷ Dreer was an early investor⁴⁸ and decided that, as The Ville was becoming increasingly the destination of choice for middle class Black citizens in the City, it was crucial to provide appropriate and accessible financing for these new residents. In 1926, Dreer, with seven other prominent residents of The Ville, formed the Elleardsville Financial Corporation.⁴⁹ The Corporation was begun with the personal funds of the eight partners, \$15,000.00 in total, and it was created to fill the need for financing home purchases and new construction. The headquarters of the new lending institution was in a storefront office at 4214 W. Easton Avenue—now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive (demolished).⁵⁰

Dreer was also the motivating force behind the creation of Peoples Finance Corporation of St. Louis, an industrial bank was founded in 1923 in an effort to provide loans to working class people who were ordinarily overlooked by even those banks serving the African American population. Dreer wrote: "Though we [African Americans] have been creative in music and literature and art, we have been imitative in business. Though the wages of our people have been meager, many of our business men have too often disregarded our small incomes and have taken all the traffic would bear especially as to the retail and sale of real estate."⁵¹

⁴⁷ New Age Savings and Loan Association, St. Louis (1915-) Records, 1915-1967, sl box 53, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis

⁴⁸ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview.

⁴⁹ Elleardsville was the original name of what came to be known as The Ville neighborhood.

⁵⁰ The other partners were Joseph James, John Keen, Arthur Flagg, Herbert Bruce, Henry Porter, Thomas Sanders and Oral McClellan, M.D. John A Wright, Sr., *The Ville St. Louis*, 17.

⁵¹ Herman Dreer, "Education of the Negro with Respect to his Background," 45-52.

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The Peoples Finance Corporation became nationally-known for its service to minority groups, and in 1929 was the leader in African-American lending, with more than a half million dollars in resources, and gave rise to similar institutions in St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Newark and others.⁵² Like many small banks, the Peoples Finance Corporation failed during the Depression,⁵³ taking a good deal of Dreer's money with it.⁵⁴

Extensive use of restrictive racial covenants—where owners in certain areas agreed not to sell their property to people of other races—had contributed to widespread residential segregation in St. Louis. In 1944, a house at 4600 Labadie Avenue, now known as the Shelley House [NR-listed 4/18/88; NHL 12/19/90] was sold to an African American couple despite such a covenant.⁵⁵ A neighbor, Louis Kraemer sued in St. Louis Circuit Court to enforce the covenant contract. James T. Bush, Sr., the real estate broker who sold the house to the Shelleys, assumed responsibility for financing the defense, forming the Real Estate Brokers Association of St. Louis to support the Shelleys.

At Bush's request, Herman Dreer organized a citizen's group to assist with the legal battle. Dreer became Chairman of the Citizen's Committee – Shelley Restrictive Covenant Case throughout 1947 and 1948 and worked tirelessly in researching case law and in fundraising.⁵⁶

The case was ultimately decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, where in 1948, in a vote of six to zero, the Court ruled that courts cannot uphold contracts that are in violation of the 14th Amendment, which ensures equal protection under the law. The decision made such covenants unenforceable and was a major victory in the battle for equal protection for African Americans, not only in St. Louis, but across the nation.

PUBLICATIONS

Dreer was a prolific writer who is credited with many publications, including two novels: *The Immediate Jewel of the Soul* (1919) and *The Tie That Binds* (1955).⁵⁷ He published numerous articles in

⁵² Arnett G. Lindsey, "The Negro in Banking," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April 1929), 197-198.

⁵³ St. Louis Virtual City Project, University of Missouri-st. Louis
<<http://www.umsl.edu/virtualstl/phase2/1950/events/peoplefincorpor.html>>

⁵⁴ Dr. Vivian Dreer, U. of Missouri-St. Louis Oral History Interview.

⁵⁵ Margaret Bush Wilson and Beverly A. Fleming. "The Shelley House," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, St. Louis (Independent City), 1990.

⁵⁶ John A. Wright, Sr., *Black America Series, The Ville, St. Louis*, Arcadia Publishing; Great Britain, 2001; also Western Historical Manuscript Collection; University of Missouri, St. Louis; sl 167; f 3

⁵⁷ Herman Dreer Papers, sl box 167.

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the Woodson's *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin*;⁵⁸ the *Crisis*, published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and edited by W.E.B. Du Bois;⁵⁹ and *Opportunity*, a periodical published by the National Urban League Department of Research and Investigations.⁶⁰ He also edited the monthly *Masonic Journal of St. Louis*;⁶¹ the *St. Louis Tribune*, a weekly newspaper; and the *Oracle*, a monthly publication of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, of which he was a member. In 1940, he wrote and published *The History of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, 1911-1939*, which he updated from time to time: the last edition was published in 1961.⁶²

In 1948, McMillan Publishing Company contacted Dreer and requested that he compile and edit an anthology of African American writings.⁶³ In 1950, *American Literature by Negro Authors* was published by McMillan. In the introduction, Dreer points out slaves brought to this country spoke hundreds of dialects, and so were at first unable to communicate with one another; and that it was illegal for slaves to be taught to read and write. Despite these impediments, in 1760—within 141 years of arrival of the first slaves at Jamestown—Jupiter Jones, a slave, was writing and publishing poetry in English; and by 1790, poet Phyllis Wheatley, a former slave, was in publication.⁶⁴

In 1950, Dreer wrote and edited the first publication of the *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Dictionary*, a collection of biographies of prominent African American leaders. In his own entry, Dreer proudly displays a full-page photograph of his home at 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue (See Photo #9) and summed up his philosophy of life: “He is a firm believer in Negro genius, Negro culture, the equality of races, and in Christianity.”⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Carter Godwin Woodson, ed., *Negro History Bulletin*, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History; Washington, D.C.1937-present

⁵⁹W.E.B. Du Bois, ed., *The Crisis, A Record of the Darker Races*. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Baltimore, MD; 1910-present

⁶⁰ *Opportunity, A Journal of Negro Life*, (New York: National Urban League, Department of Research and Investigations: 1923-present). See Gerald Early, *Ain't But a Place: an Anthology of African American Writings about St. Louis*, (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998).

⁶¹ Dreer was a lifelong Prince Hall Mason

⁶² “Famous men of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.,” Alpha Omega Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Washington, D.C.<<http://www.alphaomegachapter.com>> (accessed 22 September 2008).

⁶³ Early, 307.

⁶⁴ Herman Dreer, *American Literature By Negro Authors*, (New York: McMillan Publishing Company, 1950).

⁶⁵ Dreer, *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Directory*, 8.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre.

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated site is located at 3697 Cote Brilliante Avenue on City Block 3697, Lot W 21 in the Elleard Place Addition in the City of St. Louis, Missouri; 30 ft. by 130 ft. 5-3/4 in.

Boundary Justification: Current boundaries encompass all land associated with the building since its construction, as well as all that is currently associated with it.

PHOTO LOG

Photo #1: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Front (south facing) façade looking directly north
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #2: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Front façade looking northwest
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #3: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Front facade looking northeast
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #4: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – West façade looking northeast
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #5: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – East façade looking northwest
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

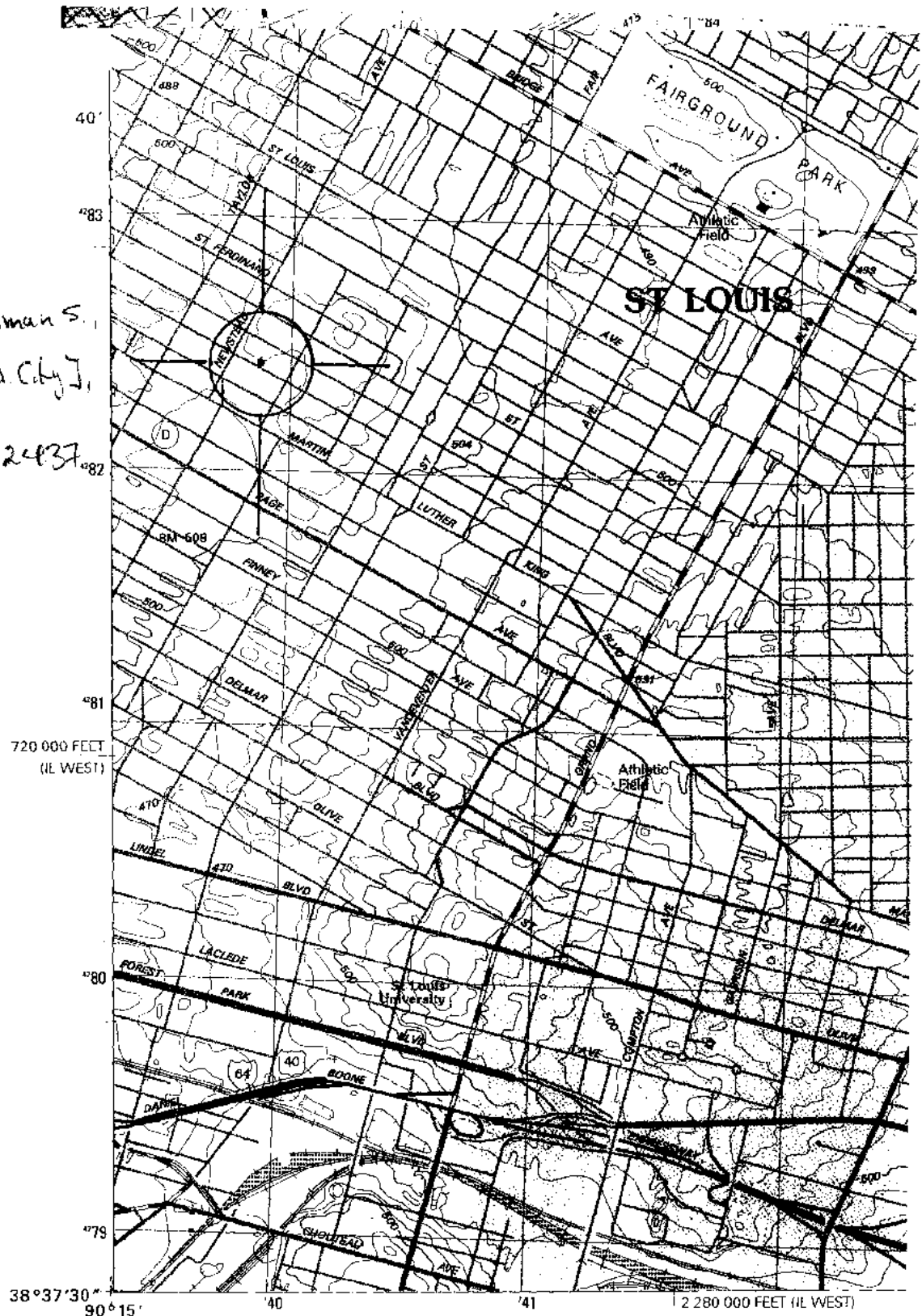
Photo #6: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Rear façade (north-facing) looking south
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #7: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Rear façade (north-facing) looking southeast
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

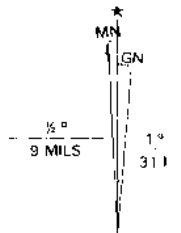
Photo #8: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Rear façade looking southwest
Photographer: Bob Bettis, September 2008

Photo #9: 4335 Cote Brilliante Avenue – Historic Photograph c. 1943 from *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Directory*

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 MO
 15/739881/4292437



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken
 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1998;
 derived. PLSS and survey control
 in corporate, verified 1999
 Projection and
 projector, zone 15
 Missouri (east zone)



UTM GRID AND 1999 MAG;
DECLINATION AT CENTER

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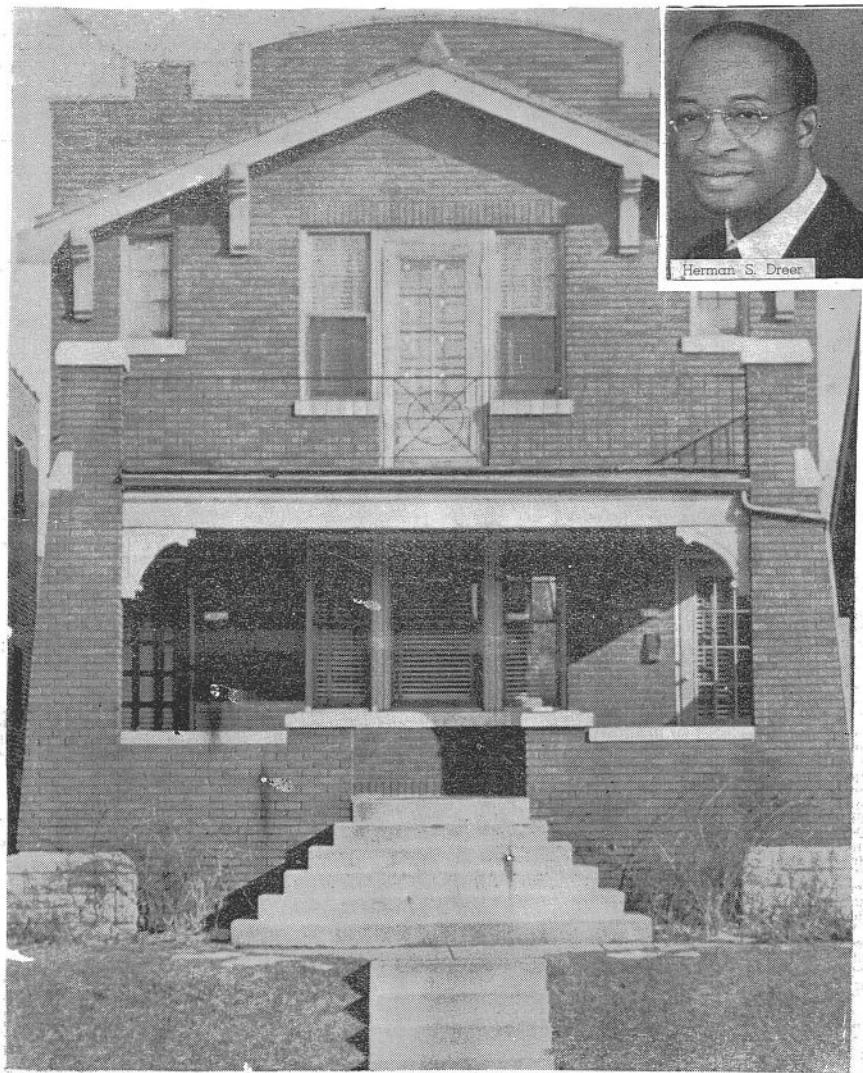






4337





Herman S. Droer