

## Summary Paragraph

Grambling State University is a historically black institution located in the small town of the same name. The campus is set on a modest more-or-less flat plateau amid the gently rolling landscape of central Lincoln Parish. While the school was founded in 1901, the earliest buildings on the present campus (four) date from a large New Deal-funded improvement program of 1939. There are twenty-one buildings within the boundaries of the nominated district, with contributing elements ranging in date from 1939 to 1960. Only five buildings are non-contributing, and contributing buildings are virtually unaltered on the exterior. The dominant style is Colonial Revival (in its various permutations). The scale is generally two stories. Buildings are almost invariably red brick with some sort of light colored trim – generally painted wood, painted concrete, cast stone or light gray limestone.

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## Narrative Description

### Setting/Layout:

The Grambling campus is anchored by a long, grassy academic quadrangle which runs two blocks east-west and one block north-south. (See attached map.) Because it is bisected by the campus' main thoroughfare, Founder's Avenue, it is natural to think of the plan as that of a double quad. Eight of the buildings in the proposed district front onto the double quad, with the remainder located generally to the south. A system of streets runs along the edge of the double quad, between the quad and the buildings.

The earliest available photo of the quad appears in a 1958 yearbook. The westernmost portion of the quad is shown with the present radial configuration of sidewalks, while the eastern end is without landscape features. (Today it also has sidewalks in a radial configuration.) Today a flagpole is at the center of the western quad, set off in a circular brick design. This does not appear in the 1958 yearbook photo.

Aside from the quad, there is no formal landscape design to the campus. Mature live oaks are found on the double quad and along Founder's Avenue at the south end fronting Brown Hall. And while these add much to the campus' ambiance, they are not placed according to any overall landscape design.

Long-Jones Hall (1939), historically the main building on campus, dominates the quad from its west end with an axially-placed colossal portico -- a slight touch of the City Beautiful Movement. Historically another red brick building with a colossal portico was located at the east end of the double quad. This building has been demolished. In its place are modern dorms. (These are not within the nominated boundaries.) Aside from the quad, and the buildings that face it, campus buildings are informally disposed.

Overall the historic campus core is fairly open, with some of the larger buildings having a semblance of their own grounds. But the buildings are not widely dispersed. Multiple buildings can always be observed within the same view. The historic campus core derives some additional unity from common building materials and a consistent scale. The nominated district is also distinct from the more modern, almost window-less concrete and brick educational buildings on the campus periphery.

### Architectural Styles:

As noted above, the dominant style is Colonial Revival. This style was chosen for the earliest buildings (termed "colonial" in a contemporaneous newspaper account) and sometimes influenced later construction. Regarding the latter, the most notable examples are the gymnasium (1954) and the auditorium (1960) – see inventory below. These two major buildings, set side-by-side along the eastern portion of the quad, combine Modernism and Classicism. There are also four late International Style buildings.

### Inventory:

Only one of the buildings in the nominated district (the dining hall) has a cornerstone or date tablet. Building dates are as given in a computer printout from the Office of Facility Planning. They have been checked in almost all instances via research in yearbook (*Grambling Tiger*) photographs. There is no information available from campus sources on architects for the buildings, with the exception of the dining hall.

- 1) Long Hall (1939) – Long-Jones Hall. Contributing Element. Very broad, monumental red brick Colonial Revival building which culminates in a four column colossal Tuscan pedimented portico. Just behind the portico is a two-stage English Baroque tower. A modillion cornice outlines the tympanum. A centrally placed entrance/foyer leads to double loaded corridors. Prominent eight-over-eight windows are grouped in pairs. The long hip roof has a full modillion cornice and small dormers. Historically the main building at Grambling (classrooms and

administration), it was called Long Hall at the close of the historic period for this nomination (1960) in honor of Governors Huey P. and Earl Long. (Both men had assisted the school.) The building now bears the name Long-Jones Hall, to also honor Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones, university president from 1936 to 1977.

- 2) Originally Gym and Auditorium /now Robinson Hall (1939). Contributing Element. Handsome single story red brick building with a capacious pitched roof and side contemporaneous wings. The pillared portico with a fanlight in the tympanum is convincingly rendered and well-proportioned. The building is presently being renovated to house a museum dedicated to legendary Grambling football coach Eddie Robinson.
- 3) Lee Hall (1939). Contributing Element. Originally built as a library, this single story red brick building is set under a set of pronounced pitched roofs. Generous galleries feature brick pillars and white-painted wood entablatures. Six-over-six windows are set mostly in pairs. Building is minimally styled in the Colonial Revival tradition (i.e., red brick with white trim and white shutters).
- 4) Jewett Hall (1939). Contributing Element. Originally a dormitory, this two story red brick building is in the Colonial Revival style. It culminates in a colossal Tuscan order pedimented portico. A modillion cornice outlines the tympanum. Prominent eight-over-eight windows are set mostly in pairs. The broad hip roof features a modillion cornice and small dormers.
- 5) Grambling Hall (1988). Non-contributing Element. This two story red brick building with a colossal Tuscan pedimented portico replaced the old cafeteria destroyed by fire in 1988. It was designed after the style of the campus' earlier Colonial Revival buildings. As a modern "in the manner of" building, it is convincing and successful.
- 6) Dunbar Hall (1956). Contributing Element. Two story red brick classroom building in the late International Style. Bands of classroom windows come together to give the effect of ribbon windows. The International Style signature flat roof is marked by a white concrete ledge. There is a large modern single story wing on the east side. A prominent rooftop enclosure housing utilities provides a vertical element in an otherwise strongly horizontal building.
- 7) Gymnasium/Physical Education Building (1954). Contributing Element. Red brick building with a capacious two-story interior lit by three full-height openings. The style might best be described as "stripped down" classicism combined with Art Deco. Façade treatment features a system of cut-away building masses and a severe limestone portico without a pediment.
- 8) Auditorium (1960). Contributing Element. The unusual overall shape of this two story red brick building reflects the interior's acoustical design. Façade treatment features a system of cut-away building masses and a severe portico without a pediment. The composition derives additional energy from the building's broadly curving front. As in #7, the style might best be described as "stripped down" classicism combined with Art Deco. The façade looks like a New Deal era courthouse. That it was built as late as 1960 is truly surprising.
- 9) Student Union. Non-contributing Element. Two story red brick building (1960) with a prominent Tuscan portico (without a pediment). It is listed as non-contributing due to notable alterations, including new windows, and most importantly, a massive modern side wing that overwhelms the original building. The wing was attached to, and obscures, a Tuscan portico on the side elevation.
- 10) Science Building – now Carver Hall (1958). Contributing Element. Two story late International Style science classroom building with multi-pane metal windows set in a modular grid with colored panels. Classrooms are marked on the long main elevation by thin brick vertical strips. The more-or-less central entrance is marked by two planters and a distinctive cantilevered awning with a chevron style roof popular in the period. The west end of the building features a large brick lecture hall that reads as a separate mass.
- 11) James Hall (1956). Contributing Element. Functional red brick classroom building (historically industrial arts) with bands of windows under a system of hip roofs. The main story is raised a full story above grade, giving the building a two-story presence.
- 12) Dining Hall (1960). Contributing Element. The single story dining hall is raised several feet above grade on a brick basement. The dining space is lit by a long International Style modular grid glass wall facing Founder's Ave. This elevation also features a dynamic steel post and beam gallery to shade the glass wall. There is a similar arrangement on the southern (Robinson St.) elevation. Recently a new entrance, with a strong and incompatible character, was added at the building's southeast corner. Nonetheless, the building is being counted as

contributing because the addition is small in comparison to the original building's footprint, and at least it is only visually dominant from one viewshed.

- 13) Dorm. Non-contributing element. Modern two-story red brick garden apartment-style dorm with a relatively small footprint.
- 14) Dorm. Non-contributing element. Modern two-story red brick garden apartment-style dorm with a relatively small footprint.
- 15) Service Building. Non-contributing element. Modern small brick service buildings for dorms 13 and 14 above.
- 16) Brown Hall (1956). Contributing Element. Broad and commanding two-story red brick dormitory which culminates in a central colossal Tuscan pedimented portico. The tympanum features a modillion cornice and an oculus (painted over) at the center. Windows are eight-over-twelve mounted singly. The extensive hip roof features ventilating dormers and a modillion cornice.
- 17) Labeled President's House on 1960 map (now Student Judicial Affairs). Contributing Element, c.1950. The date of this modest single story red brick house is not documented, but it is clearly historic. The only nod to ornamentation is a centrally placed entrance under a gable with wrought iron posts. There is a porte-cochere at the back of a side elevation.
- 18) Female Faculty Housing (1943), now University Police. Contributing Element. Two-story red brick residential-looking building with a colossal pedimented portico. Portico has square pillars and lacks a frieze.
- 19) Infirmary/ now Foster Johnson Center (1943). Contributing Element. Spacious single story red brick Colonial Revival style building originally built as an infirmary. Building features a long pitched roof with two pronounced cross gables on the façade and ventilator dormers. Each front gable has an oculus in the tympanum. One of the cross gables accommodates a columnar entrance porch skewed to one side of the façade. Large brushed aluminum windows are fitted with ornamental shutters.
- 20) Natatorium (1958). Contributing Element. Single story steel and glass building with pronounced red brick end walls. The late International Style modular grid features colored panels below with clear glass above. Building culminates in a metal clad clerestory with a sloping roof.
- 21) Athletic Department at present; original use unknown (1954). Contributing Element. Single story red brick Colonial Revival building with paired six-over-six windows. Building culminates in an attenuated Tuscan pedimented portico.

#### Assessment of Integrity:

The proposed district has a relatively low non-contributing rate of 24% (5 out of 21 buildings total), and contributing elements survive virtually unaltered on the exterior. Several major buildings (all dorms) have been demolished within the last twenty or so years. Four were grouped on or near the east end of the double quad – one fronting the quad, as noted above. Also, per a 1960 campus map, there were a series of dorms on the south side of the campus. Only two of these survive. One is included in the nomination (Brown Hall, #16). The other is separated from the nominated district by various non-historic buildings, and is not being included.

Even with these losses, the core of Grambling (the proposed district) easily retains enough of its historic appearance to meet Register integrity requirements under Criterion A. With its still open double quad configuration and abundance of well-preserved major historic buildings, the campus would be immediately recognizable to former students and faculty from the historic period. And it retains major buildings to represent the various functions typically found on a college campus – classroom buildings, administration, library, gymnasium, dormitories, etc.

Significant Dates: 1939-1960

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Criterion: A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Grambling State University Historic District is of local significance in the areas of education and ethnic heritage under Criterion A: History. During the historic period, Grambling was the only institution of higher learning available to African-Americans in northern Louisiana. The period of significance spans from 1939, when the heart of the nominated district was built, to 1960, the present National Register fifty-year cutoff. Grambling continued to be the only institution of higher learning for African-Americans in northern Louisiana up to and past 1960. During the period of significance, Grambling played an important role by educating hundreds of teachers.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Historical Background:

The institution known since 1974 as Grambling State University had most humble beginnings on a site about two miles from the present one. It all began when an organization called the Farmers Relief Association wrote to Tuskegee educator Booker T. Washington for advice on a school they were attempting to establish. Washington dispatched one of his students, Charles P. Adams, a native of Brusly, Louisiana, who arrived in Lincoln Parish August 4, 1901. His mission was to establish an industrial/vocational school along the Tuskegee model. Classes opened November 1, 1901 in a two story wood frame building under the name Colored Industrial and Agricultural School. There were three teachers (all Tuskegee graduates) and 125 students.

Local Baptists attempted to take over the school in 1903, and after protracted wrangling, Adams decided to start a new school on a new site (the present one). The North Louisiana Agricultural and Industrial Institute started in the fall of 1905 in space borrowed from a local church. Fairly soon two wood frame buildings were erected. Classes went through the ninth grade. Some funding was provided by the Lincoln Parish School Board (generally for teacher salaries). A valuable early glimpse of the school is provided in a General Education Board report of 1916, based on visits in 1914, 1915, and 1916. It reads in part: "The main building is a poorly built two story frame structure. There are two very small buildings, used for a shop and a boy's dormitory. The buildings are poorly kept."

The next step in Grambling's evolution came in 1919, when it became the Lincoln Parish Training School. (So-called "training schools" existed throughout the South at this time to educate African-American youth. They followed the Tuskegee model of industrial and agricultural education and operated within the framework of county school boards, or parishes in the case of Louisiana.) Upon gaining Lincoln Parish Training School status, the first step was to secure better buildings and equipment. By the time Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones arrived to teach in 1926 (later to be president of the school), there were five wood frame buildings on campus: one eight-room classroom building, a girls' dorm, a boy's dorm, a small dining hall and an elementary school building. The Lincoln Parish School Board paid teacher salaries during the training school period.

In 1928, Charles P. Adams' school became what was then known as a "normal school" – which generally meant a teacher training school. The institution's new name was the Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial School. Adams was able to achieve this status thanks to alliances he cultivated with whites – most notably newly elected State Senator R. P. Knott and Governor Huey P. Long. Long helped secure passage of the necessary legislation by appearing personally on the legislative floor.

With this new status, the school transitioned into an institution focused on teacher training, which it remained throughout the historic period for this nomination. Soon one year of college was added to train elementary teachers for small rural black schools. By 1930, there were two college level years of teacher training available. A 1930 photo of the freshman class shows some 30 to 35 students.

The Depression years brought numerous challenges and changes to the school. There were cuts to the budget, and the school's founder, Charles P. Adams, was forced into retirement. (The reasons are complex and not pertinent to this nomination.)

Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones was chosen as the school's second president. On the faculty since 1926, Jones held a bachelors degree from Southern University in Baton Rouge and a masters degree from Columbia University. It was during Jones' tenure that the historic buildings in the nominated district were constructed – largely in two waves:

1939 and the 1950s. The four buildings from 1939, the original core of today's campus, were constructed with funding from the New Deal's Public Works Administration. The large building program of the 1950s (ending in 1960) was part of an effort to move toward equal accommodations in higher education to stave off integration (part of a strategy in many educational systems in anticipation of, and in the wake of, the 1954 *Brown* ruling by the United States Supreme Court).

There were impressive gains in enrollment and the overall education program in the early years of Jones' presidency. Enrollment soared from 120 in 1936 to 600 in 1940. In the fall of 1939, a third year of college was added, and in 1940, a fourth year. In 1944, the first graduates of the four year teaching program received their degrees. Because of WWII, 61 of the 63 graduates were female. In 1949, the school was authorized to offer a degree in secondary education, and in 1957, the state approved a curriculum in liberal arts.

Through the years the school had come to be known loosely as Grambling, after the small community where it was located. In 1946, at the request of President Jones, the state legislature approved the Louisiana Negro Normal and Industrial School being renamed Grambling College of Louisiana. At the close of the historic period for this nomination (1960), enrollment was 2,724. The school's final name change came in 1974, when it became Grambling State University.

#### Teacher Education at Grambling:

Historically, African-American institutions of higher learning in Louisiana were concentrated in the southern part of the state. Grambling was the sole exception during the historic period for this nomination. (Southern University did not open its campus in Shreveport until 1967.) Historically the nearest African-American college to northern Louisiana would have been Southern University, some 200 miles away in Baton Rouge. Figures obtained from the Grambling registrar's office show enrollment to have been heavily weighted toward Louisiana residents. Of the 748 students enrolled for the 1949-50 school year, only 44 were from out-of-state (6%). For 1959-60, out-of-state enrollment was only 3% of the total (86 out of 2,724). Presumably the great majority of students were from northern Louisiana. (College age African-Americans in southern Louisiana had one state-supported institution of higher learning, Southern University in Baton Rouge.)

The hundreds of students matriculating at Grambling during the period of significance for this nomination (1939-1960) were being trained as teachers. This was the school's very reason for being, initially in elementary education, and since 1949, in secondary education. In 1950, 221 education degrees were awarded (of 221 total), and in 1960, 300 (of 303). The three-year old liberal arts degree program produced only 3 graduates in 1960. Presumably most of Grambling's graduates went on to secure teaching positions in their home region.

In 1940, the *Louisiana Colored Teachers Journal* praised Louisiana Negro Normal (LNN) for its "unique program of teacher training based upon the needs of the small rural school and its place in the improvements of rural life." The journal no doubt was referring to the "Louisiana Plan" instituted at the school in 1936 and continued through 1942. Based on real life needs in rural black schools, the Louisiana Plan focused on field service. Six field centers were organized at African-American high schools in the state: Mansfield, Natchitoches, St. Joseph, and Minden in northern Louisiana; Lake Charles, in southwestern Louisiana; and Kentwood, in southeastern Louisiana. At the field centers, LNN's Field Service Unit offered a year of post-high school teacher training, and then students transferred to LNN for their second year.

Due to partnerships formed by LNN with various state and parish departments (public health, home economics, agricultural extension, etc.), the Field Service Unit included a shop supervisor, a home-making supervisor, a public health physician, a registered nurse, and an agricultural agent. A rural school supervisor, acting as "critic," writes Grambling historian Mildred Gallot, completed the team. Important components of the program included apprenticeship training for LNN students for six weeks in a rural school, summer sessions at the field centers or at LNN, and lesson plans and other instructional material from a curriculum laboratory at LNN. One observer, writing in 1948, noted that the Field Service Unit visited 846 rural schools in 36 parishes, nearly half of which were not in regular schoolhouses, but "in drafty lodge halls, churches and abandoned stores." "The Grambling [LNN] station wagon became a familiar sight to sharecroppers all over the state."

LNN's "Louisiana Plan" was written up in various journals at the time. Other important aspects of the teacher training program at the school during the historic period included summer workshops for Jeanes supervising teachers (held on campus) in 1941, 1942, and 1943, and the establishment of a special education program and a special education center in the 1950s.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See above.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

Gallot, B. G. Mildred. *A History of Grambling State University*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1985.

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