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MINNEAPOLIS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT STUDY

Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota

May 2025

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CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

ABSTRACT

People of African descent have had a presence in Minneapolis since before the city's founding and have contributed, and continue to contribute, greatly to its history and culture. Despite this fact, the City has conducted few historic surveys, context studies, or inventories related to African American heritage or experiences. As of 2022, it was estimated that only three percent of the 95,000 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) focus on the experiences of Black Americans (Regas 2022). The situation is similar in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) estimates that five of the 154 NRHP listings in the city (3.2 percent) recognize African American history and seven of the 217 local landmarks and historic districts (3.2 percent) are designated specifically for their association with African American history. Furthermore, many important places associated with African American heritage in Minneapolis have been lost due to intentional destruction, public and private disinvestment, highway construction, urban renewal initiatives, and other factors. This study aims to serve as a first step in confronting this particular form of inequity. Toward this end, it provides a foundation for the identification of key properties of historic significance throughout the city to inform heritage planning moving forward. The following study is a detailed document that includes many people, places, and events, but is not comprehensive; more stories exist that should be uplifted in the future.

In 2024, the City of Minneapolis was awarded a grant from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, part of the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants Program and administered by the Minnesota Historical Society, to draft a Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study (Project). This Project builds upon a previous effort, funded by a 2020 African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund Grant through the National Trust for Historic Preservation and undertaken by the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED), in which a community engagement study was performed to better understand the themes, events, people, and places that may be included in the context study. The community engagement study resulted in a draft context study outline that identified seven themes that serve as the foundation for this Project.

The Project seeks to provide a narrative history of Africans, African Americans, and Black people in Minneapolis from their arrival in the early 1800s to the present and highlight places in the built environment that relate to that history. It also provides guidance related to the City's efforts to recognize, uplift, and preserve those places. As part of the Project, a reconnaissance survey of 25 properties will be conducted in order to determine their potential eligibility for listing in the NRHP and local landmark designation within the context (to be submitted under a separate report). The Project follows the adoption of the city's new comprehensive plan, Minneapolis 2040, which includes new policies to promote educational, outreach, and engagement opportunities related to heritage preservation among communities who have been traditionally underrepresented. Aspects of this document describe difficult events, including acts of violence and racism, which may trigger intense emotions in readers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project team would like to thank the individuals who were appointed to and served on the African American Heritage Work Group (AAHWG), which was established by the Minneapolis City Council and Mayor Jacob Frey with staff support from the Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). These individuals represented their personal experiences and those of the community more broadly. They provided their time, insights, heartfelt opinions, and honest feedback to both the City and the project team over the course of this project. In so doing, they shaped the content and presentation of the context study. The group also led the report authors in interpreting the information contained within the context to ensure it reflected the community's perspective.

Our sincerest thanks to the members of the African American Heritage Work Group:
Tiara Fard, Beverly Propes, Julia N. Moturi, Keegan Xavi, Denise Barge Jamison, Kendra N. Ellner, Tene M. Wells, Greg W. McMoore, Michelle K. Gibson, Brian C. Kelley, Daniel Bergin, Michelle Lincoln, Davu Seru, Minister Dr. Ora Hokes, and James A. Curry.

The project team would also like to thank the individuals who served as the Technical Reviewers on this project. The Technical Reviewers provided their time and expertise in reviewing the presentation and content of the context study. Their insights proved an invaluable resource in the development of this study.

Our sincerest thanks to our Technical Reviewers:
Judge LaJune Thomas Lange and Denise Pike.

The CPED Project Team included:
Erin Que, Senior City Planner and Project Manager; Rob Skalecki, Senior City Planner; and Andrea Burke, Historic Preservation Supervisor.

It should be noted that none of the project team's researchers or authors self-identify as having descended from a Black or African American heritage. The authors recognize the limitations attendant to this fact regarding perspective and knowledge and do not claim to be authorities on the subject of Black history. The information that follows is based on a combination of primary and secondary research, with direction informed by Black advisors. Sources from Black authors were prioritized whenever possible. The best source of information remains members of the community who can speak directly to their shared history and lived experiences.

This project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study is intended to address a critical gap that exists within heritage preservation documentation: the history of African Americans in the city of Minneapolis. Despite the fact that people of African descent have been present in Minneapolis since before the city's founding and have contributed—and continue to contribute—greatly to its history and culture, the City has conducted few historic surveys, context studies, or inventories related to African American heritage or experiences. The Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) estimates that five of the 154 NRHP listings in the city (3.2 percent) recognize African American history and seven of the 217 local landmarks and historic districts (3.2 percent) are designated specifically for their association with African American history. Furthermore, many important places associated with African American heritage in Minneapolis have been lost due to intentional destruction, public and private disinvestment, highway construction, urban renewal initiatives, and other factors. This study aims to serve as a first step in confronting this particular form of inequity. Toward this end, it provides a foundation for the identification of key properties of historic significance throughout the city to inform heritage planning moving forward. In the words of African American Heritage Work Group (AAHWG) member Davu Seru, "history is not the past. [This work] requires walking back through it but then critically engaging with the present."

This context study builds upon the results of a previous project conducted by CPED. In 2020, CPED was awarded an African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund Grant through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. CPED subsequently hired a consultant team consisting of Lange Johnson Development, LLC, Equity Strategies, LLC, and 106 Group to facilitate community engagement with Minneapolis' Black community and draft a context study outline. The resultant outline identified seven key themes to structure an eventual context study:

1. Arrival
2. Residential Life and Neighborhoods
3. Religion and Houses of Worship
4. Employment and Professional Growth
5. Community, Social Organizations, Recreation and Education
6. Arts, Design, Music and Culture
7. Segregation, Discrimination, Civil Rights and Reclamation

Those themes have been retained and form the basis of the historical narrative presented in Section 2.0 of this study. The temporal boundaries of the context study are from circa 1800 to the present; the physical extent of the study includes the current boundaries of the city of Minneapolis. The subsections for each theme generally follow the same format: a general overview is provided before more specific topics related to that theme are explored. Some individuals and places are also described within each subsection, but they are not the only ones associated with these themes.

The information presented in Section 2.0 is not intended to be, nor should it be considered, a comprehensive history of the Black experience in Minneapolis. Each of the seven themes noted above warrant in-depth, sustained scholarship that is not possible within the time and budget constraints of this project. Instead, this study strives to provide an overview of key events, people, and places associated with Minneapolis' Black history to aid in the identification and evaluation of associated properties located within the city. The information presented here can and should be supplemented with additional research as it is utilized moving forward. In particular, further research and analysis should be done to consider the intersectionality of identities that converge with African American heritage, including, but not limited to, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

It is also hoped that the information presented here will be used to recognize African American heritage beyond formal preservation documentation. The AAHWG has suggested the following as a starting point: walking tours, public monuments, cultural corridors, heritage trails, interpretive signage, and acknowledgement of history within government buildings. The AAHWG recommends continued community engagement, beyond this project, to determine appropriate methods to connect historically significant sites across the city.

There are no existing statewide Post Contact (defined as the period following the first major Indian treaty in Minnesota) or Thematic contexts related to African American communities or property types in Minnesota. In 2017, the City of Saint Paul published the first citywide African American Historic and Cultural Context Study in Minnesota, which has information that is relevant to Black history in Minneapolis (Foss and Wilder 2017). Additionally, the following existing contexts are relevant to some of the geography, themes, people, and events discussed in this study:

- Granger, Susan, Scott Kelly, and Patricia Murphy. 1993. "Historic Context Study for the Standing Structures Survey of the I-35W Study Area."
- Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. 1990. "Historic Context: Urban Centers (1870-1940)."
- Pearson, Marjorie and Charlene K. Roise. 2000. "South Minneapolis: An Historic Context."
- Pearson, Marjorie and Charlene K. Roise. 2000. "Downtown Minneapolis: An Historic Context."
- Peterson, Garneth O. and Carole Zellie. 1998. "North Minneapolis: Minneapolis Historic Context Study."
- Peterson, Rachel. 2022. "Rethinking I-94: Black History in the Interstate 94 Corridor."
- Roise, Charlene, Elizabeth Gales, Kristen Koehlinger, Kathryn Goetz, Kristen Zschomler, Stephanie Rouse, and Jason Wittenberg. 2018. "Minneapolis Music History, 1850-2000: A Context."
- Thomas R. Zahn & Associates. 1991. "Minneapolis Context: Neighborhood Commercial Centers, 1885-1963."

- Zellie, Carole and Amy M. Lucas. 2009. “Historic Context Development and Cultural Resources Evaluation for the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works Strategic Development Framework, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota.”
- Zellie, Carole. 2000. “The Shingle Creek African-American Community.”
- Zellie, Carole. 2009. “Snelling Avenue, Minneapolis: Research on the History of the African American Community.”
- Zschomler, Kristen, Barbara Howard, and Jessica Berglin. 2020. “National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Prince, 1958-1987.”

Section 3.0 of this study aims to explain how the information presented in Section 2.0 can be applied to the preservation of associated resources. It provides an overview of the different types of historic designation (local, state, and NRHP), key property types and how they should be evaluated, the social, economic, and environmental benefits of historic preservation, priorities for future work, avenues for future research, and a summary of community feedback gathered over the course of this project.

Throughout the document, the authors have indicated if specific properties discussed have been previously inventoried and, when known, whether or not the property remains extant. This information is included in parentheses following the mention of said properties. If the property has been previously inventoried, that is indicated by the inclusion of its associated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) inventory number, which takes the form of HE-MPC-####.

Within the document, the terms “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in reference to members of the community, generally. Occasionally, the phrase “people of African descent” is used. The authors recognize that there are a range of preferred descriptors that individuals may feel better reflect their ancestry, cultural backgrounds, and community identities. The topic of preferred terminology was discussed at a February 18, 2025, meeting of the AAHWG and the opinions of members were collected via a subsequent online poll. A majority of AAHWG members supported the interchangeable use of “African American” and “Black.” Additional terms noted by AAHWG members, but not used within this document, include “Native Black Americans,” “African Diaspora,” and “Black Americans.” The group also recognized that words, and the social meaning ascribed to them, are products of their given historical moment and terms have evolved over time.

Finally, racialized and/or period-specific terminology is occasionally used within Section 2.0; in such instances, those terms are placed in quotation marks to indicate that they reflect language used in historical documentation and are not the views of the authors.

Community Engagement Summary

As noted above, the first phase of this project focused on community engagement and took place in 2021-2022. Six virtual engagement meetings were held focusing on different themes, which informed

the outline for this context study. CPED staff continued to engage with community members during the development of this context study. Methods included the following:

- Email updates to City Council members to share in their ward newsletters
- Online public comment form
- Presentation to the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (May 2023)
- Exhibitor booth at the Community Connections Conference (June 2023, February 2025)
- Establishment of the AAHWG, a 15-member appointed body of community members, and organization of seven meetings (April 2024-June 2025)
- Exhibitor booth at the Juneteenth celebration in Bethune Park (June 2024)
- Exhibitor booth at two Black Business Week events (July 2024)
- Publication of a periodic email newsletter (July 2024-ongoing)

CPED staff and AAHWG members participated in various media interviews, upon request. CPED staff also presented information about the project at the 2022 and 2024 PreserveMN Conference (annual statewide historic preservation conference), the 2025 Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History, and a webinar hosted by the American Planning Association's Minnesota chapter's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. Newsletter subscriptions grew to over 500 recipients during the course of the project.

Formation of the African American Heritage Work Group (AAHWG)

CPED staff proposed to create the AAHWG in order to include community voices in telling the history of African Americans in Minneapolis, given the historical trend of excluding community members in the process by the City, other government agencies, and historic preservation professionals. On April 13, 2024, the Minneapolis City Council and Mayor Jacob Frey established the AAHWG with 15 available seats (File No. 2024-00320). Of those seats, 13 were to be appointed by the City Council and two were to be appointed by the Mayor. The ideal candidate would demonstrate knowledge and/or expertise in African American heritage, through lived and/or professional experiences. The terms of the enabling resolution allowed the work group to meet from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025.

After establishing the work group, the City invited applications through the open appointments process. The work group was promoted by CPED staff to various professional and community partners and through council member newsletters and a press release. All applicants were interviewed virtually by a panel that included representation from the following entities: CPED historic preservation staff (Erin Que, Rob Skalecki, Andrea Burke); the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (Kimberly Sandbulte); the Mayor's office (Andrea Inouye, Rebecca Fabunmi); Ward 6 Council Member Jamal Osman's office (Irene Balthazar-Chon); and Ward 5 Council Member Jeremiah Ellison's office (Bethany Turnwall). Wards 5 and 6 were included because these council members serve as the Vice-Chair and Chair, respectively, of the Business, Housing and Zoning Committee. The interview committee included

people of color, however, a person of African or African American descent was not present in all interviews. The interview committee recommended candidates to the City Council and Mayor for appointment and 15 members were appointed on June 29, 2024 (File No. 2024-00657). Appointed members took an oath of office and completed ethics training. They represent wards across the city and beyond, with ties to different parts of Minneapolis and different generations of its history. Members were compensated with parking vouchers or MetroTransit passes at each meeting.

2.0 Historic and Cultural Context

Present-day Minneapolis is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, who lived and flourished in the area for generations prior to European contact. By 1800, Dakota settlements were present along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, below the sacred site of Owámniyomni, or the Falls of St. Anthony (which later served as the nucleus of Minneapolis). The area was claimed as French territory in the late seventeenth century before switching hands between European powers several times between 1760 and 1800, including Britain, Spain, and France once again (Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community 2024; Pearson and Roise 2000a:5; Smith 2021:13–28). In 1803 the territory was transferred to the US following the Louisiana Purchase and, in 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike signed a treaty with the Dakota that granted the US access to the land to build military posts. In 1819, the Fort Snelling Military Reservation was established, which encompassed all of present-day downtown Minneapolis, South Minneapolis, a portion of North Minneapolis, as well as portions of Richfield and Bloomington (Pearson and Roise 2000a:5).

Development of what would become Minneapolis began in 1848 with the platting of St. Anthony on the east bank of the Mississippi River by Franklin Steele. The west bank of the river remained part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation, within which private citizens were prohibited from settling. In 1849, Colonel John H. Stevens built the first house on the west bank and was joined shortly thereafter by other illegal squatters. In 1852, following lobbying by Steele and others, the US Congress passed a bill (amended in 1855) that opened approximately 26,000 acres of the Military Reservation for settlement and recognized the land claims of those who had already settled there. In 1854, Stevens platted the village of Minneapolis on the west bank of the river. Both St. Anthony and Minneapolis were based around the Falls of St. Anthony as a source of waterpower which ultimately fueled a powerful milling industry. Minneapolis expanded to the south and west during the 1850s and 1860s, was incorporated as a city in 1867, and eventually merged with St. Anthony (now Northeast Minneapolis) in 1872 (Pearson and Roise 2000b:4–5). Starting in 1880, the city experienced rapid growth as its milling industries boomed. The city boundaries were enlarged in 1883 and 1887 to encompass nearly its current area. As of 1887, the city was bounded on the west by France Avenue South and Xerxes Avenue South; on the north by 53rd Avenue North and Lowry Avenue Northeast; on the east by a line that roughly follows 33rd Avenue Southeast; and on the south by 54th Street East. In 1927, the area between Xerxes Avenue South, 54th Street East, 46th Avenue South, and 62nd Street East was annexed, giving the city its current boundaries (Pearson and Roise 2000a:12–13).

2.1 Arrival

Earliest Arrivals (circa 1800-1865)

People of African descent have had a presence in present-day Minnesota since at least the early nineteenth century. While documentation related to this early history is limited, historians have identified sources that indicate Black people engaged in a variety of activities related to the fur trade,

acting as independent entrepreneurs, servants, hunters, guides, and interpreters. The majority of these individuals entered Minnesota via regional fur trading centers to the south, such as St. Louis, while others came from British-controlled Canada. Some came freely, hired by fur companies and compensated for their labor, while others were enslaved by white fur traders and brought against their will (Spangler 1961:17–18).

This period of initial arrival is represented by the story of Jean Bonga and his descendants (discussed more in Section 2.4). In 1782, Bonga was brought to Michilimackinac, in present-day Michigan, by a British military officer by whom he was enslaved. Bonga was emancipated following the officer's death and remained in the region, where he married and started a family. Jean's son, Pierre Bonga, married into the Ojibwe tribe (though some historical accounts note his wife's tribal affiliation as Anishiinaabe or Chippewa) and worked in the fur trade in the vicinity of present-day Duluth. Both of Pierre's sons, George and Stephen Bonga, rose to prominence as successful fur traders and translators in the region. Both men, as well as their sister Marguerite, spent time at Fort Snelling, in the vicinity of present-day Minneapolis, as the US military outpost served as a central hub for fur trading activities after its establishment in 1820. By the 1830s, Stephen and Marguerite were living amongst the mixed settlement of Europeans, Americans, and Native Americans at Coldwater Spring, located on the banks of the Mississippi River approximately one mile northwest of Fort Snelling. George, who was fluent in English, French, and Ojibwe, frequently worked as a translator between Ojibwe and American representatives at the fort, most notably during major treaty negotiations in 1820 and 1867 (VanderVelde 2009:50; Weber 2023; Wingerd 2010:232).

Unlike the Bongas, other Black people who resided in and around Fort Snelling during the first half of the nineteenth century were held there in bondage. While the institution of slavery was technically illegal in present-day Minnesota according to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the subsequent Missouri Compromise of 1820, it nonetheless existed in practice prior to the Civil War. The primary enslavers were the military and governmental personnel who were stationed at the fort. According to US Army policy, officers were permitted to retain a personal servant for whom they received additional pay to support. The army allowed these officers to utilize enslaved labor in place of a contracted servant, in which case the additional pay was added to the officer's personal income, thus incentivizing the practice (DeCarlo 2020:31–32). Slavery at the fort was most frequently practiced by southern officers who brought enslaved individuals with them when they were transferred to Fort Snelling. However, northern officers, such as the fort's commander and namesake, Colonel Josiah Snelling, and civilian fur traders are known to have purchased or rented enslaved laborers while residing in the area. Lawrence Taliaferro, the Virginia-born administrator of the US government's St. Peter's Indian Agency stationed at Fort Snelling, brought at least three enslaved people with him when he arrived in 1820 and often rented them to military personnel, such as Colonel Snelling (Bachman 2013:13; DeCarlo 2020:30–32). The number of enslaved people held at Fort Snelling fluctuated over time depending on the military units stationed there but remained a constant presence during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is

estimated that 114 enslaved people resided at Fort Snelling between 1820 and 1858 (Green 2007:3–6; Schwalm 2009:15–17).

Many of the details related to the biographies and experiences of those held in bondage at Fort Snelling are unknown, having been largely omitted from the historical record. However, it is known that several enslaved people used their time at Fort Snelling as the basis for challenging their captivity through the legal system. A Black woman named Rachel (no last name recorded) had been held at the fort by Lieutenant Thomas Stockton starting in 1830 and was later brought to St. Louis, Missouri, and sold to a local slave trader. She subsequently sued for her freedom in state court under the argument that her time held in free territory entitled her to emancipation. Her case made its way to the Missouri Supreme Court, which ruled in 1836 that Rachel's enslavement at Fort Snelling was "contrary to law" according to the Missouri Compromise and ordered that she and her infant son be set free (Bachman 2013:26, 41). Another enslaved woman named Courtney (no last name recorded) arrived at Fort Snelling in 1826 and remained in bondage there until she, too, was brought to St. Louis and sold in 1835. She followed the same legal path as Rachel and successfully sued for her freedom in state court (Bachman 2013:17, 23–24).

The most well-known freedom suit based on an enslaved person's time held at Fort Snelling is that of Dred and Harriet Scott. In 1836, Dred Scott was brought to Fort Snelling by his enslaver Dr. John Emerson, the fort's newly appointed surgeon. The same year, Scott was permitted to marry Harriet Robinson, who was enslaved at the fort by Lawrence Taliaferro. The Scotts spent the majority of the period between 1836 and 1842 at Fort Snelling (DeCarlo 2020:34; Hess 1975). In 1842, Dred and Harriet were brought to St. Louis by Emerson, who died the following year. Aided by local abolitionists and likely following the precedent set by Rachel and Courtney, the Scotts sued Emerson's widow for their freedom on the grounds that their time held at Fort Snelling and in other free territories violated the terms of the Missouri Compromise. In 1852, the Missouri Supreme Court contradicted its earlier decisions and ruled that their time spent in free territory did not entitle the Scotts to freedom because they had since returned to a slave state (Hess 1975). The Scotts' case was eventually brought before the US Supreme Court in 1856 (*Scott v. Sandford*) and resulted in one of the most consequential rulings in the nation's history. In 1857, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney handed down a sweeping decision in which the court ruled that people of African descent were not citizens of the US and, therefore, were entitled to no legal protections from the federal government. The decision also stated that Congress had no authority to regulate slavery in federal territory, thereby nullifying the terms of the Missouri Compromise and clearing the way for the expansion of slavery across the country. The ruling was a tipping point on the country's path toward civil war and, ultimately, the abolition of slavery throughout the nation (Lehman 2019:28–30; VanderVelde 2009:1–5).

While many of the Black people who arrived in Minnesota during the first half of the nineteenth century were brought against their will, others traveled to and settled there by choice. This population was, however, small. The first census taken after Minnesota was organized as a territory in 1849, for instance,

recorded 40 free people of African descent. Thirty of them resided in St. Paul, the territory's largest population center, and only one, a woman named Maria Haynes, was recorded as living in St. Anthony (Taylor 1981:73). The free Black population of St. Anthony expanded modestly in the 1850s. By 1857, it is estimated that eight free Black families had settled in the city (Taylor 1981:76). Among them were Emily Goodridge Grey, who arrived from Pennsylvania in 1857 along with her first-born son, her husband's cousin, Hamilton W. Grey, and Hamilton's wife, Mary Smallwood Grey. Emily's husband, Ralph, had arrived approximately a year and a half earlier to establish his barbershop within the Jarrett House (non-extant), which was located near the Winslow House (see Figure 1). The Greys (discussed more in Section 2.7) roomed within the Jarrett House before they moved into their own home made from a converted barn (location unknown). While Ralph cut hair, Emily worked as a seamstress and carried out domestic duties. She also socialized with much of St. Anthony's white population, including the abolitionists with whom she worked to free Eliza Winston in 1860 (described below). She also gave birth to the first Black child born in the city, whom she and Ralph named Toussaint L'Ouverture Grey after the Black revolutionary leader who fought to overthrow colonialism in Haiti (Couch 2022:4; Green 2007:79–82). The members of this small community are credited with establishing the first formal Black religious organization in the state, St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, which began holding meetings in various homes in St. Anthony around the year 1860 (see Section 2.3) (Taylor 1981:76).

The arrival of enslaved people in Minnesota was not limited to Fort Snelling. In the decades immediately preceding the Civil War, Minnesota had begun promoting itself as a tourist destination for southerners wishing to escape the summer heat. These vacationers frequently brought enslaved individuals with them on their trips north. This tourist industry boomed after the *Scott v. Sandford* decision, in particular, as it mitigated the threat of enslaved people suing for their freedom after entering a free territory (Green 2000:113; Spangler 1961:24). St. Anthony (now Minneapolis), on the east bank of the Mississippi River, was one of the Minnesota destinations that actively catered to a slaveholding clientele. Southern visitors from Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Missouri traveled by riverboat to St. Anthony and stayed at the Winslow House (non-extant), which was Minnesota's largest and most elegant hotel after it was built between 1856-1857 (Green 2000:108).

Figure 1. Winslow House (left) and Jarrett House (right) in 1858 (Cartwright 2023)

In the summer of 1860, Richard Christmas, a white Mississippian, traveled to St. Anthony along with his wife and child and checked into the Winslow House. They brought with them Eliza Winston, an enslaved woman of African descent, to care for Mrs. Christmas, who was too ill to travel without assistance. While in St. Anthony, Winston met Emily Goodridge Grey and her husband Ralph. The Greys, in turn, introduced Winston to local abolitionists and anti-slavery leaders, including W.D. Babbitt, Ariel S. Bigelow, and William S. King. Winston communicated her desire to be free to the group and Emily Grey and Babbitt subsequently filed a legal complaint asserting that Winston was being held against her will. By this point, Christmas had heard of the plan to free Winston and, in an attempt to thwart it, he relocated his family from the Winslow House to a lodge on the shore of Lake Harriet in Minneapolis (non-extant). Judge Charles Vanderburgh ordered the Hennepin County Sheriff to collect Winston and escort her to court where he could rule on the matter. The sheriff and an abolitionist posse, led by Emily Grey, successfully retrieved Winston and Judge Vanderburgh ultimately ruled in favor of her release. While Christmas reportedly accepted the court's decision, a large crowd of pro-slavery residents, primarily those who had a vested interest in St. Anthony's tourist industry, protested the decision. Later that night, the mob surrounded Babbitt's house, where Winston had taken refuge after the trial, but she had already been relocated to another safe house. It is unclear based on the historical record where, exactly, Winston ended up after securing her freedom, but historian William D. Green believes it is most likely that she remained in the Minnesota countryside in the immediate aftermath of her emancipation (Cartwright 2023; Green 2000:119, 2007:97–100).

The pace of new Black arrivals to Minnesota increased after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. In 1862, following the US-Dakota War, the US Army stationed at Fort Snelling prepared to pursue a

campaign of retribution against the Dakota farther west in what came to be known as the Punitive Expeditions. However, Colonel Henry Sibley, who led the expeditions, faced a labor shortage because many of Minnesota's military-aged men had been deployed elsewhere as part of the Civil War. Accordingly, he sought to use "contrabands"—a term used by the army to refer to formerly enslaved individuals who fled captivity and sought safety behind Union lines—as a means of filling necessary support positions within his ranks, such as teamsters. In May 1863, two steamboats, the *Northerner* and the *Davenport*, arrived at Fort Snelling with several hundred formerly enslaved people to fulfill Sibley's request (Taylor 1981:75). When they reached Fort Snelling, the boats were moored to large trees along the Minnesota River, south of the fort, in what is now Fort Snelling State Park (Watkins and International Leadership Institute 2023).

In addition to the "contrabands," the steamboats also brought with them Black refugees that they encountered along the way. As the *Northerner* made its way up the Mississippi River toward the fort, it met a makeshift raft carrying 76 Black men, women, and children adrift near Jefferson, Missouri. The group, which had fled slavery in Boone County, Missouri, was led by a preacher named Robert Thomas Hickman, and referred to themselves as Pilgrims. While some of the Black individuals who arrived in 1863, indeed, joined Sibley on the Punitive Expeditions, others joined Hickman and his Pilgrims in establishing an encampment immediately outside the walls of Fort Snelling. Hickman and his congregation eventually settled in St. Paul, where they established Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1866. When those who had joined the Punitive Expeditions returned, some continued their military service by joining the US Colored Troops (the army's segregated fighting units). Others joined Hickman in St. Paul, where the state's largest Black community resided at the time, but it is likely that some laid down roots in St. Anthony and Minneapolis (DeCarlo 2020:54–60). As of 1865, when the Civil War drew to a close, the combined Black population of St. Anthony and Minneapolis stood at 78 people, 50 of whom lived in St. Anthony (Taylor 1981:76).

Post-Civil War Community Growth (1866-1910)

There was a large influx of new Black arrivals to Minneapolis and St. Anthony during the second half of the nineteenth century. Following the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery throughout the country, many Black southerners migrated north and west in search of opportunity and safety from racial violence. Some of those who moved north settled in St. Paul or other Minnesota communities, such as Hastings, which had a Black population consisting of 40 people by 1870. Others laid down roots in Minneapolis, contributing to a steady growth of the city's Black community (Spangler 1961:47; Thamer 2023). By 1870, the combined Black population of Minneapolis and St. Anthony had risen to 162. Between 1875 and 1885, it leapt to 673 and, by 1895, it doubled to approximately 1,300. This steady growth coincided with the local Black population's shift from the east side of the Mississippi River, in St. Anthony, to Minneapolis on the west side of the river. Between 1866 and 1875, especially after the two cities consolidated in 1872, the central business district moved from St. Anthony to Minneapolis. This transition encouraged the Black residents, wanting to live near their places of employment, to follow suit (Taylor 1981:78).

Those who arrived in Minneapolis during this period followed a variety of paths. The ancestors of fourth-generation Minnesotan John Samuel Wright II, for instance, arrived in Minnesota from Kentucky in 1874 as part of a larger stream of Black refugees known as the Exodusters. The Exodusters were led out of Kentucky and Tennessee during the waning days of Reconstruction by a Black minister named Benjamin Singleton who sought to create independent settlements on the frontier of the US, where Black people could more easily acquire land. Exodusters primarily settled in western states such as Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, but Minnesota became one of their lesser stops due to its railroad and waterway connections. After arriving in 1874, Wright's grandmother's uncle, George Hall, initially worked as a barber in St. Paul. After the state's first barber's union refused to admit Black members and created a hostile environment for Black barbers in St. Paul, he moved to Minneapolis to explore new trades in the late 1880s (Winkler-Morey 2021). Others, such as William R. Morris, the first Black lawyer to argue a case before the Hennepin County courts, established themselves professionally prior to their arrival. Morris was born into slavery in Kentucky in 1859. He studied at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, from which he received his master's degree in 1887. He spent time in Chicago and Nashville before moving to Minneapolis in 1889, where he practiced law for 35 years (see Section 2.7) (Spangler 1961:68–69).

New arrivals to the city searching for economic opportunities relied on informal networks to establish roots in their new home. Kinship ties were particularly important in this regard. When John Samuel Wright I (father of Boyd A. Wright, grandfather of John Samuel Wright II), for example, moved to Minneapolis from Kentucky around 1898 in search of a better-paying job, he stayed with an aunt and uncle who had arrived in the city earlier. This base of support allowed Wright to get introduced to the local community, learn about the city, and save up the money necessary to pay for his wife's trip up from Kentucky in 1899. Once she arrived, the couple continued to live with Wright's aunt and uncle until they were able to rent a house of their own at 911 22nd Street East (non-extant) (Taylor 1974).

Fort Snelling continued to provide an avenue through which new Black residents arrived in Minneapolis during the second half of the nineteenth century, as well. After the Civil War, the army units that constituted the US Colored Troops were reorganized into two all-Black cavalry units and two all-Black infantry units, the soldiers of which were commonly referred to as "Buffalo Soldiers." Fort Snelling served as the regimental headquarters for the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, one of the units of Buffalo Soldiers, between 1882 and 1888. Their time stationed at the fort provided the soldiers with the opportunity to experience life in Minneapolis and, in some instances, establish themselves in the city. This was the case for First Sergeant Zachariah Pope, who arrived at Fort Snelling in 1882 and purchased a parcel of land in Minneapolis the following year. In 1887, he married a native Minneapolitan, Mary Young. Pope and his regiment were ordered to travel west in 1888 and eventually fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, but he returned to Minneapolis in the late 1890s following his retirement from the military. Soon after, he and Mary purchased a home at 216 31st Street West (non-extant) and became active in social events within the local Black community. Zachariah also helped found the African

American Business Men's Club in 1900 and was a founding member of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1913 (see Section 2.5) (Flueger 2021:4).

Figure 2. First Sergeant Zachariah Pope and Mary Young Pope (The Appeal 1912)

The Great Migration (circa 1910 – 1970)

The largest expansion of Minneapolis' Black population occurred over the course of the twentieth century, during one of the largest internal movements of people in United States history known as the Great Migration. Spanning from roughly 1910 to 1970, the Great Migration consisted of approximately six million Black people moving to states in the North, West, and Midwest to escape the oppression of the Jim Crow South. Historians typically split this process of movement into two phases: the First Great Migration (1910-1940), during which Black southerners relocated to northern cities in response to the industrial labor shortage created by World War I, and the Second Great Migration (1940-1970), during which similar labor demands were created by World War II and racial tensions in the South were exacerbated by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (National Archives 2024; Trotter, Jr. 2002:31–32).

Like other cities in the North and Midwest, Minneapolis was a destination for Black southerners during the First Great Migration. However, the lack of major industries in the state meant that the population increase was relatively low when compared to that experienced by other states in the region, such as Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois. Additionally, as historian Luke Mielke points out, white business and community leaders in the Twin Cities sought to discourage migration during this period by actively conspiring to exclude Black workers from the local job market (Mielke 2016:64). Nonetheless, the Black population in Minneapolis experienced growth fueled by both new arrivals from out of state and internal migration from communities such as Hastings (Thamer 2023). Between 1910 and 1920, the

number of Black residents in the city increased from 2,592 to 3,927 (Spangler 1961:65–66). By 1930, the Black population reached 4,176 (approximately 0.9% of the city's total population), and 4,646 in 1940 (approximately 0.94% of the city's total population) (Zellie 2009:2).

As they did during the second half of the nineteenth century, new arrivals during the First Great Migration relied on informal networks, such as family members, friends, and churches, to learn about Minneapolis and integrate into the local community. They were further aided during the early twentieth century by formal organizations that were established explicitly for the purpose of receiving new arrivals. In 1924, for instance, the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House opened in response to the growing number of young, single Black women moving to Minneapolis. Initially intended to be a boarding house for new arrivals, the organization quickly expanded to provide a range of services for the entire Black community, including educational, recreational, and social activities (see Section 2.5 for more detail) (Heller 2016). Similarly, the National Urban League, first established in New York in 1910, was founded with the express purpose of helping Black arrivals, particularly those coming from the rural South, to ease into life in urban centers. They did so through a variety of programs but put a particular emphasis on developing partnerships with government agencies and private businesses to help new arrivals find employment (Bell 2024). The Minneapolis branch of the Urban League opened in 1925 (see Section 2.5 for more detail) (Urban League Twin Cities 2024).

Figure 3. Children on the Steps of the Phyllis Wheatley House, 1925 (Heller 2016)

The industrial boom generated by World War II created an even larger labor demand than had been seen during World War I. As a result, the Black population continued to grow during the Second Great Migration. Between 1940 and 1950, Minnesota received 4,094 new Black residents, bringing the statewide population to just over 14,000 (Spangler 1961:97). Between 1950 and 1970, Minneapolis saw

its Black population jump by a record 436%, reaching approximately 19,000 (the overall population of Minneapolis in 1970 was 434,400). The most drastic increase occurred between 1960 and 1970, when the Civil Rights Movement and reactionary violence in the South reached its greatest intensity (Taylor 1981:84). The *St. Paul Recorder*, worried that the "irresponsible shiftless, rough hustler type" might be among the influx of new residents to the Twin Cities, urged local "social service organizations, the churches, the veterans groups [and] the fraternal and civic organizations" to develop programs to help meet the needs of new arrivals, while instructing its readers to "make each new resident a welcome and worthy part of the community" (St. Paul Recorder 1947). The same paper also highlighted the successes achieved by the local branches of the Urban League in helping new Black residents find employment. In 1943, the paper celebrated the work done by the organization in "screening and assisting in the selection of several hundred Negroes employed in a local war plant" and pointed to such results as "justification for every dollar spent on Urban League budgets for the past 15 years" (St. Paul Recorder 1943).

Recent Arrivals (circa 1970 – Present)

Since the Great Migration, the growth of Minneapolis' Black community has been primarily characterized by an influx of foreign-born arrivals, particularly from East Africa. Minnesota, and Minneapolis in particular, has become a top destination for immigrants moving to the US from Ethiopia and Somalia. This process of migration began in the 1970s, as Ethiopians and Somalis with the means to do so left their home countries in search of educational and professional opportunities in the US (Blevins 2007:18–19; Horst 2006:8). The rate of arrival increased significantly in the 1990s as both countries experienced economic hardship, political unrest, and armed conflict. As a result, many of those who arrived during the 1990s and early 2000s did so as refugees and asylum seekers. In 1994 and 1995, for example, large groups of Somalis were officially resettled in Minneapolis by the US government (Horst 2006:8–9). One notable Minneapolitan who arrived in the city as part of this process is US Representative Ilhan Omar, who moved to Minneapolis with her family in 1997 after fleeing Somalia's civil war and spending four years in a Kenyan refugee camp (Omar 2024). Others have since been drawn to Minneapolis following the development of robust Somali and Ethiopian communities in the city, relying on familial and personal connections to establish themselves in a new location (Horst 2006:13–15).

Researchers have indicated that it is difficult to measure the precise number of Ethiopian and Somali arrivals to Minneapolis due to the fact they represent a variety of residential statuses. As mentioned, some have arrived as refugees or asylum seekers, some have temporary permits, some have become fully naturalized citizens, while others are undocumented (Horst 2006:8). While an incomplete representation, census data from 2000 recorded 11,164 Somali Americans living in Minnesota, with the vast majority concentrated in Minneapolis (Horst 2006:8). As of 2004, 7,500 Ethiopian Americans were reported to be living in the state with, again, the majority located in Minneapolis (Blevins 2007:18–19). By 2021, immigrants from East Africa constituted the second largest group of new arrivals to the Twin Cities. Between 2010 and 2021, the group had increased by 47,000 people, bringing the total East

African population across Minneapolis and St. Paul to 108,263 (O'Neill 2023). Members of Minneapolis' East African community are primarily concentrated in the Cedar-Riverside, Seward, and East Phillips neighborhoods (Blevins 2007:19; Horst 2006:10).

2.2 Residential Life and Neighborhoods

Overview

In the 1860s, the first African American residents in Minneapolis settled on the east side of the Mississippi River in what was then the town of St. Anthony (established in 1849). After Minneapolis and St. Anthony merged in 1872 and the central business district transitioned to downtown Minneapolis on the west side of the river, the African American community followed, concentrating in present-day Wards 6 and 8. By 1895, the city's Black population had increased from less than 100 people in 1860 to over 1,300 people. While African Americans resided across the city, in 1895 they were mostly concentrated close to downtown and in South Minneapolis (Taylor 2002).

In the early twentieth century, as the city's Black population expanded as a result of the Great Migration (see Section 2.1), African American residents began to migrate south and northwesterly throughout Minneapolis (Holmquist and Minnesota Historical Society 1981: 78). However, racially restrictive covenants (contracts prohibiting real estate from being sold to certain racial and ethnic groups), racial violence, and de facto segregation (which was enforced socially, as opposed to legally) limited the neighborhoods available to them. Realtors and homeowners refused to sell African Americans homes in neighborhoods that they understood to be reserved for white residents. Instead, African Americans were, generally, forced to live in neighborhoods viewed as less desirable due to poor or old housing stock, over-crowding, and proximity to industry. These areas were often where other marginalized communities, such as recent immigrants or Jewish families, already resided. As a result, three distinct Black neighborhoods developed in Minneapolis over the twentieth century. As the Black community left St. Anthony at the turn of the century, they established an African American community in the Seven Corners neighborhood, located on the west bank of the Mississippi River to the east of the downtown business district, particularly along Washington and Cedar Avenues. In North Minneapolis, an early enclave developed in the Shingle Creek neighborhood near 50th and Humbolt Avenues North, and in Near North along 6th and Lyndale Avenues North. In the 1930s, African Americans established an enclave in South Minneapolis, between 34th Street East and 46th Street East and from Nicollet Avenue to Chicago Avenue (Burnside 2017a, 2017b). While shaped by external forces, these three neighborhoods fostered rich communities. As Nelson Peery notes in his memoir, the Black community in South Minneapolis during the 1930s was tight-knit and defined by mutual support, joyful expression, entrepreneurship, and social cohesion (Peery 1994; Roper and Townsend 2025).

African Americans living in Minneapolis have historically been limited in where they could safely live and the neighborhoods in which they could find community. Housing discrimination and segregation were

both directly and indirectly encoded into Minneapolis' residential neighborhoods through various techniques, including redlining, racial covenants, and racial violence. As a result of these practices, certain areas of the city were widely understood to be off limits to the Black population. For example, data on racial covenants from the University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice project demonstrates that Black residents were barred from much of the area surrounding the lakes and Linden Hills in South Minneapolis, as well as the area close to Lake Nokomis. In addition, Northeast Minneapolis, which was a home to multiple European immigrant enclaves, was known to be a dangerous area for African Americans to visit or live in. African Americans were also barred from the surrounding suburbs, such as St. Louis Park, Edina, and Richfield. These limits persisted into the 1960s and, even after intentional integration through school busing and public housing, many of these neighborhoods still retain their white racial homogeneity (Mills and Mapping Prejudice 2020a; Montrie 2022; Taylor 2002).

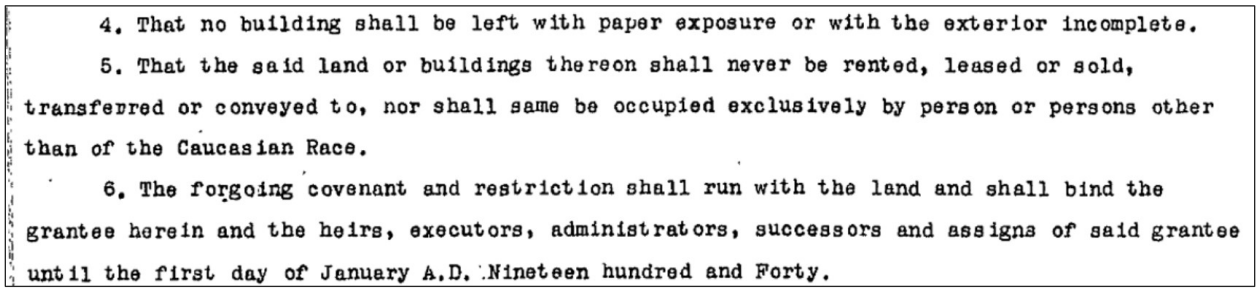
Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, urban renewal (government-sponsored, large-scale redevelopment projects that often targeted areas deemed to be 'slums'), freeway construction, and gentrification have repeatedly displaced Minneapolis' Black residents. In some areas of the city, such as the Southside, this dispersed the African American community, resulting in a less cohesive community than had previously existed. However, on the Northside, the African American community became more concentrated due to the same forces. By 2010, there were large pockets of North Minneapolis that were 75-100% African American. In South Minneapolis, African Americans were concentrated east of the I-35W corridor, but the area was more racially heterogenous (Mills and Mapping Prejudice 2020a). While there was a trend toward integration and greater racial dispersion in some parts of the city in the latter half of the twentieth century (mostly radiating out from the original African American enclaves in the Northside and Southside), in 2010 there were many parts of the city where few to no African Americans lived. For example, the Uptown and Linden Hills neighborhoods on the west side of I-35W, or the area surrounding Lake Nokomis in the far south of the city, are overwhelmingly occupied by white residents (Jubara and Zhang 2021). As of 2020, Black residents accounted for approximately 18.5% of Minneapolis' overall population, or approximately 75,500 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2024).

Residential Restrictions

Redlining and Racial Covenants

The first racial covenants appeared in Minneapolis by 1910, which corresponds with the migration of many Black families to the city from Hastings, Minnesota, as they fled racial violence there in the early twentieth century. Racial covenants banned the sale of covenanted property to anyone considered to be not white. The term racial covenant refers to race-based property ownership restrictions that were written into property deeds, thereby barring the sale of properties with such covenants to members of specified communities. In most cases, the exclusions in racial covenants extended beyond just Black homebuyers to include other racial and ethnic categories, such as Jewish and Italian people. However, all of the racial covenants in Minneapolis barred sale to African Americans (Mapping Prejudice 2024; Thamer 2023). Racial covenants were created nationally, as the racial demographics in the North shifted

during the Great Migration and white people developed racialized concerns about dangers of the urban environment in the early twentieth century. In 1900, Minneapolis, like many northern cities, was not particularly segregated; at the time, African Americans lived in every ward of the city. However, as the Black population in the North began to grow, so too did the white population's fears of 'racial mixing.' Many government officials and business leaders began to see racially integrated neighborhoods as dangerous, and a threat to civic harmony and progressive development. White people organized to enforce racial homogeneity, pushing out Black and other residents of color through racial violence and coercion (Delegard 2019). Racial covenants were implemented as part of this push, working to enforce segregation by keeping people of color out of neighborhoods deemed 'white.' At the same time, real estate steering encouraged African American homebuyers to purchase homes within established Black neighborhoods (Pike 2020). By the post-war period, racial covenants had been discarded as the primary means of enforcing racial segregation. In 1948, the US Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* deemed racially-restrictive housing covenants unenforceable and, in 1953, they were banned by the Minnesota State Legislature (Shelley v Kraemer 334 U.S. 1 1948; Delegard 2019).



4. That no building shall be left with paper exposure or with the exterior incomplete.

5. That the said land or buildings thereon shall never be rented, leased or sold, transferred or conveyed to, nor shall same be occupied exclusively by person or persons other than of the Caucasian Race.

6. The forgoing covenant and restriction shall run with the land and shall bind the grantee herein and the heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns of said grantee until the first day of January A.D. Nineteen hundred and Forty.

Figure 4. Sample Language from a Racial Covenant (Mapping Prejudice 2024)

However, beginning in the 1930s de facto segregation was upheld in cities across the country through the practice of redlining, or denying mortgages to particular racial groups. Between 1935 and 1940, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), an agency of the federal government, mapped cities across the country. In each city, including Minneapolis, they graded neighborhoods from A, "best" or the most desirable, to D, "hazardous" (Nelson et al. 2024). This practice, commonly referred to as redlining, explicitly considered race in its designations: to receive an 'A' designation, neighborhoods were encouraged to have racially restrictive covenants in place, as real estate developers and federal officials believed that mixed-race residential areas were hazardous for investment (Donofrio 2020c). The presence of African Americans or a large amount of racial heterogeneity, poor or working-class families, overcrowding, 'dilapidated' housing, and saloons or bars were all characteristics that could earn a neighborhood a 'hazardous' rating. For example, the 1936 Federal Housing Authority (FHA) underwriting manual, which instructed appraisers on how to valuate both properties and neighborhoods, listed among its "more important adverse influences" for evaluating a neighborhood "the ingress of undesirable racial or nationality groups" (Federal Housing Administration 1936).

Liquor Patrol Limits

In 1884, Minneapolis instituted liquor patrol limits as part of the national temperance movement which sought to mitigate what advocates understood to be the moral and social ills attendant with alcohol consumptions. Within the local context, the liquor laws were an attempt to balance the views of temperance advocates with residents who insisted on access to alcohol, especially immigrant populations (Irish, German, and Polish Americans) that had strong cultural ties to alcohol consumption. Minneapolis' liquor patrol limits zoned drinking establishments such as saloons and taverns into specific areas of the city, with explicit intention of "freeing the homes of people of the blighting and disturbing surroundings of the saloon" (Hathaway 1982:91; Wilkinson 2011). In 1884, the liquor patrol limits ran along the west side of the Mississippi River, primarily encompassing downtown and the gateway district, but extending into North Minneapolis and south to Franklin Avenue along Cedar Avenue in Seven Corners. They also included much of Northeast Minneapolis on the east side of the river. These limits were determined by the distance to which police officers could travel, prior to the advent of motorized vehicles, while out on foot patrol. In 1959, the limits were expanded to run along several major roads in Minneapolis, including Franklin Avenue, Lake Street, Hiawatha and Minnehaha Avenues, and Plymouth Avenue North (see Figure 4 below). The liquor patrol limits encompassed parts of Northeast, downtown, and extended to 'Snus Boulevard' (now Cedar Avenue) in Seven Corners. In practice, this meant that the liquor patrol limits sought to free upper- and middle-class neighborhoods of saloons, bars, and taverns, and instead concentrated them in less affluent neighborhoods primarily occupied by recent immigrants. These neighborhoods were often some of the few places open to African American homebuyers and renters (Hathaway 1982:93; Wilkinson 2011). The presence of drinking establishments, which were also affiliated with sex work and so-called 'red light districts,' became justifications for the disavowal and disinvestment of neighborhoods.

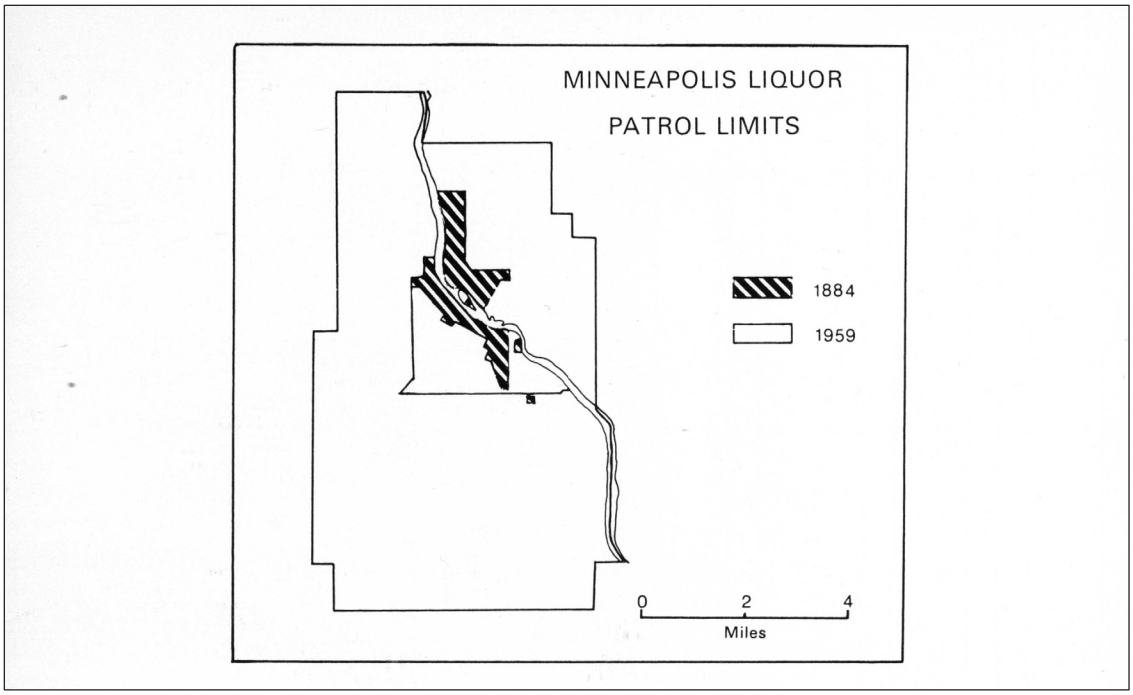


Figure 5. Map of the Liquor Patrol Limits (Hathaway 1985:7)

Racial Violence

Where redlining and racial covenants failed to exclude African Americans from purchasing property, white Minneapolitans frequently resorted to racial violence and animosity to protect their white enclaves. This could take many forms, including coercion and threats of legal action or mob violence if African Americans refused to sell or move out of the neighborhood. White supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, which was active in Minneapolis during the early twentieth century and held positions on the police force and in city government, also contributed to this effort (Minnesota Historical Society 2025). Several examples of racial violence being used to shape neighborhood demographics are included below, but there are many more. As of the writing of this study, for example, the *Star Tribune* is in the process of publishing a six-part podcast series that details white residents' use of violence and coercion to force several middle-class Black families out of Southwest Minneapolis during the 1920s (Roper and Townsend 2025).

Arthur and Edith Lee House

In July of 1931, Edith and Arthur Lee moved into a small bungalow located at 4600 Columbus Avenue South (HE-MPC-09739, extant), within the Field neighborhood of South Minneapolis. Arthur Lee was a World War I veteran and a postal worker. Lee believed that his military service ought to ensure his civil rights as a full citizen of the United States, including the right to own a home wherever he chose, regardless of his race. However, the Field neighborhood was a part of South Minneapolis that was considered a 'white neighborhood,' and the Lees were the first African American family to move there. The Lees' new neighbors attempted to coerce them into leaving through offers to purchase the home back from them at a profit, which the Lees refused. The neighbors then attempted to force the Lee family to leave the neighborhood through racial violence, taunts, threats, and insults. Angry residents

posted signs, threw waste and paint on the property, and threatened the Lees. These taunts quickly turned into a large mob of over 4,000 white people encamped on the lawn and street outside of the Lees' residence. However, the Lees were determined to remain in their new home. They were aided by family, friends, and Arthur's postal worker colleagues, who took shifts to help protect the home during threats of mob violence when the police offered limited protection against the violence (Steiner 2016).

The Lees turned to the NAACP and Lena Olive Smith (see Section 2.4 and 2.7) for legal support in dealing with the situation. Smith assisted the Lees in releasing a statement declaring their intention to remain in the property. Due to her statements, ongoing police presence at the house, and mediation efforts, riots outside the Lees' home mostly ended after July 20, 1931, though police continued to provide protection for the home through September and escorted the Lees' daughter to kindergarten for the following year (Steiner 2016).

The case of the Lees was one of the most notorious and widely publicized examples of housing-related racial violence in the Twin Cities. The story was a turning point in the history of Minneapolis' African American community, highlighting the ongoing issues of housing discrimination and racial violence in the area (Steiner 2016). The Minneapolis City Council designated their house as a local landmark to recognize this history.

Figure 6. Edith and Mary Edythe Lee outside their Home at 4600 Columbus Avenue South, 1931 (Minneapolis Tribune 1931)

The Simpson House (extant), Prospect Park

In 1908, Amy and Madison Jackson, an African American couple, moved into a home at 2003 Franklin Avenue Southeast (HE-MPC-02711, extant) in the all-white neighborhood of Prospect Park. They were followed shortly thereafter by William and Daisy Simpson, another African American couple. The Simpsons purchased a lot at 17 Melbourne Avenue Southeast (HE-MPC-02802, extant), where they built a home. Their white neighbors were outraged by the perceived incursion of Black families into the area and began what the *Minneapolis Tribune* termed a "race war" (Butcher and Pike 2018). White Prospect Park residents attempted to obstruct the construction of the Simpsons' home, while simultaneously trying to purchase the land away from the Simpsons. On October 21, 1909, a group of 125 angry residents protested on the property, threatening violence towards the Simpsons. However, both the Simpsons and the Jacksons remained in their homes for nearly 20 years, despite the harassment. The Jacksons left in 1927 and the Simpsons in 1931, returning the neighborhood to its white racial homogeneity until it slowly began to integrate again in the 1960s (Butcher and Pike 2018).

Malone House (extant), Linden Hills

In 1909, Marie Canfield attempted to sell her home at 4441 Zenith Avenue South (extant) in Linden Hills to African American reverend William S. Malone. When Canfield's neighbors found out about the agreed upon sale, they were furious and held an "indignation meeting" with over 100 attendees. Some even threatened to burn down the house. Canfield cited the other African American families that lived in the vicinity, calling the residential ire "hysterical and forced" (Delegard and Petersen 2019a). However, the white Linden Hills residents continued to protest the sale, and bought the home from Hennepin County rather than see Reverend Malone purchase it. They then proceeded to mobilize against other Black residents of the neighborhood, including Mary Myrick and her family who lived at 4601 Zenith Avenue South (extant). The group of Linden Hills residents attempted to force Myrick to sell her home, becoming indignant when she refused. However, by 1918 Myrick and her family had left the neighborhood and by 1940 Linden Hills was exclusively white (Delegard and Petersen 2019a).

Moses and Mary Burke House, 4952 Washburn Avenue South (non-extant)

Moses and Mary Burke were early African American property owners in Minneapolis. Moses Burke migrated to Minneapolis from Kentucky around 1886. In 1900, the Burkes, who both worked as janitors, bought two lots on the corner of 49th Street West and Washburn Avenue South in the Fulton/Linden Hills Neighborhood, two blocks southwest of Lake Harriet. On this property, the Burkes built a small farmstead, including a home, barn, chicken coop, and well. In 1903, Mary Burke's mother bought a parcel nearby and moved into the neighborhood. In 1907, the Burkes were forced to rebuild their home after it burned down. However, beginning in 1908, white Minneapolitans began pushing African Americans out of the neighborhood through coercion and racial violence. Mary's mother was the victim of one such organized campaign and, in 1913, the Burkes lost their property in South Minneapolis (Delegard and Petersen 2019b).

Obie and Mary Kipper House, 4505 Oakland Avenue South (extant)

In 1957, Obie and Mary Kipper sought to move their family from the area of Nicollet Avenue and 31st Street East to the 4500 block of Oakland Avenue South, thereby crossing the color line (generally understood to be 42nd Street East) that had been defined in South Minneapolis during the first half of the twentieth century. Mary was a public-school teacher, and Obie was a postal worker. The Kippers resorted to a novel tactic in order to purchase a house at 4505 Oakland Avenue South (HE-MPC-11609, extant). Obie turned to a white co-worker at his post office, who, along with his wife, posed as the Kippers during the real estate transaction in order to circumvent the discriminatory housing practices described above. The sellers did not meet the real Kippers until the day they turned over the keys upon completion of the sale. The Kippers subsequently raised their sons, Stanley and Obie, Jr., in what had been an all-white neighborhood (Bream 2019).

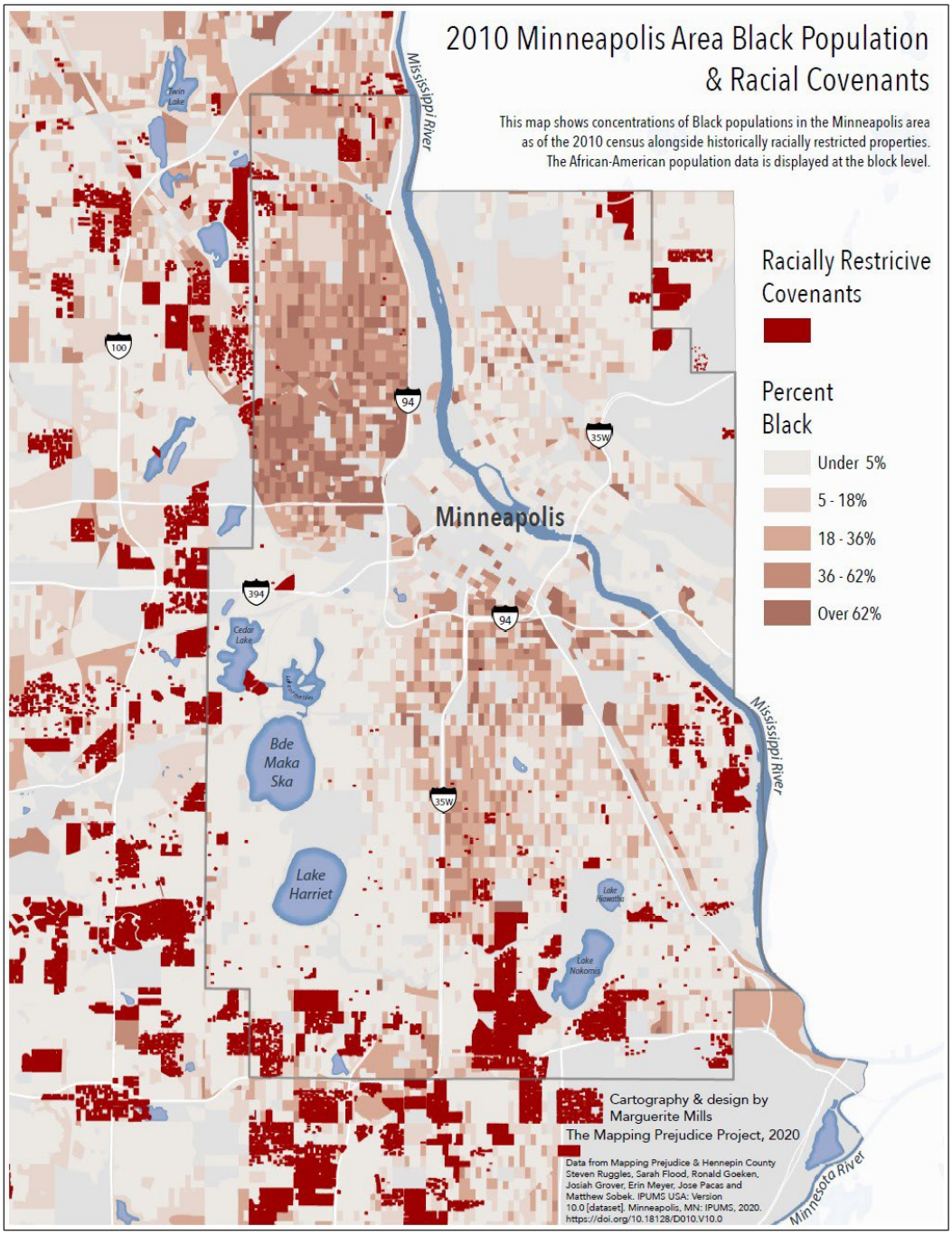


Figure 7. Minneapolis' Black Populations as of 2010 alongside Historically Racially Restricted Properties (shown in red) (Mills and Mapping Prejudice 2020a)

Specific Neighborhoods

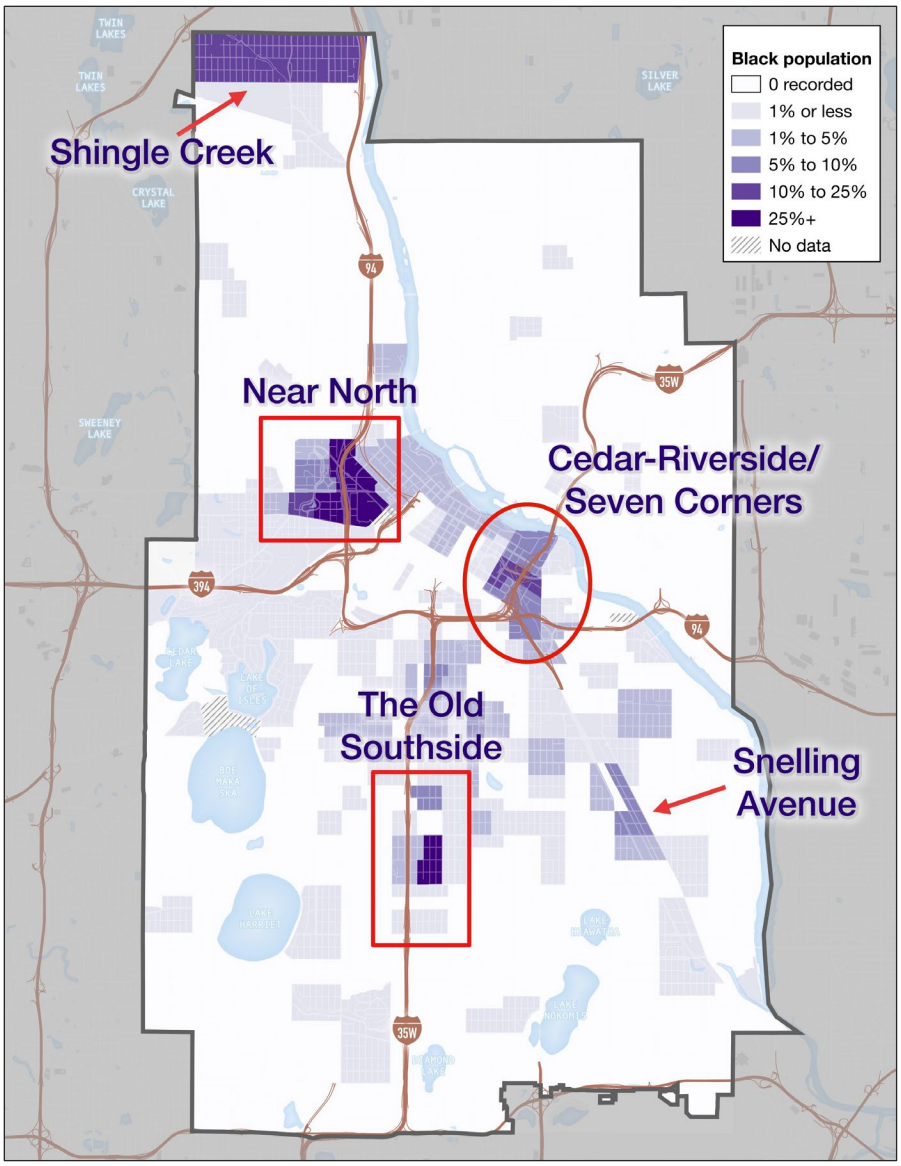


Figure 8. Minneapolis Black Population by U.S. Census Enumeration District, 1940 (Sources: Mapping Prejudice, IPUMS USA)

North Minneapolis

The area that is now North Minneapolis was settled by white Americans in the mid-nineteenth century and was formally organized into several townships before being incorporated into the City of Minneapolis in the 1880s. The construction of sawmills along the Mississippi River helped develop the area as an industrial center. After the merger of St. Anthony and Minneapolis in 1872, the Plymouth Avenue Bridge was constructed to connect the two sides of the city. The construction of the bridge, along with the expansion of the streetcar lines into the area in the 1880s, helped facilitate further residential development and expansion in the area (Peterson and Zellie 1998). Various names have been used to describe the north part of Minneapolis over time, based on a cursory review of newspaper references. In the 1880s, newspapers used “northside,” “Northside,” and “North Side.” When the

Minneapolis Spokesman began publishing in 1934, it also used these variations. The *Minneapolis Journal* used “Near North Side” in 1934 to refer to the area near 6th and Lyndale Avenues North. This name appeared in the *Minneapolis Spokesman* in 1961. In 1975, the City of Minneapolis began referring to a Near North planning district in this area, which appears to have become the neighborhood name that is still used today. Notably, the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council formed in 1969 to serve the Northside, which includes residents of present-day Willard-Hay and Near North. Members of the AAHWG also affirmed “Northside” as their preferred name for the area. In this document, “Near North” and “Northside” are used somewhat interchangeably, but the Northside may refer to a larger geographic boundary than the current “Near North” neighborhood (Gilje 1961:4A; Minneapolis Journal 1934:13; Minneapolis Spokesman 1934a:3, 1934b:3; Minneapolis Tribune 1975:12C).

The key commercial districts that developed in North Minneapolis primarily centered on the streetcar lines. Plymouth and 20th (renamed West Broadway Avenue in August 1920) Avenues North quickly became industrial and commercial hubs. West Broadway, in particular, which was adjacent to major churches, North High School, and some of the residential developments in North Minneapolis intended for more affluent residents, became the center of the Northside community (Peterson and Zellie 1998).

In the late nineteenth century, the population of Minneapolis expanded rapidly as the city’s milling industry boomed. From 1880 to 1920, much of North Minneapolis was platted and developed. North Minneapolis was never a particularly wealthy area. Instead, it mainly attracted recent immigrants to the city and was characterized by a mixture of ethnic, racial, and class groups. While there were many different racial and ethnic groups, the Northside had a particularly large Jewish community that arrived from Eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. The Jewish population initially clustered along 6th Avenue North and Lyndale Avenue North, in the older housing that had already been vacated by earlier German and Scandinavian immigrants. As the Jewish population expanded in the 1910s and 1920s, they moved to residential areas farther out and, in turn, the growing African American population moved into the area along 6th Avenue North (now Olson Memorial Highway) (Peterson and Zellie 1998).

By the time a significant concentration of African Americans began to move into North Minneapolis, the housing had already gone through several generations of residents and generally consisted of small dwellings located in close proximity on irregular plots of land. By 1930, approximately 1,700 African Americans lived on the Northside, particularly in the area surrounding 6th Avenue North (now Olson Memorial Highway) and Lyndale Avenue North, representing roughly 41% of the Black population of Minneapolis as a whole (Peterson and Zellie 1998). 6th Avenue North was once called the “Beale Street of Minneapolis” due to the mixed racial character of the neighborhood and the thriving community that existed along it (Our Streets MPLS et al. 2024). The corner of 6th and Lyndale Avenues North was the focal point of social and political activity for both the African American and Jewish communities in the neighborhood before the intersection was destroyed by the city to make way for Olson Memorial

Highway in the 1930s. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, North Minneapolis continued to house the highest concentration of African Americans in the city (Mills and Mapping Prejudice 2020a).

In the 1930s, city and state officials decided to route Highway 55 along the east-west corridor of 6th Avenue North, despite significant community opposition. Olson Memorial Highway, as Highway 55 was later named, came to divide North Minneapolis from the rest of the city. However, the construction of the highway was not the only project to displace residents. Across the twentieth century, North Minneapolis was repeatedly targeted for 'slum clearance,' the construction of public housing, and urban renewal projects. Between 1935 and 1938, for example, Sumner Field Homes (HE-MPC-08238, non-extant), Minneapolis' first public housing project, was constructed in the Glenwood neighborhood along Olson Memorial Highway, between Emerson and Aldrich Avenues North, on land that was densely occupied with a mix of residential properties (TPT 2017; Martin and Goddard 1989; Peterson and Zellie 1998).

Many institutions developed in North Minneapolis to serve the Black community over the course of the twentieth century. These included the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, the only Black settlement house in the city, The Way Community Center, The Elks Club, and several important religious institutions. North Minneapolis also supported many Black-owned businesses, including the Young Family Barbershop and Satin Doll Salon, the First Plymouth National Bank, and the King Supermarket. North Minneapolis was also home to several important music and social venues that helped foster the growing Minneapolis music scene, including the Clef Club, The Cotton Club, and the Kit Kat club (see Sections 2.4 and 2.5).

In 1967, civil unrest erupted along Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis in response to widespread and long-standing racial inequality within the city. The civil unrest accelerated the relocation of the Jewish community out of North Minneapolis, with the majority moving to suburbs such as St. Louis Park and Minnetonka. This opened up more residential areas to African Americans, who had either formally or informally been excluded or segregated from parts of North Minneapolis. After 1960, North Minneapolis was primarily Black, and Near North, centered on Plymouth Avenue North, was the clear center of the African American community in North Minneapolis. In response to the civil disturbances of 1967, government officials developed urban renewal plans to address the deteriorated housing conditions in the neighborhood. Over the 1970s and 1980s, various public-private redevelopment projects of various scales sought to improve the commercial and residential buildings in the neighborhood. Several public housing projects and affordable housing areas were constructed, as well as new retail and shopping centers. I-94 was constructed along the Mississippi River, effectively isolating industry to its east and residential areas to the west. The highway also cut North Minneapolis residents off from the river itself (Hankin-Redmon 2020; Peterson and Zellie 1998).

Shingle Creek

The Shingle Creek African American community was established in the early decades of the twentieth century. The area, which was situated about five miles north of downtown Minneapolis, was primarily used for agriculture during the nineteenth century. In 1890, Joseph L. and Elizabeth Kuchli laid out the first residential plats in the area on Humbolt Avenue North. Shingle Creek was one of the earliest places where African Americans settled in Minnesota, and several of its earliest African American residents had been born into slavery. The area had approximately 115 African American residents by 1930, despite its isolation and distance from the larger community of African Americans then living along 6th and Lyndale Avenues North in North Minneapolis. By the mid-1930s, much of the land in the area was still used for agriculture. Many of the African American families in the neighborhood owned their own homes, reporting home-ownership rates equivalent to or slightly higher than their white neighbors in the 1920 census. The neighborhood supported two African American churches – the Allen African Methodist Episcopal at 5024 Irving Avenue North (non-extant) and the Humboldt Baptist Mission (now Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church) at 5100 James Avenue North (HE-MPC-08173, extant) (see Section 2.3), in addition to several Black-owned businesses. After World War II, housing construction in the area boomed and continued into the 1970s and 1980s. Today, the area is contained within the Camden neighborhood, at the upper limits of North Minneapolis, and maintains a large African American community (Zellie 2000).

Seven Corners/Cedar-Riverside

In the popular history of Minneapolis, Seven Corners and Bohemian Flats are most frequently described and remembered as Scandinavian and Eastern European enclaves. A 1924 study by the Seven Corners librarian listed residents originally from Sweden, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and more (Engebretson 1950). Cedar Avenue became known to Minneapolitans as 'Snus Boulevard,' due to the Snus (tobacco in Swedish) that many of the area's Scandinavian residents chewed (Lintelman 2019). Similarly, Bohemian Flats was named for the Slavic community which called it home in the early twentieth century. However, the emphasis on European immigration to Seven Corners has often obscured the Black and Jewish communities who found a home in the area in the early twentieth century. The same 1924 study states that the first Black residents arrived in the area in 1870, and, by 1924, the community had grown considerably, though it was still a small percentage of the overall population of the neighborhood, which numbered upwards of 20,000 by some estimates (Engebretson 1950; Hale 1932). Due to the racially-restrictive covenants blanketing much of Minneapolis, Seven Corners was one of the few neighborhoods available to African Americans in the early twentieth century. The area was home to many important Black churches and institutions that played an important role in the Black community of Minneapolis as a whole, including the St. James AME Church, and several important music venues, such as the Key Club on Washington Avenue (see Sections 2.3 and 2.5).

Because Seven Corners was included in the city's liquor patrol limits, saloons, bars, and taverns crowded along many of its main arteries, especially Cedar and Washington Avenues, and had high rates of sex work and prostitution. Due to racial heterogeneity and the presence of Black and Jewish people, the

large concentration of saloons and sex work, and the general perception of the neighborhood as 'run down,' government officials designated the Seven Corners neighborhood as blighted in the early decades of the twentieth century (U.S. Works Projects Administration 1934). The designation prompted government disinvestment and fostered the view among planners and government officials that the neighborhood should be torn down in service of revitalization efforts. The neighborhood was subjected to several redevelopments over the latter part of the twentieth century that repeatedly pushed out residents, particularly the Black community. These included the construction of I-35W and I-94, the expansion of the University of Minnesota into their West Bank campus, and publicly funded urban renewal projects (Martin 1978; Tinsley 2021).

Riverside Plaza

In 1966, developers announced the "New Town-In Town" project, a US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-backed private urban renewal project. The New Town-In Town project was the brainchild of local developers associated with the University of Minnesota, Keith Heller and Gloria Segal, and was designed by noted modernist architect Ralph Rapson. They hoped to redevelop Cedar-Riverside into a planned community, pitched as a self-sustaining town within the city of Minneapolis. Construction on phase one of the project, Cedar Square West (CSW, HE-MPC-04641, extant), began in 1970. Now known as Riverside Plaza, CSW was opened to residents in 1973, and construction was completed in 1974. The complex consists of 15 buildings – 10 high-density residential buildings, four commercial buildings and a parking garage, as well as several surface lots and plazas. While Heller and Segal had hoped to redevelop the whole area, many of the existing residents felt that they were destroying the neighborhood and set out to block future developments through protests and direct action. In 1974, residents filed a lawsuit against the developers and the federal government. The developers declared bankruptcy shortly thereafter. In 1988, the complex was purchased by Sherman Associates and renamed Riverside Plaza. Beginning in the 1990s, Riverside Plaza began to be the hub of the East African (primarily Somali, Ethiopian, and Eritrean) immigrant community in Minneapolis. It continues to anchor the East African and African American community of Cedar-Riverside (see Section 2.1). The complex underwent major renovations in 2010 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010 (National Park Service 2023; Roise and Gales 2010; Tinsley 2021).

Figure 9. Riverside Plaza, 1976 (City of Minneapolis 1976)

South Minneapolis

The early development of South Minneapolis concentrated along the Mississippi River to the east and the Chain of Lakes to the west. The land around the lakes was the most desirable, and many of the city's early business magnates and wealthy residents built homes in their vicinity. Until the turn of the twentieth century, South Minneapolis was primarily populated by European immigrants and migrants from the East Coast and the proximate Midwest. There were some small pockets of African Americans, mostly concentrated close to downtown, in the Seward neighborhood, and along 31st Avenue South, near the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul rail corridor (Pearson and Roise 2000a). During the city's rapid growth in the late nineteenth century, South Minneapolis expanded rapidly and became a destination for new arrivals in the city.

By the 1930s, a greater number of African Americans in Minneapolis began to move to South Minneapolis and developed several distinct communities. The largest of these was centered on a Black business node at 38th Street East and 4th Avenue South and spread throughout the area between 34th and 46th Streets East and Nicollet and Chicago Avenues. This area is known as Old Southside (see Section 2.4) (Burnside 2017a; Pike 2020). Another African American enclave was established along Snelling Avenue, between Lake Street East and 32nd Street, extending to Minnehaha and Hiawatha Avenues. This neighborhood had high rates of home-ownership and was long a stable, mostly middle-class community of African Americans in Minneapolis (Zellie 2009).

Old Southside

The Old Southside, was one of the few integrated areas of the city. It was a working- and middle-class community where Black residents could own homes and have a "stable child-rearing environment"

(Lloyd 2013:149). Former African American residents of the neighborhood recalled that though this neighborhood was, from 1930 to 1950, mostly white, it was nonetheless the hub of the African American middle class in Minneapolis. It was also seen as a welcoming place for Black newcomers and visitors to the city, where they were able to rent homes or rooms at a time when many hotels refused to accept them. For example, former resident Louverne Williams recalled her neighbor renting a room at 3616 4th Avenue South to the athlete Willie Mays, who was briefly in town while playing for the Minneapolis Millers (see Section 2.5). The area was attractive to African Americans because it boasted good schools, diverse faith institutions, and was safe enough that residents felt comfortable leaving their doors unlocked and letting their children roam the neighborhood freely (Lloyd 2013; Sturdevant 2016).

When freeway routes were planned through Minneapolis in the 1950s, I-35W was routed directly through the Old Southside neighborhood (see Section 2.4). Construction began on the South Minneapolis corridor of I-35W in 1959. As it came through the Old Southside, it created a physical dividing line through the community. The area to the west of the freeway became almost exclusively white, while African Americans and other people of color were segregated to the east of the freeway (Pike 2020). Many of those whose homes were destroyed or relocated by the construction of the freeways moved to the east of I-35W. Some African Americans from the community relocated to North Minneapolis, while others moved to the suburbs. However, for the most part, it was difficult for Black families to relocate – it was a struggle to receive a fair market value for their homes, and they were limited in where they could relocate due to housing discrimination (Lloyd 2013).

Snelling Avenue

In the early twentieth century, African Americans settled along Snelling Avenue, between Minnehaha and Hiawatha Avenues, south of Lake Street on the east side of South Minneapolis. Despite the industrial nature of the neighborhood, the area had high rates of homeownership among African Americans. The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul (CM&StP) railroad corridor ran adjacent to Snelling Avenue and offered many relatively well-paying jobs to African Americans, who could be employed as laborers, porters, cooks, waiters, and coachmen (see Section 2.4). By 1930, the core of the African American community in this area was concentrated between 3500 and 3700 Snelling Avenue. Industrial expansion in the area after 1930 significantly impacted the neighborhood, removing all but one house from the 3000 and 3200 blocks of Snelling Avenue (Zellie 2009:1–2).

Significant individuals who lived in the community include Henry Michael Bannarn (1910-1965), a painter and sculpture who was a contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, well-known writer and journalist Mary Edith James (married name Kyle) (1908-1994) who owned the African American newspaper the *Twin Cities Courier*, and Sylvestus Phelps, the female owner of the Phelps Café and Hotel at 246 4th Avenue South (non-extant) and operator of the 'Oh Boy! Chicken' Shack at the Minnesota State Fair. Significant institutions included Fire Station 24, which began as an all-Black fire station (see

Section 2.4), and St. James AME, the oldest African American congregation in Minnesota which relocated to 3600 Snelling Avenue in 1958 (Zellie 2009:7–8).

Property Ownership and Dispossession

Property ownership was an important way in which African Americans achieved upward mobility, stability, and community in Minneapolis from their earliest arrival to the present day. There were significant numbers of Black homeowners within the Shingle Creek neighborhood and Old Southside during the first half of the twentieth century, for instance (Lloyd 2013:149; Zellie 2000:20). However, structural inequities made it difficult for African Americans to purchase and retain property within the city, generally. Many significant individuals were often the first Black property owners in an all-white neighborhood, and they often faced substantial backlash to their presence. In addition, vast urban redevelopment projects often targeted African American neighborhoods, stripping Black homeowners of their property through eminent domain. In part because of this history, only 29% of African American households in Minnesota owned their homes as of 2024, compared to 77% of white households. Minnesota has one of the largest racial homeownership gaps in the country, which is directly tied to disparities in generational wealth according to race (Crann and Alvarez 2024).

Property Ownership

John Samuel Wright I and Fannie Hall Wright

John Samuel Wright I and Fannie Hall Wright migrated to Minneapolis from Kentucky in the 1890s to join family, including Fannie Wright's cousin George Hall. They were committed to advancing the interests of the African American community in Minneapolis. John Wright was the director of educational programs and community outreach at the Bethesda Baptist Church and a member of the National Afro-American Council (predecessor of the NAACP), in which he helped organize the biannual convention of the National Afro-American Council in St. Paul. Fannie Hall Wright was more progressive and radical than her husband – she was a member of the St. Peter's AME Church in South Minneapolis, a founding member of Minneapolis' Colored Women's Pioneer Economic Development Club, a member of the Order of the Eastern Star, the women's auxiliary of the Prince Hall Masons, a leader of the Sisters of the Mysterious Ten (a quasi-secret society dedicated to Black women), and organized fundraisers for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (Winkler-Morey 2021).

The Wrights arrived with next to nothing yet were able to grow their wealth and purchase not only a home in South Minneapolis at the intersection of 27th Street East and 11th Avenue South, but two apartment buildings and a farm in Robbinsdale. One apartment building was in the Phillips neighborhood at 911 22nd Street East (non-extant), while the other was located at 4th Avenue South and 24th Street East (non-extant). The apartment buildings were home to several leading Black families in Minneapolis, including Cecil Newman, founder and editor of what is now the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, Matthew Little, prominent civil rights leader, and Curtis and Mildred Ewing, local leaders of the Black Bahái Community. Their children included Boyd A. Wright and Martha Wright, both of whom attended the University of Minnesota. John S. Wright II, grandchild of John and Fannie Wright, was also

raised in the apartment buildings and would go on to become one of the leaders of the Morrill Hall takeover at the University of Minnesota. The Wrights eventually provided a parsonage in their Minneapolis home (non-extant) for the Bethesda Baptist Church (Winkler-Morey 2021).

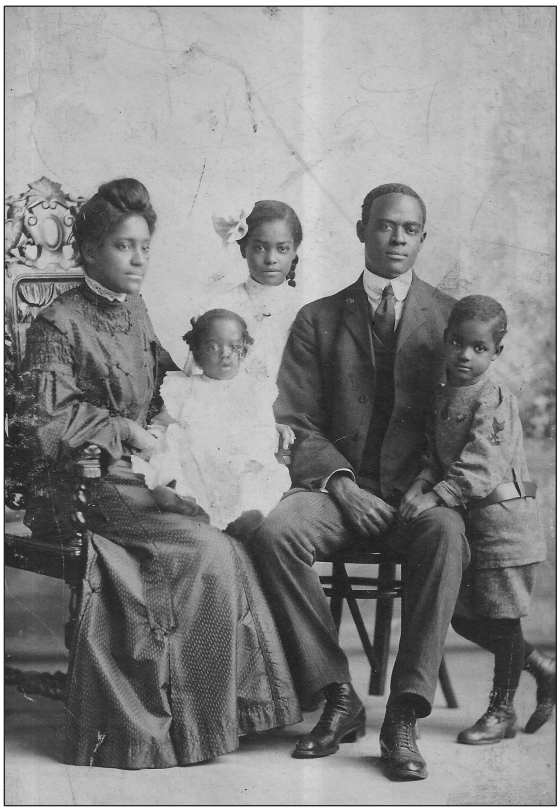


Figure 10. John S. and Fannie Hall Wright with their Children, circa 1905 (Winkler-Morey 2021)

Tilsenbilt Homes

The Tilsenbilt Homes were an early commercial housing development project by Archie Givens, Sr., and were among the first interracial housing developments in the country.

The project began in 1953 as a collaboration between the FHA, the Minneapolis Urban League, and several African American realtors, including Archie Givens, Sr. The lots purchased for the development were located between the prominent Black community of the Old Southside and the almost exclusively white community located farther south, with 42nd Street East serving as the dividing line between the two. Givens recruited prominent builder Edward Tilsen, a Ukrainian immigrant, who lent his name and credibility to the project. Tilsen constructed a total of 52 homes as part of the project, all of which were completed by 1957. Almost 90% of the purchasers of these homes were African American or mixed-race. While some of the area's white residents did relocate due to the project, the neighborhood was not significantly affected by white flight following the construction and occupation of the Tilsenbilt Homes. The neighborhood was possibly the most integrated neighborhood in Minneapolis in the 1950s and helped demonstrate that integrated housing could be successful (Frenz et al. 2016). To recognize this history, the Minneapolis City Council designated the Tilsenbilt Homes Historic District, composed of

single-story single-family homes located between 39th and 47th Streets East on 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues South in the Regina, Bryant, and Field Neighborhoods of South Minneapolis (Frenz et al. 2016).

Dispossession

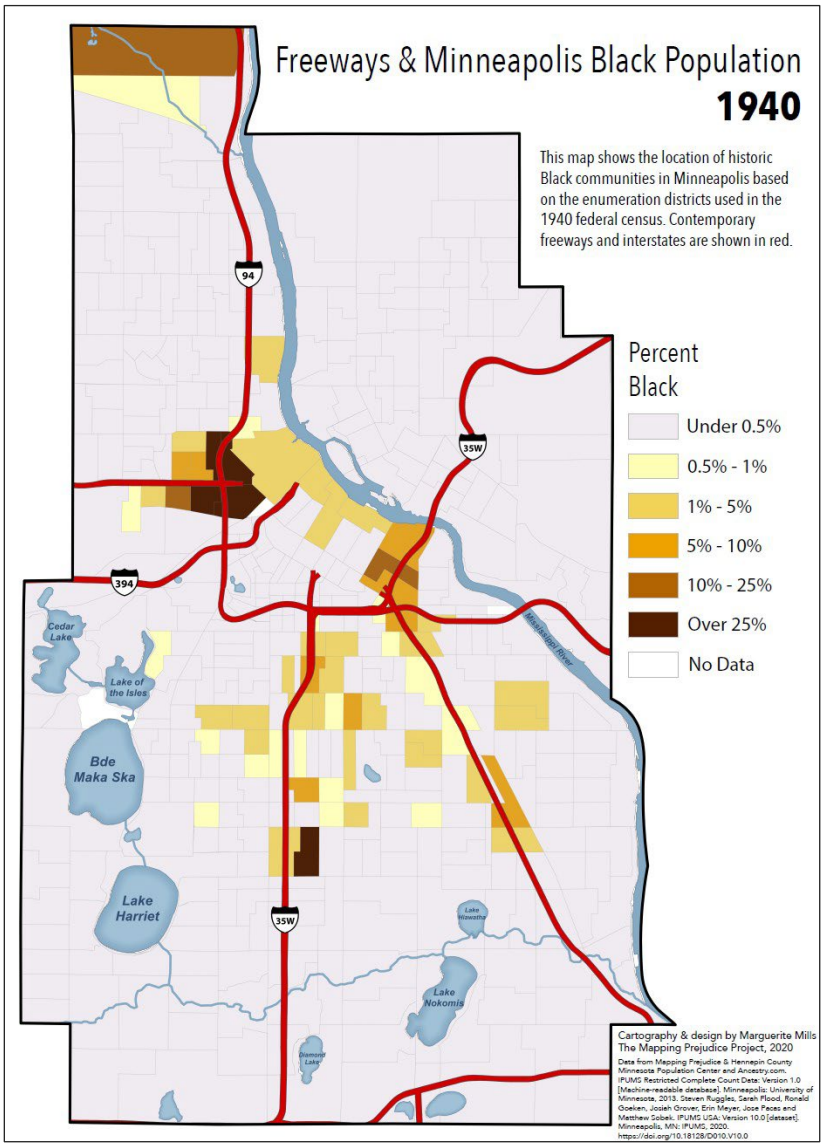


Figure 11. Minneapolis Black Population as of 1940 and Freeway Locations (Mills and Mapping Prejudice 2020b)

Freeway Development

Freeway planning was publicly linked to both 'slum clearance' and urban redevelopment as early as 1939. Across the country, freeway planners purposefully routed freeways through 'blighted' areas, predominately those associated with the poor and people of color, arguing that the benefits of routing the interstates through these neighborhoods were twofold. First, they said, the land would be cheaper to acquire and thus would lower the project's costs. Second, they could use the projects to clear 'slum housing' and 'urban blight,' thereby improving the physical appearance of the city. Historian Raymond A.

Mohl has shown that “builders were clearly conscious of the social consequences of interstate route location [and that] it was quite obvious that neighborhoods and communities would be destroyed, and people uprooted, but this was thought to be an acceptable cost” (Mohl 2001).

In Minneapolis, the freeways were planned and constructed by the Minnesota Department of Highways (MDH, now MnDOT) beginning in the 1940s with the passage of the 1944 Federal-Aid Highway Act (Lloyd 2013). Routes were first announced in 1956 and the first (and only) public hearings on the path of I-35W and I-94 were held by MDH in 1957 (Donofrio 2020b). Freeways were routed through each of the Black communities throughout Minneapolis: Cedar-Riverside/Seven Corners, North Minneapolis, and the Old Southside. Freeway planners dismissed the destruction of these neighborhoods. For example, in describing the neighborhoods through which I-35W would go in South Minneapolis, an MDH report argued that there were “no functioning neighborhoods now existing in the South Corridor. Neighborhood elements such as schools, parks, and shopping districts do exist of course, but the Planning Commission could not find any unified and strongly functioning groupings” (Lloyd 2013). This was clearly inconsistent with the reality of the thriving Black community in the Old Southside, which was considered the hub of the Black middle class in Minneapolis. The freeway destroyed much of the community’s physical fabric, wiping away Black businesses and creating a racial dividing line that disconnected and ultimately displaced the community (Pike 2020).

Urban Renewal

After World War II, cities went through dramatic changes. As people returned home from the war, there was a dramatic rise in births, leading to a rapidly increasing population size. In addition, the GI Bill of 1944 made it easier for returning veterans to purchase homes. Many of the families who received the benefits of the GI Bill decided to purchase homes in the newly developing suburbs. This was facilitated by the invention and construction of freeways, which opened land outside the city for development. While not specifically excluded within the law itself, Black veterans were routinely denied bank loans for mortgages and faced intense discrimination that prevented them from purchasing homes in the predominantly white suburbs. As a result, many Black veterans were excluded from the benefits of the GI Bill that their white counterparts received. Cities were viewed by these suburban homemakers, as well as government officials, to be in decline – they pointed to what they saw as the blighted slums of the urban core, which were seen as dangerous, over-crowded, unclean, and, importantly, home to African Americans and racial mixing. As described above, these ideas materialized through hazardous designations by the FHA and HOLC, which prompted continued disinvestment in these areas. However, city governments were also stymied by the decreasing tax revenue that resulted from wealthy and middle-class residents leaving for the suburbs. Urban renewal promised a solution (Martin 1978; Tinsley 2024).

Urban renewal refers to federal programs to incentivize the redevelopment of cities, typically those areas considered “slums.” Urban renewal made large pools of federal funds and resources available to local and state governments, which undertook large-scale clearance and reconstruction projects aimed

at creating a more "rational," livable city (Martin and Goddard 1989:1). While these projects promised to create a better living environment for all Americans, in practice they targeted African American and racially mixed communities. Using the process of eminent domain, whereby a government is legally allowed to forcibly take private property, local governments stripped African Americans of their homes and turned them over to private developers. Restrictions governing the use of eminent domain dictated that property owners needed to be compensated, but the fairness of that compensation, in practice, was often debated. While not every home taken for urban renewal belonged to an African American, the Black community was disproportionally affected by such projects. Many of the important community sites and neighborhoods in the city were lost to redevelopment. Due to push back from community activists, beginning in the 1960s urban renewal projects began to incorporate public and low-income housing. Many of the public housing projects in Minneapolis were built in historically Black communities through urban renewal projects (Martin and Goddard 1989:18; Tinsley 2024).

Glenwood/Grant/Sumner Field

The Glenwood and Grant neighborhoods are located in North Minneapolis, south of Plymouth Avenue North between Lyndale and Logan Avenues North and bisected east-west by Olson Memorial Highway. I-94 runs along and through the eastern edge of the communities. In the early twentieth century, the area was home to a large Jewish community, who had first settled in the area in the 1890s, and a significant African American population who had first settled in the area in the early 1920s. In 1911, the Minneapolis Park Board established Sumner Field Park, acquiring the land for it through condemnation. The park was extensively used and has remained an important community gathering site. Following World War II, the Black population in the area increased substantially, while the Jewish population dispersed across the larger metro area. By 1960, the Glenwood neighborhood was 55% Black and the Northside, more broadly, was one of the largest Black communities in Minneapolis (Hankin-Redmon 2020; Martin and Goddard 1989; Smith 2024; TPT 2017).

Sumner Field Homes

North Minneapolis was targeted for urban redevelopment and renewal as early as the 1930s, when housing was demolished to make way for industrial redevelopment. In 1938, the city's first public housing project, Sumner Field Homes, was constructed by the WPA in the neighborhood. The Sumner Field Homes (HE-MPC-08238, non-extant) replaced approximately 30 acres of housing along 6th Avenue North with 600 new multi-family units. It consisted of 44 two-story row homes and four three-story apartment buildings.

The housing project was, for many, the center of an interconnected community in North Minneapolis. Despite being segregated based on race and ethnicity, many residents described racial mixing within Sumner Field Homes in the early years. However, as the neighborhood became more isolated due to freeway construction, the population of Sumner Field Homes shifted as white and Jewish people moved out and more low-income African Americans moved in. In the 1970s, the housing projects were one of the places that East Asian immigrants, including a large Hmong community, fleeing the Vietnam War

settled. By the 1990s, Sumner Field Homes was primarily populated by Asian and African American families (Hennepin County Library 2024; Martin and Goddard 1989; TPT 2017).

There were many important community organizations that began in Sumner Field Homes, including Parents in Community Action (PICA), Head Start, and the Glendale/Lynwood Community Center. Perhaps Sumner Field Homes' most famous former resident was Prince Rogers Nelson, although there were many important African American figures who came up in the projects. However, by the 1990s the Sumner Field Homes needed dramatic rehabilitation. Due to the Hollman Consent Decree, the Sumner Field Homes were razed in 1998 and eventually replaced by the Heritage Park Housing Development, which was completed in 2009 (Hennepin County Library 2024).

Figure 12. Sumner Field Homes and Sumner Field, 1937 (Minneapolis Public Works Department 1937)

Glenwood

The Glenwood urban renewal project began in 1954, although the initial plans were submitted in 1950. The project area stretched from 12th Avenue North to Girard Avenue North and from Glenwood Avenue North to Olson Memorial Highway. The project area encompassed 180 acres and property acquisition began in 1956. Over 700 housing units were demolished over the course of the project. In their place, 831 units of housing were constructed, including several large apartment blocks and public housing. This included Glenwood Homes (1960), Lyndale South Apartments (1959), and University Towers (1974) (Martin and Goddard 1989).

Glendale Townhomes

The Glendale Townhomes in the Prospect Park neighborhood were built in 1952 as housing for veterans and low-income residents, making them the oldest extant public housing in Minneapolis. The Glendale Townhomes extend from 27th Avenue Southeast, Delaware Street Southeast, Williams Avenue

Southeast, and St. Mary's Place (HE-MPC-18030). The Glendale Townhomes were designed by architectural firm Larson and McLaren and consist of 184 homes spanning 14.5 acres of land. In the 1960s, the University of Minnesota established an experimental extension program offering free "storefront" courses for the residents (Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition 2023). One of the first Head Start programs for preschool children opened in Glendale at 55 and 57 Saint Mary's Avenue, which became the nationally recognized Early Childhood Development Program that currently enrolls 150 children from Glendale and the broader Minneapolis community. In 2014, the Defend Glendale Campaign formed to organize against plans to privatize the public housing through HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program. The effort successfully swayed the City Council and prevented the plans from being enacted but, in 2017, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) and the City of Minneapolis announced plans to demolish and/or privatize the entire public housing stock of Minneapolis through federal HUD programs. The Defend Glendale Campaign, primarily led by Black women, has continued to organize, incorporating public housing activists across the city as the Defend Glendale and Public Housing Coalition (DG&PHC) (Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition 2023; Department of Community Planning and Economic Development 2019).

Hollman v. Cisneros

In 1992, the NAACP and Legal Aid filed a lawsuit against the City of Minneapolis on behalf of several families living in public or subsidized housing. The lawsuit, *Hollman v. Cisneros,* alleged that the city had engaged in historical patterns of segregation in its placement of public housing. The lawsuit primarily rooted this claim in the city's concentration of public housing built in the Glenwood and Grant neighborhoods of North Minneapolis in the 1950s, and lack of upkeep of those properties in the subsequent decades. The lawsuit aimed to increase the quality and geographic diversity of public housing throughout the city. In 1995, the case was settled and resulted in the Hollman Consent Decree, which required that the city demolish and redevelop 770 units of public housing in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs. While the Hollman Consent Decree is credited with creating more public housing in the Twin Cities over the long term, it was extremely disruptive to communities of color. Over 500 communities were relocated across the metro area in the 1990s and early 2000s. While some families relocated within the neighborhood, many more were displaced and moved to nearby neighborhoods or suburbs (Family Housing Fund 2002; Goetz 2002).

2.3 Religion and Houses of Worship

Overview

Although European colonists largely introduced Christianity to Black people they had enslaved in North America, African Americans developed their own versions and stylistic expressions of the Christian faith that provided spiritual uplift and fostered tight-knit communities. Whether rural or urban, African Americans faced discrimination and segregation, resulting in many forming their own churches separate from their white counterparts. Even then, they often faced restrictions on their religious activities and ability to hold leadership positions within the churches they formed (Bailey 2016:53). White church

leadership often forbade unsupervised gatherings, voting on church affairs, and emotional expressions of faith, as well as prevented Blacks from receiving sacraments until after white congregants had finished (Bailey 2016:53).

Black churches in growing urban areas, like Minneapolis, were frequently forced to relocate due to broader community development, urban renewal projects, and city efforts to clear what they determined to be blighted areas (Tinsley 2024:1). However, congregations also voluntarily moved in response to population growth and shifting residential and commercial neighborhoods to better serve their congregations (Taylor 2002:18). Not only did Black churches provide religious services for congregants, but they also served important community functions by providing social and intellectual opportunities and welfare assistance to Black residents, which were typically denied them by white-dominated institutions (Granger et al. 1998:80; Pinn 2022:31; Taylor 2002:19; Taylor et al. 2005:501-502). This was especially crucial for formerly enslaved individuals who found both freedom and much needed community support within African American churches after emancipation (Battle 1979:5). At a time of deep discrimination in housing, employment, politics, and education, it was frequently only within church spaces that African Americans could access education, participate in political discussions and activities, exercise their unique talents, and find fellowship and the strength to endure hardships and discrimination (Battle 1979:8).

In Minnesota, African Americans carried their faith traditions and cultural practices when migrating to the state. Black churches representing a variety of Christian faiths served as cultural centers that offered their communities strength in the face of rampant racial discrimination beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century (Glover 2021; Taylor 2002:9). As detailed in the histories below, discrimination, financial difficulties, city development projects, fires, and demographic shifts led to Black churches in Minneapolis to frequently relocate out of necessity. Regardless of where and how often they moved, each church embraced and retained their core missions to serve both the spiritual, social, and material needs of its congregants and the communities of which they were a part.

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Traditions

The AME faith is one of the primary Black spiritual traditions in the United States. Its founding is attributed to Richard Allen following a 1787 incident at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Pinn 2022:31). The church was under renovation at the time. Although services were still being held in the church, the location where Black congregants were assigned to worship was in constant flux (Bailey 2016:54). When Black congregants accidentally sat too near their white counterparts, they were yanked up off their knees and forced into the African American section designated for that particular service (Bailey 2016:54).

Allen was one of those Black congregants forced into the segregated section of the church. After this incident, Allen co-founded the Free African Society, which was a mutual aid society created to financially and spiritually assist other African Americans in Philadelphia (Pinn 2022:31). This mutual aid society

developed church-like qualities and, in 1794, it established Bethel Church (now referred to as Mother Bethel AME Church) in an old blacksmith's shop (Pinn 2022:32). Many Methodist Episcopal church members feared the idea of an independent Black congregation and white leadership began harassing African American Methodists (Bailey 2016:57). The harassment grew so intense that Bethel's congregation physically blocked a white preacher from conducting their services one Sunday (Bailey 2016:57). The Philadelphia Supreme Court took up the case filed by the white minister and, in 1816, ruled in favor of Bethel Church, granting the congregation independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church (Bailey 2016:57). The AME Church was organized that same year. The first AME convention, held in 1816, inspired the creation of mutual aid societies to help newly arrived African Americans in discriminatory urban spaces (Pinn 2022:33, 35, 57). Literacy and the education of African Americans also quickly became a core tenet of the AME Church's community support activities (Pinn 2022:35).

Around the same time as the 1787 incident at St. George's in Philadelphia, Abraham Thompson, James Varick, William Miller, June Scott, and other African Americans split from the John Street Church in New York City to form their own church due to the discrimination Black people experienced within the white-dominated congregation (Wesleyan University 2024). In 1801, the group received formal recognition as an affiliate of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the church became known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church in New York (Wesleyan University 2024). In 1820, the church officially separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church and, in 1848, further differentiated itself from AME congregations in Philadelphia by adding "Zion" to its name (Wesleyan University 2024).

St. James AME Church (also known as Mother St. James)

Free Blacks carried the AME Church to Minnesota around 1860. Initially, Black women and men who had settled in St. Anthony practiced their faith at prayer meetings held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Brown (Mother Saint James 2024a; University of Minnesota 2024a). In 1863, the Browns and their two daughters joined with Mr. Isaac Newton and Mrs. Mattie Williams to found St. James AME Church (University of Minnesota 2024a). By 1869, the new congregation, which was then under the leadership of Rev. W. Hedgeman, had obtained enough funding to purchase a church formerly belonging to a white congregation at 6th Avenue Southeast and 2nd Street (Mother Saint James 2024b; Taylor 2002:9; University of Minnesota 2024). St. James AME struggled to maintain a permanent home over subsequent decades, however, experiencing repeated displacement due to urban renewal projects, interstate construction, and financial issues (Tinsley 2024:1). The church's next three locations were in former commercial spaces: a storefront on Main Street, a feedstore near 1st Avenue Southeast and 2nd Street Southeast, and a storefront at 422 5th Avenue South (all non-extant) (University of Minnesota 2024a).

In 1892, the St. James AME congregation constructed a red brick church at 4th Street and 8th Avenue South under the guidance of Rev. Butler (Mother Saint James 2024b; University of Minnesota 2024a). By 1916, however, the Rock Island Railroad undertook an expansion project that displaced the St. James AME congregation once again due to the proximity of the railroad's new tracks, leading to another

period of fluctuating locations (City of Minneapolis 2018:17; Tinsley 2024:1; University of Minnesota 2024). Financial issues prevented the church from finding a new permanent home and the congregation subsequently held services in a storefront at 5th Street and 4th Avenue, a building at Bloomington Avenue and 26th Street, and other buildings at 1306 6th Avenue North (non-extant) and 41 5th Avenue South (non-extant) (Tinsley 2024:2; University of Minnesota 2024).

By 1918, the St. James AME congregation had dwindled after many members left to join St. Peter's AME Church, which had split into a separate mission from St. James AME around 1880 (St. Peter's AME Church 2024; Taylor 2002:18; University of Minnesota 2024). Under the leadership of Rev. J.T. Merritt, Sr., the St. James AME congregation took ownership of a former synagogue at 314 15th Avenue South (non-extant) where they remained for almost four decades (University of Minnesota 2024a). In 1956, financial difficulties and highway construction pushed St. James AME to sell the building (Mother Saint James 2024b; Tinsley 2024:2). The congregation moved services into the Pillsbury Settlement House, sometimes also making use of a nearby funeral home, and made plans for the construction of a new church (Mother Saint James 2024a; Tinsley 2024:2). Rev. Cleveland Duke Smalls headed fundraising efforts and oversaw the construction of the new church at 3600 Snelling Avenue, which would finally become the congregation's permanent home in 1958 (University of Minnesota 2024a).

Figure 13. St. James AME Church (3600 Snelling Avenue) (Mother Saint James 2024a)

As in Black churches throughout the US, offering community social services was key to the St. James AME mission even through the congregation's frequent displacement and financial difficulties (Tinsley 2024:1). By the early twentieth century, the church was well-known for its unique blending of caring for the spiritual and social welfare of its community, including offering educational lectures, night school and trades classes, kindergarten classes, banking services, and special support for mothers (City of

Minneapolis 2018:17). The church that the St. James AME congregation built in 1902 was designed by Edwin Parker Overmire and became known as the St. James AME Church and Social Settlement (City of Minneapolis 2018:17). Today, St. James, also known as Mother St. James, remains active within the AME faith and the community it serves from its location at 3600 Snelling Avenue in Minneapolis, which was designated by the Minneapolis City Council as a local landmark.

St. Peter's AME Church

St. Peter's AME Church emerged from a congregational disagreement within the St. James AME Church. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not uncommon for Black churches to relocate in response to population growth and shifting residential and commercial neighborhoods (Taylor 2002:18). One such population shift led to a split in the St. James AME congregation around 1880 when those members who wanted services held closer to downtown formed a separate mission, which was incorporated as St. Peter's AME Church in 1886 (St. Peter's AME Church 2024; Taylor 2002:18). Fundraising efforts, including the major support of the Mission Sewing Circle, eventually raised $7,000 for the construction of a permanent church at 920 22nd Street East in 1888 (Minnesota Historical Records Survey:332; St. Peter's AME Church 2024; Taylor 2002:18). A fire destroyed the church in 1893, sending the congregation into a series of temporary homes until the church was rebuilt at 916 22nd Street East (St. Peter's AME Church 2024). In 1915, the church acquired a parsonage at nearby 2205 Elliot Avenue (Twin City Star 1915).

On May 6, 1951, fire destroyed the second St. Peter's AME Church. The congregation, however, had already been raising funds to construct a new church near 38th Street East and 4th Avenue South, which is where about 70% of its parishioners lived at the time (St. Paul Recorder 1949). In August of that year, a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the new site, located at 401 41st Street East (HE-MPC-04701, extant), with construction beginning soon after (St. Paul Recorder 1951b, 1951c, 1951d). After the fire, the parsonage was relocated to a house at 3756 5th Avenue South (HE-MPC-12738, extant), which was closer to the new church (St. Paul Recorder 1951b; Twin City Star 1915).

Like other African American churches, the St. Peter's AME congregation wove social justice and community needs with their faith. The church hosted activities associated with uplifting the Black community and the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s to 1960s, such as offering the church up as a site for NAACP meetings (Granger, Susan, et. al. 1993; Price 2013). To better serve their growing congregation, which was likely fed by a surge in African American migration to Minneapolis in the 1960s (see Section 2.1), St. Peter's AME constructed an education wing on the church in 1967 (Minneapolis 1967; Taylor 2002:51).

Figure 14. St. Peter's AME Church (401 41st Street East) (Bowman 1980a)

Wayman AME Church

Wayman AME Church was established by Elder Thomas Stoval in 1919 in the home of Mrs. Lucinda Jackson (106 Group, Ltd. 2012; Hennepin County Library 2023; University of Minnesota 2024b). At the time, the only AME churches in Minneapolis were St. James and St. Peter's, and both were in South Minneapolis. This meant that those of the AME faith in northern neighborhoods had no church that specifically served their community. Wayman AME Church was named for Alexander Walker Wayman who served as the seventh AME Bishop in the 1860s, worked tirelessly for the advancement of the AME Church, and was a close friend of Frederick Douglass (Documenting the American South 2024; Frederick Douglass Museum and Cultural Center 2024).

As was the case with the establishment of St. James AME Church, the Wayman AME congregation held services in members' private homes until a permanent church was secured. In 1938, they built their first church at 537 James Avenue North, which was destroyed by fire later that year (University of Minnesota 2024b; 106 Group 2012). The congregation then remodeled a duplex at 819 Fremont Avenue North (non-extant), turning the first floor into a sanctuary and the second floor into a parsonage, and held services there until they sold the building in 1944 and purchased a larger building one block away at 619 Fremont Avenue North (non-extant) (106 Group 2012).

In 1954, Dr. Marlin J. Hendrieth of Detroit was sent to the Wayman congregation by the AME bishop and charged with the task of overseeing the construction of a new church (106 Group, Ltd. 2012). It would take 12 years for the church to become a reality as committees poured over architectural plans and raised funds. In 1966, the new church at 1221 7th Avenue North (HE-MPC-08290, extant) was finally completed (106 Group, Ltd. 2012; Insight News 2019; University of Minnesota 2024b). In 1967, the building at 619 Fremont Avenue North was demolished (Hennepin County Library 1966).

Figure 15. Wayman AME Church, 1980 (Bowman 1980b)

Since the Wayman AME Church's inception, and like other Black churches, the congregation has worked to serve the needs of the North Minneapolis African American community beyond a strictly spiritual capacity. Social justice is interwoven with the congregation's faith and can be seen in their political and community activism to address racism and housing injustice, focusing on the lack of affordable housing, the needs of those who are unhoused, and healing racial tensions, such as its work in helping to build houses that were more supportive of family life at Emerson Village and bringing the community together after the 2020 murder of George Floyd (Novacek 2021). Today, the Wayman AME Church remains an active congregation housed at 1221 7th Avenue North in Minneapolis.

Baptist Traditions

The Baptist faith, which originated in seventeenth century England, drew free and enslaved Blacks into its fold during the First Great Awakening, which was a mid-eighteenth century religious revival that emphasized individuals' personal relationships with God (Bailey 2016:46; Butler 2021). Both the Methodist and Baptist faith traditions heavily linked emotion with spiritual expression, which especially attracted African Americans (Butler 2021). For those who were enslaved, this religious revival also inspired many of their enslavers to allow ministers to evangelize among them (Butler 2021). The first

African American Baptist congregations formed as the faith grew among enslaved people in the South during the mid-eighteenth century (Bailey 2016; Battle 1979; Butler 2021; Pinn 2022:86). For free Blacks, racial discrimination within individual congregations played a significant role in the rise of independent Black Baptist congregations in the nineteenth century (Bailey 2016:60). Because Baptist churches were largely independent of a larger religious organization, they faced fewer obstacles to their establishment compared to those of the Methodist Episcopal faith prior to the formation of the AME Church in 1816 (Bailey 2016:60).

Furthermore, the Second Great Awakening in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century emphasized the health of people's personal relationship with God and people's daily concerns. This focus on autonomy and individuality resonated with those who were or had been enslaved, as such ideas were explicitly denied within the institution of slavery (Bailey 2016:46). As a result, Baptist churches were a magnet for those who escaped slavery prior to the Civil War and those who achieved freedom following the abolition of slavery, quickly becoming local centers of Black culture (Battle 1979:34).

Enslaved African Americans who had escaped from Missouri in 1863 brought the Baptist faith to Minnesota when they were brought to Fort Snelling by the US Army. Rev. Hickman, who was among this group, founded Pilgrim Baptist Church in St. Paul in 1866 (see Section 2.1). During his tenure with the church, Hickman also founded two mission churches in Minnesota, one in Hastings and one in Minneapolis, the latter of which gave rise to Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church and Zion Baptist Church (Pettis 2018; Zion Baptist Church 1992:21).

Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church

Sources regarding the founding of Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church are scant and conflicting, but the church appears to have been organized in the late 1880s under Rev. W.M. Withers, originally from Kentucky, as the first Black Baptist church in Minneapolis (Battle 1979; Glover 2021; University of Minnesota 2024c; Zion Baptist Church 1992). The congregation was small in the beginning, comprised of between 15 to 25 people, but membership steadily grew over subsequent decades to about 250 by the 1930s (University of Minnesota 2024c). Prayer meetings were first held at a congregant's hair dressing parlor at 520 Nicollet Avenue (non-extant) (University of Minnesota 2024c). Like other Black churches in Minneapolis, the Bethesda Missionary's congregation frequently had to find new spaces in which to worship, which included Freyers Hall (505 ½ Washington Avenue South, non-extant) and the Peck Building (location unknown) (University of Minnesota 2024c). In 1892, the congregation was finally able to build a permanent church at 1118 8th Street South (HE-MPC-00371, extant) and in 1926 purchased its first parsonage at 2737 11th Avenue South (HE-MPC-20340, extant) (University of Minnesota 2024c). Today, the Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church remains at 1118 8th Street South, but the 1892 building appears to have been replaced by the current building on this parcel in 1964 (Hennepin County Assessor's Office 2024). The congregation's community service activities includes involvement in

affordable housing projects, such as owning an apartment building specifically for people with low incomes (Blume 2023; Smith 2013).

Figure 16. Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church (1118 8th Street South) (Hennepin County Library 1975)

Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (formerly known as Greater Sabathani Baptist Church)

Originally known as Sabathani Baptist Church and later Greater Sabathani Baptist Church, the Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist church was established around 1962 at 3805 3rd Avenue South (non-extant) (Minneapolis Interview Project 2020; R.L. Polk & Co. 1962). The church was founded by Rev. Stanley King who was also a community activist and made concern for the broader community's welfare a core tenet of the church's identity (Minnesota PRSA 2023).

The church was located in the Bryant neighborhood, which, in the 1960s, held the largest population of African Americans in the city (Glover 2021). The construction of I-35W through South Minneapolis devastated this neighborhood (see Section 2.2) and, in 1966, Stanley and a group of concerned congregants organized the Sabathani Community Center (Minneapolis Interview Project 2020; Minnesota PRSA 2023). Sources conflict about where the community center was originally housed, with some stating it was in the Sabathani church basement and others at Fifth Avenue Congregational Church, near 32nd Street East and 5th Avenue South, but the great need in the community quickly led the organization to outgrow its space (Minneapolis Interview Project 2020; Minnesota PRSA 2023). The community center moved to a building near 38th Street East and 3rd Avenue South in 1972. In 1979, it relocated to the vacant Bryant Junior High School, which was purchased by members of Greater Sabathani Baptist Church (Glover 2021; Minneapolis Interview Project 2020; Minnesota PRSA 2023). By the time of its move to the junior high school, the community center was no longer associated with Sabathani Baptist Church (Minneapolis Interview Project 2020).

By 1986, Greater Sabathani Baptist Church changed its name to Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (Star Tribune 1986:204). The church is now located at 2600 38th Street East (HE-MPC-04695, extant).

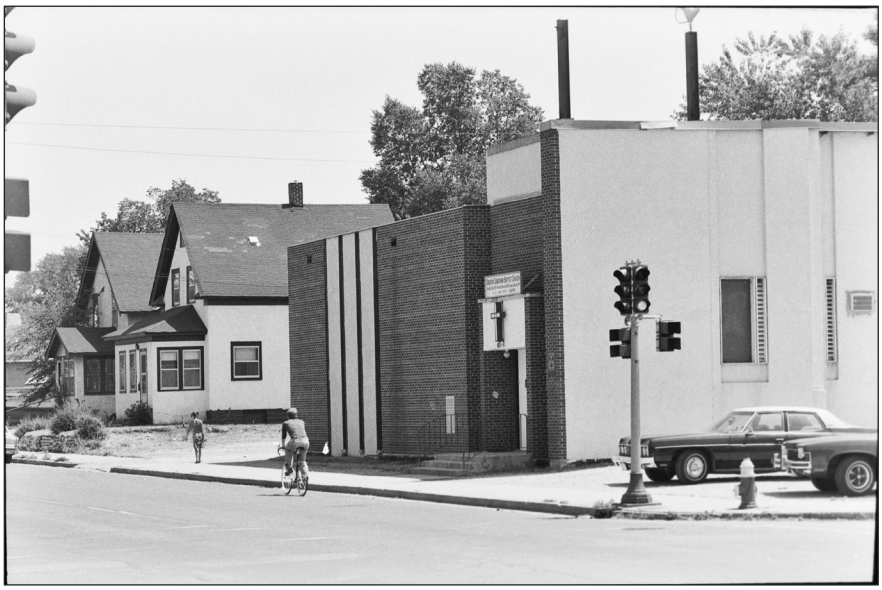


Figure 17. Greater Sabathani Baptist Church (3805 3rd Avenue South) (Bowman 1980c)

Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church

The Pilgrim Rest Baptist congregation formed in 1923 from the Humbolt Baptist Mission with services originally held in the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Stevens (5126 Irving Avenue North, extant), a founding member of the congregation (Abdi and Smoley 2016:6). Rev. W.M. Withers, who had formerly served as the pastor of Zion Baptist Church, led the new mission of African Americans, many of whom had been formerly enslaved or who had parents who were (Abdi and Smoley 2016:6; Raiche 2023). The church was incorporated in 1929, and services were held in a converted garage (non-extant) until 1943 when the congregation built a larger, one-room building on the land they had purchased at 51st Avenue North and James Avenue North in the Shingle Creek neighborhood (Abdi and Smoley 2016:6).

In 1953, the Pilgrim Rest congregation began construction on a new building at 51st Avenue North and James Avenue North, but faced funding shortfalls that resulted in them roofing the concrete-block basement they had built and temporarily using that space for services (Abdi and Smoley 2016). In 1968, Hope Lutheran Church donated a building to Pilgrim Rest. It was the old church they had vacated a few blocks north of the latter's property at 5100 James Avenue North (HE-MPC-08173, extant) (Abdi and Smoley 2016).

As with other African American churches, Pilgrim Rest Baptist has a long history of social service within its community. Congregants have been involved with fights for equal access to quality education, voting rights, the construction of pedestrian bridges to allow for safe walking routes, the origins of the NAACP chapter in St. Paul, and the Martin Luther King Center (Schott-Bresler 2014). The church also oversees charitable activities, including food and clothing pantries and a prison ministry (Schott-Bresler 2014).

Today, the church remains at 5100 James Avenue North and was designated a local landmark by the Minneapolis City Council.

Figure 18. Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church (5100 James Avenue North) (Bowman 1980d)

Zion Baptist Church

Zion Baptist Church was first organized in April of 1873 (Minneapolis Tribune 1873a). In December of that year, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church gifted to the Zion Baptist congregation its old frame church after completing their new stone church. By February 1874, the frame church had been moved by Zion Baptist to a lot located at the corner of Harrison Street Northeast and Spring Street Northeast (Minneapolis Tribune 1873b, 1874). In 1883, Zion Baptist Church was reorganized and began meeting in a hall located within the Centennial Block (non-extant) on Washington Avenue South (Minneapolis Tribune 1883). By 1889, Zion Baptist Church was legally reincorporated under the leadership of Rev. W.M. Withers, who was the original minister associated with Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, and the cornerstone to a new church located at 738 Fillmore Street Northeast (non-extant) was laid in May of that year (Battle 1979:32; Minneapolis Daily Times 1901; Minneapolis Journal 1889; Zion Baptist Church 1992:21). In 1906, the congregation bought a building at 5th Street and 6th Avenue North in which to hold services, but a rapid growth in their membership forced the church to find a new location (Battle 1979:32). They found a larger building for a temporary location at 7th Street and Hoag Avenue North (Battle 1979:32).

By 1930, the talents of a new minister, Rev. Henry W. Botts, Sr., had drawn in enough new congregants to force the church into once again seeking a new location. Zion Baptist first relocated to a barn-like building that had been previously used as a synagogue, then a Catholic church, and later a warehouse at 11th Street and Lyndale Avenue (Battle 1979:33). By 1951, the church was located at 1023 Lyndale Avenue North in a one-story building at the southwest corner of 11th Avenue North and Lyndale Avenue North (non-extant) (Sanborn Map Company 1951). In 1959, Rev. Dr. James Holloway arrived from South

Carolina to take over the ministry at Zion Baptist when the church was forced to relocate again because of the planned construction of I-94 through this section of Minneapolis. Rev. Holloway oversaw the construction of a new, permanent home for the congregation, designed by Lorenzo Williams, located at 621 Elwood Avenue North (HE-MPC-07572, extant). Construction on the new church was finished in 1967 (Battle 1979:33).

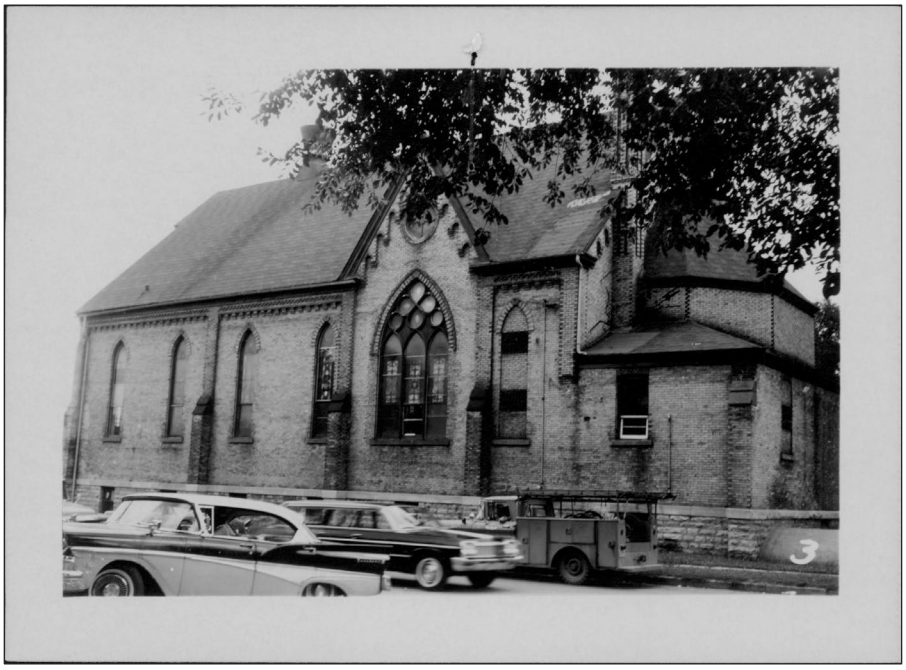


Figure 19. Zion Baptist Church, 11th Avenue North and Lyndale Avenue North (non-extant), 1964 (Minnesota Department of Transportation 1964)

Like other Black churches throughout the US, Zion Baptist Church actively included its community's social needs as part of its mission. Historically, the church offered babysitting and preschool for the children of working mothers, a nursery during church services to allow mothers the opportunity to more actively participate, a group home to address troubled youth and their involvement in illegal activities, mental health and family counseling services, a foster home network, and a senior citizen ministry (Battle 1979:43–44; Zion Baptist Church 1992:21). The church was also active within the Civil Rights Movement and sent their minister, Rev. Dr. James Holloway, as a church representative to Dr. Martin Luther King's 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, as well as his 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama (Zion Baptist Church 1992:21).

Additional Faith Traditions

Additional major denominations, such as Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist Episcopal, and Pentecostal churches, have also attracted Black congregants throughout the US. Along with AME and Baptist churches, about 80% of Black Christians belong to these major denominations, but African Americans have also found religious homes in hundreds of smaller and independent denominations as well (Pinn 2022:87).

St. Thomas Episcopal Church

Many African Americans found a home within the Episcopalian faith because of its doctrine of universality that did not exclude people based on race, which was especially salient in the nineteenth century when the abolitionist movement grew in strength (Bailey 2016:65–66). With several early church fathers of African descent, belief in the core concept of universality in spiritual matters that transcended racial lines, and emphasis on the intellect and reason, some African Americans found in the Episcopal faith a religious home that recognized them as spiritual equals to white congregants (Bailey 2016:65–66). The Episcopal Church made inroads in Minnesota through the missionaries that sought to convert local Ojibwe and Dakota peoples to Christianity in the 1850s (Episcopal Church in Minnesota 2024). In 1850, two Episcopal churches formed in the Twin Cities: Christ Church, St. Paul, and Holy Trinity Church, St. Anthony (later Minneapolis) (Episcopal Church in Minnesota 2024). By the mid-1880s, Black Episcopalians in Minneapolis, barred from worshipping with their white counterparts, began worshipping together in a storeroom somewhere along Rice Street in St. Paul (Episcopal Church in Minnesota 2024).

The St. Thomas congregation began to form around 1899 as a mission church of Gesthemane Episcopal Church to better serve Black Episcopalians in Minneapolis (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024). Between about 1905 and 1934, the St. Thomas congregation shared a minister with St. Philip Episcopal Church of St. Paul, which had begun as a mission church of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in 1895 (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024). The first minister, Rev. Alfread Lealtad, offered Sunday services in the morning at St. Philip and in the afternoon at St. Thomas, using the streetcar system for his commute (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024). Both churches hired their own ministers around 1934.

Rev. Canon Louis took over ministerial leadership at St. Thomas in 1947 and served the congregation until 1975 (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024). Rev. Louis oversaw the move of St. Thomas from mission status and the construction of a new church at 4400 4th Avenue South (HE-MPC-04408, extant) between 1960 and 1966 (City of Minneapolis 1960, 1966; Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024; Strickler 2008). During its time as an independent congregation, St. Thomas Episcopal also provided support for civil rights and worked to improve employment opportunities for African Americans (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024).

Due to various challenges and demographic shifts, the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota marked St. Thomas and St. Philip for closure and the two congregations began negotiating a merger in 2005, which was completed in 2008 (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024; Strickler 2008). In 2012, the combined congregation adopted the name Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (Holy Trinity Episcopal Church 2024). Holy Trinity is located at 1636 Van Buren Avenue in St. Paul. The former St. Thomas building at 4400 4th Avenue South now houses a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Figure 20. St. Thomas Episcopal Church (4400 4th Avenue South) (Bowman 1980e)

Border Methodist Episcopal Church

Border Methodist Episcopal Church was founded by African Americans in 1918 (University of Minnesota 2024d). Little is known about the congregation's early history due to a 1928 fire that destroyed most of its records (University of Minnesota 2024d). Under the leadership of Rev. Cheers, the small congregation of about 15 people initially met at 18 4th Street South (University of Minnesota 2024d). In 1923, the church moved to 95 Border Avenue North and, in 1937, it relocated again to 812 4th Avenue North (non-extant) in the Near North neighborhood (Minnesota Conference of The UMC 2022; University of Minnesota 2024d).

The construction of I-94 as part of Minneapolis' urban renewal projects targeted the church for demolition in the 1950s (Keller 2016:9). The mostly white congregation at Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church invited Border Methodist Episcopal to merge with them and the two congregations joined as one in January 1957 (Keller 2016:9). Reportedly, this caused "quite a stir nationally" and made Hennepin Avenue Methodist one of the first racially integrated churches in the US (Keller 2016:9; University of Minnesota 2024d). The first service in the newly integrated church was held on January 11, 1957 (Minnesota Conference of The UMC 2022:9). The Hennepin Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church (now the Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church) remains at 511 Groveland Avenue (HE-MPC-00559), which was constructed in 1914 (Keller 2016:9).

First Church of God in Christ

The Church of God in Christ is an off-shoot of the Holiness Pentecostal faith. Begun by Bishop Charles Harrison Mason in Tennessee in 1907, the Church of God in Christ quickly grew through revival meetings held by members over subsequent decades (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a). The first African Americans of this faith in Minneapolis, Elder Thompson and Mother Drake,

arrived prior to 1923, but little is known about this faith in Minnesota prior to a revival held by Elder Thompson with the assistance of Mother Reath Morris and her sister, Leatha, in 1923 in South Minneapolis (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a).

In 1923, African Americans who had migrated to Minnesota from Oklahoma to work in a vineyard stayed with Elder and Mother Drake on Cedar Avenue where the revival was being held (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a). These settlers founded the first Church of God in Christ in North Minneapolis and held services near Olson Memorial Highway and Lyndale Avenue North, which eventually led to several other churches being established throughout Minnesota as the African American population grew and many converted to the faith (First Church of God in Christ 2024; Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a, 2024b; University of Minnesota 2023b). Faced with discrimination, such as harassment by neighbors and local authorities stopping church services, this first congregation struggled to establish itself. A small group, however, managed to continue church services despite such obstacles (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a).

Bishop J.W. Graham established the First Church of God in Christ in the 1940s in the Near North neighborhood and later renamed it the Graham Temple Church of God in Christ (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a). However, it took until 1957 for the congregation to find a permanent home in a former Jewish synagogue at 810 Elwood Avenue North (HE-MPC-08080, extant). Romanian Bessarabian Jews had constructed the Tifereth B'nai Jacob Synagogue in 1926, incorporating intricate paintings on the interior that feature zodiac medallions and trompe l'oeil techniques (University of Minnesota 2023b). Like African Americans, Jewish people faced rampant discrimination within Minneapolis from white residents and political leaders, the latter of whom frequently targeted their neighborhoods for public renewal projects (see Section 2.2). This synagogue, in particular, was politically active and frequently hosted meetings and rallies that were progressive in nature (University of Minnesota 2023). When the First Church of God in Christ-Graham Temple purchased the building in 1957, it carefully maintained the intricate interior artwork and became well known within the city for its New Year's Eve gospel concerts (University of Minnesota 2023b). After Bishop Graham's death in 1967, Earl Denning took over as pastor and renamed the congregation the First Church of God in Christ (Minnesota Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ 2024a). Today, the congregation remains at 810 Elwood Avenue North in Minneapolis.

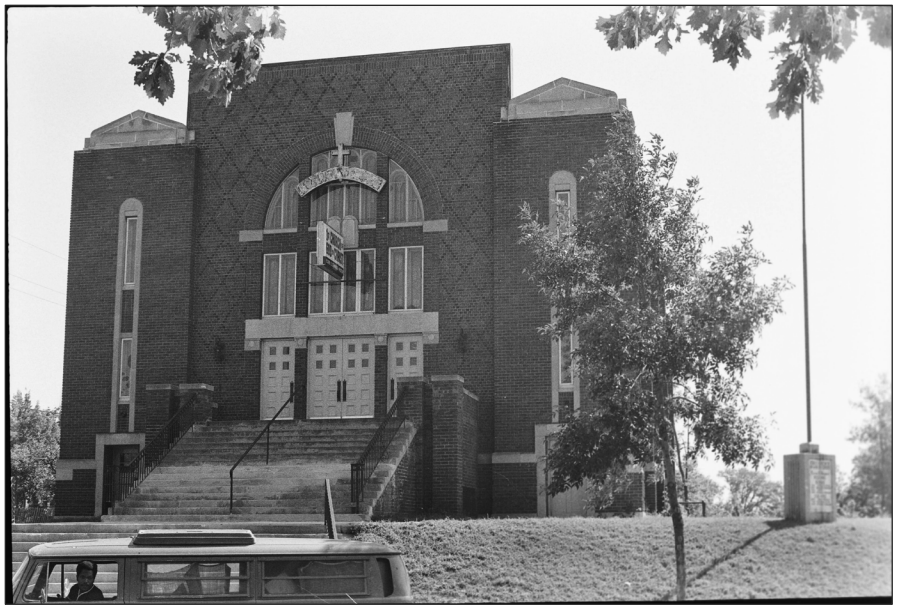


Figure 21. First Church of God in Christ (810 Elwood Avenue North) (Bowman 1980f)

New Covenant Church of God in Christ

The origins of the New Covenant Church of God in Christ as a Holiness Pentecostal church can be traced to Elder Fred W. Washington's efforts to establish the Inner-City Outreach Ministry in South Minneapolis (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). Joined by his wife, Sister Barbara Jean Cotton Washington, and their children in his door-to-door canvassing, the core of the ministry's mission was to grow the community's faith in deliverance through Jesus (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). Many of those families who joined Washington's new church had previously relocated to Minneapolis from the South (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). The ministry's first home was a building at 301 Lake Street East (HE-MPC-07771, extant), which they shared with several businesses (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). Later that year, the building was sold and the ministry moved to a storefront at 810 38th Street East (HE-MPC-19251, extant) (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). In 1974, the church was incorporated as the New Covenant Church of God in Christ (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023).

The congregation grew to include about 100 people until the late 1970s when several African American families who were members of the church left Minneapolis to migrate back to the South (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). However, continued canvassing and conversion efforts brought in new members during the 1980s (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). Not only was the church actively attempting to care for the spiritual needs of its community, but it also cared for people's material needs, including aiding working parents with household duties and childcare (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023).

In 1983, the New Covenant Church moved from its home on 38th Street East and rented several different spaces in which to hold services (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). In 1988, the

congregation was able to purchase its current church at 4254 15th Avenue South (HE-MPC-09736, extant) (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023). In the 1990s, the congregation's community service efforts expanded into several ministries aimed at supporting individuals as whole human beings, including assisting with education and welfare needs and addressing the unique concerns of specific gender and age groups (New Covenant Church of God in Christ 2023).

Apostolic Faith Mission

In 1906, African American minister William J. Seymour unleashed a national Pentecostal revival from a Los Angeles revival meeting (University of Minnesota 2024e). The following year, African American converts organized the Apostolic Faith Mission in Minneapolis (University of Minnesota 2024e). The congregation initially held prayer meetings in private homes but, by 1908, they had begun renting buildings near Bloomington and Franklin Avenues and later near Chicago Avenue and Lake Street (University of Minnesota 2024e). Between 1909 and 1920, Rev. Jackson White served as the congregation's preacher and, in 1926, two women, Miss M. Hanson and Mrs. Martha White took over ministerial duties (University of Minnesota 2024e). In 1911, the congregation finished the construction of a permanent home at 2415 Riverside Avenue (University of Minnesota 2024e). By 1936, the church had moved to 1534 24th Street East (Hennepin County Library 1936). Today, Apostolic Faith is located at 2900 29th Avenue South (HE-MPC-04545). The congregation was well known for their revival meetings and their efforts to proselytize via a "gospel truck" (University of Minnesota 2024e).

Figure 22. Apostolic Faith Mission (1534 24th Street East) (Hennepin County Library 1936)

African Americans and the Islamic Faith in Minneapolis

Immigrants from the Ottoman Empire first introduced the Islamic faith to Minnesota as early as the 1880s (ReligionsMN 2025a). When Congress passed restrictive immigration laws in the 1920s, Muslim immigration to the US slowed until the 1960s when laws were restructured to prioritize people with certain skills and education rather than on excluding those with particular religious, ethnic, or racial

backgrounds (ReligionsMN 2025a). However, between the 1920s and 1960s, the numbers of Muslims in the US grew as African Americans increasingly converted to Islam. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, an Indian from the Ahmadiyya sect and resident of South Chicago, worked to convert African Americans in his neighborhood, many of whom had recently moved from the South as part of the Great Migration (ReligionsMN 2025a). Sadiq's messages of anti-racism, equality, justice, and the universality of Islam drew many Black people into the faith (ReligionsMN 2025a). Two major African-American-led Muslim groups, the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, also formed around this time (ReligionsMN 2025a). While both groups argued that Islam was the natural faith of Black people, their followers also believed their founders were prophets, which resulted in fissures between them and other Muslim groups (ReligionsMN 2025a).

In 1959, followers of the Nation of Islam established a temple in North Minneapolis (location unknown), which continued to attract new people into the 1960s and 1970s with the growth of the Black Power Movement. By 1963, another chapter of the group, consisting of roughly 60 dues-paying members, was operating out of a house in South Minneapolis (location unknown) (Masjid An-Nur 2025; Parsons 1963; Pinn 2017). In 1975, the movement's founder, Elijah Muhammad, passed away and his son Wallace D. Muhammad was named his successor. Inspired by the growth of civil rights, Imam Muhammad instituted a series of reforms to draw his followers into mainstream Sunni Islam through realigning the group's practices with Muhammad's teachings and welcoming Muslims of all racial backgrounds (Gibson and Karim 2014: 87; Masjid An-Nur 2025; ReligionsMN 2025a). As part of his missionary activities, he sent groups of Muslim families from Chicago to other areas of the country to start new communities. One group of families joined the community already established in Minneapolis and, under the leadership of Charles El-Amin, embraced Imam Muhammad's reforms and founded several mosques, including Masjid An-Nur (Masjid An-Nur 2025; ReligionsMN 2025b; Uluyol 2011).

Like their African American Christian counterparts, Black Muslims in Minneapolis sometimes struggled to find permanent homes in which to practice their faith and considered community service an important extension of their religious practices. The people of Masjid An-Nur relocated several times in North Minneapolis before briefly moving to South Minneapolis and finally finding a permanent home back in the northern part of the city at 1729 North Lyndale Avenue in 1996, which was previously home to Skips Barbecue, a Northside favorite (ReligionsMN 2025b). In 1998, the Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center was founded and, after several years of fundraising efforts, its members purchased a building in 2006 to be used as house of worship in South Minneapolis (2824 13th Avenue South, HE-MPC-10686) (Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center 2025). In 2006, the Masjid An-Nur mosque was expanded and renovated to include the first minaret to be constructed in the state of Minnesota (Collins 2006). As the city's East African community has grown since the 1990s (see Section 2.1), more mosques and Islamic centers have been established throughout Minneapolis to provide services to this predominantly Muslim population. Like Black churches in Minneapolis, these religious institutions provide important community services, including providing access to food, employment, housing, and mentoring, through its social service organization Al-Maa'uun (Al-Maa'uun 2025).

Places of Rest: Funeral Homes and Cemeteries

As with finding a religious home, employment, housing, and education, African Americans faced intense discrimination accessing burial places up through the mid-twentieth century. African American funerary rites and traditions have deep roots in the history of enslavement in North America beginning in the seventeenth century. Between the colonial period to the Civil War, funerals often served as one of the few ways for enslaved people to express their humanity and act with autonomy while enslaved (Smith 2010:25). Funerals typically took place at night in a secluded, wooded area often known as a "hush harbor" where mourners could gather and honor the dead in peace (Smith 2010:25). Burials and mourning were communal affairs and an important expression of kinship (Smith 2010:28, 31). Funerals often incorporated West African traditions, including bathing and wrapping bodies, a procession to the burial site, mournful screams, dancing, and feasting, in addition to North American Christian traditions, such as praying and singing (Smith 2010:28). As more enslaved people converted to Christianity, services conducted by itinerant Black preachers became a necessary component of funerals, thereby providing an important foundation for the growth of autonomous Black churches in the nineteenth century and beyond (Smith 2010:29). Following emancipation in 1863, "hush harbors" were no longer necessary components of African American funerary rites, but other traditions continued, especially those that emphasized the sacredness of memorializing the dead, tapped into a sense of community kinship, and gave loved ones a space to properly mourn with dignity (Smith 2010:31).

With the evolution of embalming techniques during the Civil War and the growth of mortuary education in the late nineteenth century, funeral services transitioned from a small, cottage industry to a professional and highly commercialized endeavor (Smith 2010:36, 38). The exponential growth of industrialization, professionalization, and urbanization in the US around the turn of the twentieth century opened new employment opportunities to all Americans, including for African Americans (Smith 2010:39). Although Black entrepreneurs had worked in a variety of trades, serving both Black and white people, throughout the nineteenth century, the advent of Jim Crow laws in the 1880s forced many to turn inward to their own communities for business (Smith 2010:44). Despite funeral direction being marked as a whites-only profession, the number of Black funeral directors grew around the turn of the twentieth century. This was due in large part to their connections with the organizational networks and mutual aid societies African Americans had developed in response to the rampant discrimination they faced in social and political settings (Smith 2010:40). One of the top priorities of these Black funeral directors was to ensure that African Americans had access to services that were respectful, dignified, and provided space for well-beloved funerary traditions (Smith 2010:185). This sentiment was carried by subsequent generations of Black funeral directors into the mid-twentieth century, leading to Black-owned funeral homes becoming important components of African American communities (Smith 2010:185).

However, not all African American communities, including those in Minneapolis, had a Black funeral director to serve them, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century. White funeral directors often refused to serve African American clients and, even if they did not, Black families did not always

trust that white funeral directors would adhere to Black funeral and burial traditions (Rosenblatt and Wallace 2005:47). Having a Black funeral director was a comfort within African American communities because they often knew the families involved and were well-versed in preferred funerary traditions (Rosenblatt and Wallace 2005:48). The African American community in Minneapolis did not have a Black-owned funeral home until the late 1920s.

Discrimination also took place within cemeteries, most of which were racially segregated from the colonial era through the late nineteenth century (Smith 2010:64). White cemeteries often charged African Americans more for burial than they did white Americans, and frequently made Black funeral processions use back entrances (Smith 2010:65). Many African American communities took it upon themselves to establish African American cemeteries throughout the US as a means of fighting racial discrimination (Smith 2010:64). However, Minneapolis serves as an important contrast to this historic trend. The oldest city cemetery, Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery (2945 Cedar Avenue South, HE-MPC-04123, extant), was racially integrated from its inception around 1853 and serves as the final resting place of several hundred of the city's earliest Black residents (Friends of the Cemetery 2005).

Woodard Funeral Home

Few historic sources are available that reveal the origins of the Woodard Funeral Home, which was started by MacDuff Woodard in the late 1920s and was the first African American funeral home in Minneapolis. Woodard was born in Kentucky in about 1882 and, by 1920, he was widowed and working as a janitor in Minneapolis (U.S. Census Bureau 1920). This funeral home is suspected to be the first African American funeral home in Minneapolis, although a precise date of establishment has not been located. By 1936, it was listed in city directories at 1103 Lyndale Avenue North (non-extant) under the direction of Theodore E. Woodard, MacDuff's son (Minneapolis Directory Company 1936:1502; U.S. Census Bureau 1940). Theodore's wife, Lucille, and another MacDuff Woodard worked as assistants (Minneapolis Directory Company 1936:1502)

Theodore Woodard passed away in 1966 and James T. Toliver took over the business (Star Tribune 1970:18). When he passed away in 1970, the funeral home was located at 3953 4th Avenue South and had sometimes appeared in newspapers as the Woodard-Toliver Funeral Home (Star Tribune 1970:18). The funeral home continued operation under new ownership until at least 1978 when it appears that the funeral home, then located at 3953 4th Avenue South, and its contents were placed for auction (Star Tribune 1978:38).

Estes Funeral Chapel

Richard Estes established the Estes Funeral Chapel at 1401 Plymouth Avenue North (non-extant) in 1962 (Estes Funeral Chapel 2024; Williams 2018). Estes was born in Kansas in 1929 and had three uncles who were morticians and inspired him to follow in their footsteps (Insight News 2013). He graduated from the California College of Mortuary Science in 1956 and apprenticed with his uncle, John Estes, in Des

Moines, Iowa (Insight News 2013). In the 1960s, Estes moved to Minneapolis, joined Zion Baptist Church, and worked for the Woodard Funeral Home (Insight News 2013).

Estes opened Estes Funeral Chapel in North Minneapolis in the hopes of serving both African Americans and the broader community with dignity, regardless of race, religion, or financial ability to pay for service (Estes Funeral Chapel 2024). White-owned funeral chapels in Minneapolis at the time typically treated deceased African Americans and their families with little respect or dignity (Estes Funeral Chapel 2024). It was not uncommon for Estes to receive calls in the middle of the night from white-owned funeral homes requesting he prepare the body of a deceased African American (Insight News 2013).

In 1986, Estes had new facilities for the funeral chapel constructed at 2210 Plymouth Avenue North (Estes Funeral Chapel 2024; Insight News 2013). Estes passed away in 2013, but his example had inspired his son, nieces, and nephews to study mortuary science and his family has continued to carry on the business (Broaddus 2017). In 2018, they completed the construction of their new facilities at 2201 Plymouth Avenue North (Williams 2018). Today, Estes Funeral Chapel is the only Black-owned funeral home in Minneapolis and one of two in the entire state (Broaddus 2017).

Pioneer and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery

The Minneapolis Pioneer and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery (HE-MPC-04123), which is located at 2945 Cedar Avenue South, is the oldest cemetery in the city with burials dating to at least 1853 (Friends of the Cemetery 2012). Originally known as Layman's Cemetery, early settler-colonists and veterans are buried there along with early African American residents, many of whom were connected with the abolition movement (Friends of the Cemetery 2012). Martin and Elizabeth Layman founded the cemetery and were active members of First Baptist Church where Minneapolis abolitionists would hold meetings (Friends of the Cemetery 2005).

The cemetery never segregated burials based on race (Friends of the Cemetery 2005). It is estimated that hundreds of Black Minneapolis residents are buried there, with the first being an infant who was interred in 1867 (Friends of the Cemetery 2005). Other notable African American burials include former enslaved person and Underground Railroad activist William Goodridge, the first Black firefighter in Minneapolis John Cheatham, founder of a Black chapter of Masons Slade Robinson, and nine Civil War veterans (Friends of the Cemetery 2005; Stowes 2018).

Lakewood Cemetery

Situated between Lake Harriet and Bde Maka Ska in Minneapolis, Lakewood Cemetery was established in 1871 (The Cultural Landscape Foundation 2024). Adolph Strauch and C.W. Folsom designed the cemetery's layout according to concepts aligned with the Picturesque movement in cemetery design (The Cultural Landscape Foundation 2024). The cemetery is known as the resting place for several notable African Americans important in Minneapolis and Minnesota history. Important burials include Lena Olive Smith, a civil rights lawyer and the first African American woman to become a lawyer in

Minnesota; Dr. Robert Brown, the first licensed Black doctor in Minneapolis; Dr. B. Robert Lewis, the first Black state senator in Minnesota; Bobby Marshall, the first African American athlete to play in the Big 10 (then the Big 9); Ralph and Emily Goodridge Grey, the Black abolitionists who made their home in St. Anthony; Anthony Brutus (A.B.) Cassius, owner of the Dreamland Cafe where African Americans had the freedom to socialize and network with others; Archie and Phebe Givens, the first Black millionaires in the state; and Cecil Newman, first African American president of the Minnesota Press Club, founder and publisher of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, and a civil rights activist (Lakewood Cemetery 2024).

2.4 Employment and Professional Growth

Overview

The historical trajectory of labor, employment opportunities, and professional growth for African Americans in Minneapolis has been shaped and influenced by purposefully restrictive forces driven by racism and exploitation. But it has also been influenced by employee-driven forces connected to self-determination, advocacy, and sense of community. Since the early nineteenth century, employment growth for Black Minneapolitans has necessitated entrepreneurial approaches, self-sufficiency, and community building in order to progress and thrive under restrictive systems set in place and upheld by employers and others with economic power. The importance of community building and interracial coalitions in economic development and job creation and growth has also shaped the physical landscape of Black commercial and residential districts in Minneapolis.

Early Minnesota Territory

In the late eighteenth century, the British mostly controlled the fur trade in present-day Minnesota. The earliest records of Black people living in the region date from this period, particularly with regard to those working within the fur trade in a variety of roles, such as traders, interpreters, cooks, personal servants, hunters, and guides (Spangler 1961). Many of the free Black traders also worked as language interpreters between other traders and the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Dakota people living within the region. The most well-known Black fur traders and language interpreters of this early period are members of the Bonga (sometimes written as Bungo) family: Pierre, his wife, and their two sons Stephen and George. Pierre's wife (usually unnamed in written record) was a Native woman, though her tribal affiliation differs in the written record, noted variably as Anishiinaabe, Ojibwe, or Chippewa. Pierre and his wife also had at least one daughter, though records of her (and other daughters) vary, and it is not known if she, too, was involved in fur trading and interpretation (Farrell Racette and Willmott 2020; Gilman 1989; Taylor 1981). In 1782, Pierre Bonga's parents, Jean and Marie-Jeanne Bonga, were enslaved and brought to Michilimackinac in present-day Michigan, a center of the fur trade in the region. The elder Bongas were freed by 1794, and Pierre, growing up in a diverse, economically driven community, learned French, English, and Ojibwe in order to be a language interpreter for traders. Eventually, Pierre became a fur trader, working first for the Northwest Fur Company in Grand Portage in the Red River Valley. Sons George and Stephen were successful fur traders and language interpreters

themselves; George worked for American Fur Company and plied his trade in the area around Duluth (Grace 2022; Spangler 1961; Taylor 1981).

By 1820, a small group of Black people had been forcibly moved to Minnesota, as enslaved people working for officers stationed at Fort Snelling (see Section 2.1). James Thompson, who had been enslaved in Virginia by a nephew of President James Monroe, was bought and sold several times before arriving at Fort Snelling by 1827. He eventually became free, finding employment as an interpreter for Methodist missionaries working within the Dakota population. He stayed in Minnesota for over 60 years, becoming the only Black member of the St. Paul Old Settlers Association (Spangler 1961; Taylor 1981). Black people were also forcibly brought to Minnesota by southern families who vacationed here during the summers during the 1850s and 1860s. The most well-known is likely Eliza Winston, who successfully freed herself from her enslavers when they brought her to Minnesota on vacation in 1860, with the help of local abolitionists (see Section 2.1) (Taylor 1981).

Only 40 African Americans were documented in the Minnesota Territory's first census of 1849, with jobs listed as cooks, barbers, and other trades. The number of Black residents in Minnesota grew steadily over the next decade. During the Civil War, calls for white volunteer soldiers created a severe labor shortage in many employment sectors, one which many Black migrants came to fill. During this period, African Americans worked in a variety of positions, including property developers/owners, shop owners, religious leaders, deck hands, laundresses, seamstresses, cleaners, laborers, teamsters, cooks, barbers, and more. And despite the racism and segregation they experienced, African Americans also served in the US military, with at least 104 Black men from Minnesota serving in the Union Army during the Civil War (Spangler 1961; Taylor 1981).

Employment: 1860-1910

In the 1860s in Minneapolis and St. Anthony, the Black residential population was concentrated on the east side of the Mississippi River. After the cities merged in 1872 and employment opportunities were more readily available across the river in Minneapolis, Black communities concentrated in downtown-adjacent areas like Nicollet Avenue and 10th Street and the Seven Corners neighborhood. The African American population in Minneapolis grew exponentially after the Civil War, and in 1895, Black residents lived across the city at the time (Gilman 1989; Spangler 1961; Taylor 1981).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Black residential communities had begun to develop beyond the near-downtown population centers, particularly in the Seven Corners neighborhood, Northside, and along 6th Avenue North (now Olson Memorial Highway). Minneapolis' overall population growth in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century created the need for a variety of services and trades, in many of which Black Minneapolitans worked. Due to systemic racism and segregation, most jobs African Americans could obtain in this period were considered "unskilled," such as jobs in restaurants, hotels, and, occasionally, industry. Many African Americans living in Minneapolis worked in

the service industry as waiters, cooks, janitors, and barbers. They also found work in meat packing plants, on the railroads, and in a variety of domestic work (Spangler 1961; Taylor 1981).

Milling, Warehouses, and Sex Work

In its first decades as an established city, Minneapolis had three primary industries: flour milling, sawmilling, and warehousing. While each of these industries focused their production and office space near the river downtown, the concentration of people and money in these locations provided opportunity for the growth of another employment sector: organized sex work. Of course, sex work existed in Minneapolis and St. Anthony prior to its professionalization; as early as 1855, St. Anthony had a city ordinance on the books that fined sex work establishments if discovered. Starting in 1868, Minneapolis facilitated a system of regular fines for prostitution, in which madams and sex workers could appear in court on designated days, plead guilty, and pay a fine before continuing their work largely unbothered until the next month. By 1870, this system and the demand for service eventually led to the development of two openly operated red-light districts: the Main Street District, on the east side of the Mississippi River, and the First Street District, concentrated along 1st Street North between 2nd and 3rd Avenues North, just south of the Warehouse District (Petersen 2013).

Black women in Minneapolis found employment in the sex work sector, both as sex workers and as establishment managers, or madams. At this time, brothels and bordellos were segregated by race, but several Black women achieved significant success in the sector. Mary Evans was one of Minneapolis' first Black madams, operating her business on High Street, near the First Street red light district. The city's most successful African American madam, however, was Ida Dorsey. Born in Kentucky in 1866, Dorsey first moved to St. Paul in 1885, where she operated a brothel that catered specifically to Black soldiers. She moved to Minneapolis by 1886, operating a brothel located at 125 2nd Street North (non-extant). Unlike other similar businesses at the time, Dorsey's bordello presented unique offerings other establishments did not, such as can-can dancing, which had been outlawed in Minneapolis, and interracial sex. Her employees were Black, biracial, and multiracial women, but she actively sought a rich white clientele. Her business practice attracted much attention, as well as political ire. In the late 1880s, Dorsey was convicted of selling liquor without a license along with several prostitution charges, and, unlike her white counterparts, she was sentenced to prison. She was released after 76 days for good behavior. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Dorsey continued to operate bordellos in Minneapolis, continued to face fines and charges from the local police, and continued to be featured in the newspapers of the time. By 1890, a third red-light district developed south of the flour mills on the west side of the Mississippi River, concentrated around 11th Avenue South and 2nd Street South. Dorsey was again at the forefront of this development, notably commissioning a bordello at 212 11th Avenue South in 1890 before the district was well-established (HE-MPC-09839, extant). Dorsey continued to work as a madam and property owner until her early death in 1918 (Petersen 2013; Schmidt 2018).

Law, Medicine, Publishing, and Politics

During the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Black people also worked in municipal jobs, government services, shops and small businesses, and as doctors, lawyers, clerks, writers, and teachers. In the 1870s, Black community leadership in the Twin Cities centered around a small group of people living in St. Paul, among them Thomas H. Lyles, businessman and community organizer, and James K. Hilyard, businessman, musician, and organizer. Lyles and Hilyard formed the Appeal Publishing Company in 1886, the company that published one of the Twin Cities' earliest Black-owned newspapers, the *Western Appeal*. Lyles and Hilyard were instrumental in recruiting Black professionals to the Twin Cities, most notably Frederick L. McGhee, the state's first Black criminal lawyer and co-founder of the Niagara Movement (see Section 2.7); Dr. Robert S. Brown, the first Black physician licensed to practice in Minneapolis; and John Francis Wheaton, the first Black lawyer to graduate from University of Minnesota Law School (1894) and the first Black person elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1899, representing the 42nd District in the state house. In addition to those professionals recruited by Lyles and Hilyard, other professionals moved here, such as William R. Morris, Sr., who graduated law school at the University of Chicago and moved to Minneapolis in 1889. That same year, he became one of the first Black people admitted to the Minnesota Bar Association and, among other high-profile community leadership positions, he served as the executive chairman of the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP in 1914 (see Section 2.7) (African American Registry 2024; Huber 2018; Lange et al. 2022; Taylor 1981).

Early Municipal Employment

In the late nineteenth century, Black Minneapolitans began to gain formal employment in municipal jobs. John W. Cheatham, hired in March of 1888, is considered to be the first Black firefighter in Minneapolis, and, as of 1890, he was the only Black employee of the Minneapolis Fire Department. He remained the city's only Black firefighter until 1904, when he was transferred to Chemical Engine Company No. 5 as a driver, and Frank Harris joined the department as a pipeman (engine and/or hose operator) at Hose Company No. 13. In 1905, Harris was likewise transferred to Chemical Engine Company No. 5, which operated from the same location as Hose Company No. 13. In 1907, the first all-Black fire crew in Minneapolis occupied the newly built Fire Station No. 24 at 4501 Hiawatha Avenue (HE-MPC-07413, extant and a designated local landmark). The creation of an all-Black crew, however, was an attempt by the City and the Minneapolis Fire Department to impose racial segregation among its ranks. The new fire station was built in response to community demand in an area of the city where the population was rapidly growing. The City saw this new building as an opportunity to concentrate Black staff members in one place so that the white staff would not have to share quarters with their Black colleagues. The Fire Station No. 24 crew consisted of Cheatham, the driver; Harris, a lieutenant and ranking officer; Archie Van Spence, a pipeman. A second pipeman, James R. Cannon, joined them in 1908, and the crew at Fire Station No. 24 remained an all-Black company until 1911 (Que and Gallo 2021:31–34).

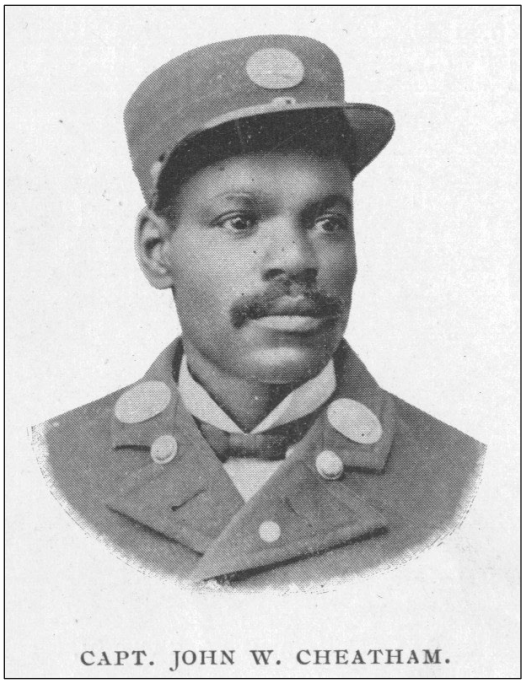


Figure 23. Captain John Cheatham (Alley Newspaper 2005)

Railroads

Railroad company growth and the physical expansion of the rail lines brought employment opportunities for African Americans in Minneapolis. Opportunities, however, were limited to specific roles, particularly those in service, rather than in operation. With the opening of the first Union Depot in St. Paul in 1881, and its replacement by the current Depot in 1923, St. Paul became a central hub for the railroad industry, though Minneapolis benefitted from employment opportunities by proximity (Diers 2013). The railroad lines employed large numbers of African American men as cooks, porters, and waiters at the station and on the cars, while women were employed as matrons and maids. In Minneapolis, the Snelling Avenue corridor on the south side served as a primary location for railroad jobs available to African American residents (Foss and Wilder 2017; Schmidt 2021; Zellie 2009).

In the 1860s, industrialist George Pullman designed the Pullman railroad sleeping car, a new, more comfortable and luxurious version of a sleeper car compared to the spare and uncomfortable cars travelers were used to (Foss and Wilder 2017; Tye 2011). Pullman hired large numbers of formerly enslaved African Americans, in particular those who had worked as house servants, to staff the Pullman cars. Historian Arthur C. McWatt notes that “all [porters] were ordered to answer to the name ‘George,’” reflecting a custom in the antebellum South in which enslaved people were referred to by the name of their enslaver (McWatt 1997).

For a time, Pullman was the single largest employer of Black Americans in the country. Other railroad companies followed his lead, staffing African Americans as porters, waiters, and cooks on their lines (Tye 2011). In addition to porter positions on sleeper cars, African Americans frequently worked as railway

station porters, also known as "Red Caps," due to their required uniforms (Foss and Wilder 2017). Sleeping car porters and Red Caps were often highly educated. A 1938 *Ken* magazine article on Red Caps titled "Ph.D. Carries Your Bags" reported that "among Red Caps, one of three has had college training ... M.A.'s are common; men studying for doctors' degrees are no rarity" (Ken Magazine 1938). Employment on the railroad often served as a professional stepping-stone for Black Minneapolitans, providing a path to middle class employment, homeownership, and financial savings to send children to college (Lange et al. 2022).

African American railroad workers formed at least one related social institution, the Colored Railroad Men's Club. Formed in 1913 by porter Fred S. Carver, the Club was located at 212 11th Avenue South, the previous location of Ida Dorsey's bordello, from 1914 until at least 1920 and existed as a formal club until at least 1925 (Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association, Inc. 2024; Minneapolis Directory Company 1914, 1920, 1925). A similar group, the Brotherhood of Pullman Porters, frequently met at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House (see Section 2.5) located at 809 Aldrich Avenue North (non-extant) during the same period (Heller 2016).

Employment: 1910-1960

In the early decades of the twentieth century, employment opportunities for African Americans modestly grew in Minneapolis. World War I curtailed mass immigration from Europe and, as a result, created an acute industrial labor shortage in many cities across the US, including Minneapolis. By this time, Minneapolis had begun to outgrow St. Paul in population, and it became the more attractive city for Black people from the US South, who were often recruited to northern industrial centers in this period to fill the industrial labor shortage (see Section 2.1). Compared to other large Northern cities like Chicago and Detroit, however, lucrative job opportunities at this time were not as plentiful in Minneapolis. Black residents could find some work with federal employers, such as the United States Postal Service (USPS), but were often provided with little opportunity for advancement. It was not until the 1940s that the USPS began to open supervisory positions to Black employees (United States Postal Service 2025). Overall, this period of African American migration from the South only modestly grew Minneapolis' Black population (Peterson and Zellie 1998; Taylor 1981).

By 1920, the City, homeowners, and real estate developers were using racially restrictive covenants to limit property ownership opportunities for Black people in Minneapolis. As discussed in Section 2.2, realtors and homeowners refused to sell African Americans homes in neighborhoods that they understood to be reserved for white residents. This codified segregation forced concentrations of Black Minneapolitans to buy houses in specific areas of the city (Burnside 2017a). In the early decades of the twentieth century, the population centers, and thus the neighborhood economic and commercial centers, for Black Minneapolitans were the Seven Corners neighborhood and Near North, in large part due to racially restrictive covenants. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the commercial corridors on the Northside were centered on West Broadway Avenue, particularly at the intersection with Penn Avenue North, as well as what was then 6th Avenue North. The area near Nicollet Avenue

South and 38th Street East, and the area known by some as “Black Wall Street,” centered at 38th Street South and 4th Avenue South, began to coalesce as a hub of Black residential and commercial life at this time, as well (Taylor 1981).

A 1950 study noted that the first Black residents arrived in the Seven Corners neighborhood in 1870 and, by the 1920s, the population had grown considerably. As noted in Section 2.2, Seven Corners was included within Minneapolis’ liquor patrol limits, so saloons, bars, taverns, and music clubs were located on the neighborhood’s primary arteries. Despite the neighborhood being home to many Black residents, little information is available on Black-owned businesses from that time. Built in 1906, the Minnesota Brewing Company opened a saloon at 500 Cedar Avenue South (HE-MPC-04935, extant). Since its original opening, a variety of neighborhood residents and workers have gathered there. After changing hands several times since its establishment, the saloon was renamed Palmer’s Bar sometime around 1947. Palmer’s Bar has been Black-owned business since at least 2018, the bar is also celebrated for being a homebase for prominent Black musician James Samuel “Cornbread” Harris (Bos 2021a; Engebretson 1950; Palmer’s Bar 2023; Twin Cities Music Highlights 2024a).

Labor Movement in the US and Federal Government Employment Opportunities

In the second quarter of the twentieth century, African Americans increasingly advocated for expanded employment opportunities and organized against racial discrimination in hiring practices. In 1925, as part of one of the earliest national efforts, A. Philip Randolph started his twelve-year push to gain recognition of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters by the Pullman Car Company, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and the US government. When his efforts proved successful in 1937, Randolph was hailed as a leader in the fight against racism in the workplace. In 1935, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), formed in an effort to organize industrial workers regardless of race or ethnic background, galvanizing thousands of African American workers to join labor unions. In 1941, following continued advocacy by Black labor leaders, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which prohibited federal agencies, labor unions, and private companies engaged in war-related work from discriminatory employment practices and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the new policy. In 1942, Roosevelt issued another executive order that established the National War Labor Board in the Office for Emergency Management, a body that was to rule on wartime labor disputes, including those concerning discriminatory employment practices. After World War II, African Americans continued to advocate for labor rights as a part of the larger Civil Rights Movement through a variety of means, gaining nationwide success through a number of court cases under Title VII, Equal Employment Opportunity, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Cassedy 1997; Roosevelt 1941).

Due in large part to the labor activism of African Americans, federal initiatives established as a result of the Great Depression and World War II also presented employment opportunities for Black Americans that had previously been limited or closed altogether due to prejudice and systemic racism. New Deal

programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) expanded job opportunities for Black nurses, hospital workers, artists, librarians, outdoor recreation workers, housing surveyors, and construction workers. Labor shortages caused by World War II opened positions in industries such as meatpacking, metal working, and arms development. In Minneapolis, among the 72 positions secured for Black workers through the CWA, for example, were the city's first Black nurse, hospital file clerk, and bookbinder. While increasing opportunities for Black employment, it should be noted that many of these federal programs were nonetheless unequally distributed between white and Black residents (Cassedy 1997; Delton 2001; Lange et al. 2022).

During World War II, the federal government converted existing factories around the country for use as munitions plants, including the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant (TCOP), located 10 miles north of Minneapolis (precise location unknown). The Federal Cartridge Corporation (FCC) was contracted to operate TCOP, manufacturing military equipment and supplies from February 1942 to September 1945. At the time, Charles L. Horn was president of the FCC and, in large part due to his collaboration with Cecil E. Newman, labor activist, founder of what is now the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, and Urban League leader, the FCC hired more than 1,000 local Black men and women to work at the TCOP. According to an article written by Newman in 1944, Horn, the first paid subscriber to the *Spokesman*, was one of the few manufacturers in the region to comply with Executive Order 8802. At its peak, the plant employed 26,000 people (about 1% of Minnesota's population at the time). In 1943, the TCOP received the Army-Navy "E" Award for exceptional work in munitions manufacturing, maintenance of fair labor standards, and training of additional labor forces (Delton 2001; National Park Service 2022).

Hospitality and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis

In Minneapolis, African American leaders in the labor movement gained the most momentum in the field of hospitality. While Black Minneapolitans like Cecil E. Newman (see Section 2.6 and 2.7) had already been organizing boycotts and advocating for the rights of Black employees in a variety of other fields, major gains for Black workers were most prominent in the service industry.

In the 1937 *Social Saga of Two Cities*, sociologist Calvin Schmid observed that a higher percentage of African Americans in Minneapolis (62%) were employed when compared to percentages of Minneapolis-born or foreign-born white people (53.3% and 51.6%, respectively). Schmid noted that the most common occupations for Black men were porters, janitors, waiters, and barbers; the most common jobs for Black women were domestic servers and housekeepers. Schmid also noted, though, that significant numbers of African Americans in Minneapolis also worked as laborers in manufacturing or street and railroad construction, and in clerical or professional work (Schmid 1937).

In the 1920s and 1930s, hospitality jobs, such as those at hotels, restaurants, and clubs, were some of the more lucrative professional positions available to Black Minneapolitans. Still, even in these establishments, positions open to African Americans were often limited to cooks, bellhops, waiters, porters, and cleaners. Several of the most prominent Black entrepreneurs and community leaders, such

as A.B. Cassius and Nellie Stone Johnson, the first African American person elected to public office in Minneapolis, worked in hospitality positions during this period (see Section 2.7). In an oral history recorded in 1981, Cassius recalled "here's the places you worked at [if you were Black]: The Athletic Club, the Elks Club, The Curtis Hotel. Most of the people were either working there or on the railroad as Pullman porters…Young-Quinlan's Company and Dayton's—they hired no Blacks. So, you either worked in the hotel and restaurant industry or you worked on the railroad" (Ross 1981a).

Figure 24. The Curtis Hotel (Co-Mo Company 2024)

Nellie Stone Johnson, Albert L. Allen, and the Minneapolis Athletic Club

Though these hospitality positions were desirable for Black Minneapolitans, employees knew there were still racial restrictions hindering their earning power and limiting their career paths. In the 1930s, Stone Johnson worked as an elevator operator at the Minneapolis Athletic Club (615-621 2nd Avenue South, HE-MPC-07873, extant). When club management announced their intention to reduce operator pay from $15 per week to $12.50 per week, Stone Johnson and a coworker organized their colleagues and established the first integrated union in Minnesota, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) Local 665 International Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union. In her oral history interview from 1981, Stone Johnson recalled that there were only a few other women in Minneapolis working in labor organizing. Stone Johnson eventually became the union chapter's Vice President in 1936. Stone Johnson also became the first African American elected to office in Minneapolis, when she won a seat on the Minneapolis Library Board in 1945. Stone Johnson spent her career in labor organizing and political consultation, becoming one of the most influential and respected Black leaders in Minneapolis during her lifetime (Delton 2001; Prescod 2023; Ross 1981c; Summit Envirosolutions 2016).

Figure 25. Nellie Stone Johnson, 1943 (Star and Tribune Company 1943)

Albert L. Allen, Jr., also worked at the Minneapolis Athletic Club in the 1930s, managing and scheduling the popular handball court for more than a decade. Management did not give him the title of athletic director, but his work running the handball court was essentially that of a director, arranging strategic tennis and handball matches between executives, potential clients, and buyers. While at the Athletic Club, Allen joined the Local 665 that Stone Johnson helped establish, and he helped recruit colleagues. He was eventually elected Vice President of the chapter, a position he held for several years. Allen later organized and served as president of Local 3015 of the Clerical Workers Union at the Minneapolis airport; served as president of the Minneapolis NAACP from 1946 to 1949; and belonged to the Minneapolis Fair Employment Practices Committee in the early 1950s (Delton 2001; Minnesota Historical Society 2015; Ross 1981b).

A.B. Cassius and the Curtis Hotel

A.B. Cassius began working at the Curtis Hotel (10th Street South and 4th Avenue South, non-extant) in 1927 and quickly realized the significant discrepancy in pay that the all-Black wait staff earned ($17 per month) compared to their white counterparts at comparable hotels ($75 per month). Cassius and several coworkers then helped Stone Johnson with the unionization of the Curtis Hotel staff into Local 665. In his oral history interview, Cassius noted he would meet fellow organizers, several of whom were white, at Foster's Sweet Shoppe at 6th and Lyndale Avenue North (non-extant), which was known as a location where Black people could freely socialize with white people. The Teamsters, Minneapolis' strongest and best-known labor union at the time, backed the unionization effort, and helped the Local 665 win back wages. The Curtis Hotel was demolished in 1984 (Bos 2021a; Lileks 2019; Ross 1981a).

Lena Olive Smith

In 1939, Lena Olive Smith (also discussed in Section 2.7), the first African American woman licensed to practice law in Minnesota, pursued a discrimination case concerning the Nicollet Hotel (235 Hennepin Avenue South, non-extant), where an African American patron was denied service at a mixed-race convention. In response to the suit, the Nicollet Hotel claimed it did not have a policy of service discrimination, but Smith argued that the hotel was responsible under the law for damages to her client. Smith's argument prevailed, and the court ordered the Nicollet Hotel to pay the plaintiff $25 in costs and over $300 in legal fees. By this time, Smith had already achieved significant professional milestones, including (but not limited to) her graduation from law school in 1921; co-founding the Minneapolis chapter of the Urban League in 1925; acceptance to the Minnesota bar in 1927; and becoming the first woman president of the Minneapolis NAACP branch in 1930. Throughout her career, Smith pursued a variety of cases that championed civil rights for Black people. Smith remained active in her law practice until her death in 1966 (DeCarlo 2024a; Sluss 1995).

Entrepreneurs and Small Business Owners

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, Black entrepreneurs increasingly opened small businesses to serve the members of the Black community who were refused service in white-owned establishments. These early Black-owned businesses faced challenges to longevity due to the tumultuous years following World War I. Nevertheless, many of these businesses provided a foundation upon which to build generational legacies of entrepreneurship. In some instances, the success of a parent's business helped them raise the standard of living for their children; in others, the spirit of entrepreneurship modeled by one generation inspired the next to become business owners themselves.

Prior to grocery stores opening in predominantly African American neighborhoods, many Black Minneapolitans purchased produce from local farmers who would travel to the city to sell their goods. According to A.B. Cassius' oral history, African American farmer John S. Wright owned 50 acres in nearby Robbinsdale, and he both sold his crops in the city and hired local young men to work on the farm. Others opened specialty stores, such as P. J. Buford, W. W. Humphrey, and F. L. Jamison, who operated Cut Rate Grocery (advertised as "the only colored meat market in Minneapolis) at 429 6th Avenue North (non-extant) during the 1910s. In 1918, Albert L. Allen, Jr.'s, grandfather became the first Black grocer in the state of Minnesota. Albert L. Allen, Sr., opened his own grocery store in Near North shortly thereafter (624 Lyndale Avenue North, non-extant), which lasted until the Great Depression forced them to close (Minneapolis Directory Company 1923; Minnesota Historical Society 2015; Ross 1981a, 1981b).

Bert "Dutch" Thompson

In 1914, Mrs. Alice Carver moved her small hotel, the Carver Hotel, to co-locate with the Colored Railroad Men's Club at 212 11th Avenue South, the property owned by Ida Dorsey (HE-MPC-09839, extant). In 1917, entrepreneur Bert "Dutch" Thompson, then the secretary and treasurer of the Colored Railroad Men's Club, opened a barber shop at the same location. Barbering was a common occupation for Black men, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when they were denied

many other employment opportunities, as evidenced by Ralph Grey in the 1850s (see Section 2.1). By 1930, the property at 212 11th Avenue South had transitioned to a nightclub, first called Spot De Luxe, then simply Southside Night Club. By 1934, Thompson held a 3.2 beer license for the establishment, which was prominently featured in newspapers catering to Black readers, such as the *Twin City Star*. In January 1938, a police raid targeted the club, and Thompson and his two business associates were arrested for serving hard liquor. Subsequently, Thompson's licenses were revoked. Thompson's role as the Southside Night Club proprietor followed him for the rest of his life; his obituary in 1959 notes it prominently (Minneapolis Star 1938; St. Paul Recorder 1959; Twin Cities Music Highlights 2024b).

Anthony Brutus Cassius

Though he started his professional career in hotel hospitality, A.B. Cassius became one of the most prominent entrepreneurs—as well as labor organizer, civic leader, and civil rights activist—in Minneapolis (also discussed in Section 2.7). In 1937, following his tenure at the Curtis Hotel, Cassius and his brother purchased a restaurant in South Minneapolis and opened the Dreamland Cafe and Tavern at 3753 4th Avenue South (HE-MPC-04885, extant) in 1939. In 1947, the Cassius brothers bought a second restaurant downtown, which they transformed into the Cassius Club Café (first located at 207 3rd Street South, then 318 3rd Street South, both non-extant). With the establishment of his downtown club, Cassius became the first African American to hold a liquor license in Minneapolis following a legal battle with two city aldermen. He also obtained a $10,000 loan from Midland Bank for this club, which was yet another major milestone for a Black entrepreneur in Minneapolis. A.B. Cassius' wife, Florence, was also deeply involved in the businesses, evidenced by her name being listed alongside A.B.'s under entries for Cassius Bar in city directories (Minneapolis Directory Company 1950:225, 1958:220). Both the Dreamland Café and the Cassius Bar were popular gathering places for African Americans in Minneapolis for decades. Dreamland changed ownership in the 1950s, while Cassius Bar closed in 1980. In addition to the Dreamland Café and the Cassius Bar, Cassius also founded the Minnesota Club, an association of Black professionals and businesspeople; was a member of the NAACP and the Urban League; served on the board of The Way, a social service center for Black youth in Minneapolis; and served as president of the Nacirema Club, a social club and music venue located at 3949 4th Avenue South (HE-MPC-04886, extant). A.B. Cassius's entrepreneurial endeavors became more than just employment opportunities; Cassius's businesses created spaces for Black people in Minneapolis to eat, drink, organize, and connect in safe and welcoming environments. Cassius' venue at 207 3rd Street South was listed in the Green Book for Minneapolis for 13 years (1941-1954), though it was referred to as Bells Café that whole time. Dreamland became one of the anchor institutions in the neighborhood around "Black Wall Street," centered at 38th Street South and 4th Avenue South (Bos 2021a; Ross 1981a; University of Virginia 2024a, 2024b; Young 2024). A.B. and Florence Cassius lived at 4026 Clinton Avenue (extant), within the Old Southside, from 1940 until their deaths in 1983 and 1974, respectively (Minneapolis Directory Company 1940:245; Minneapolis Star 1974b:8C; Minneapolis Star and Tribune 1983:6D).

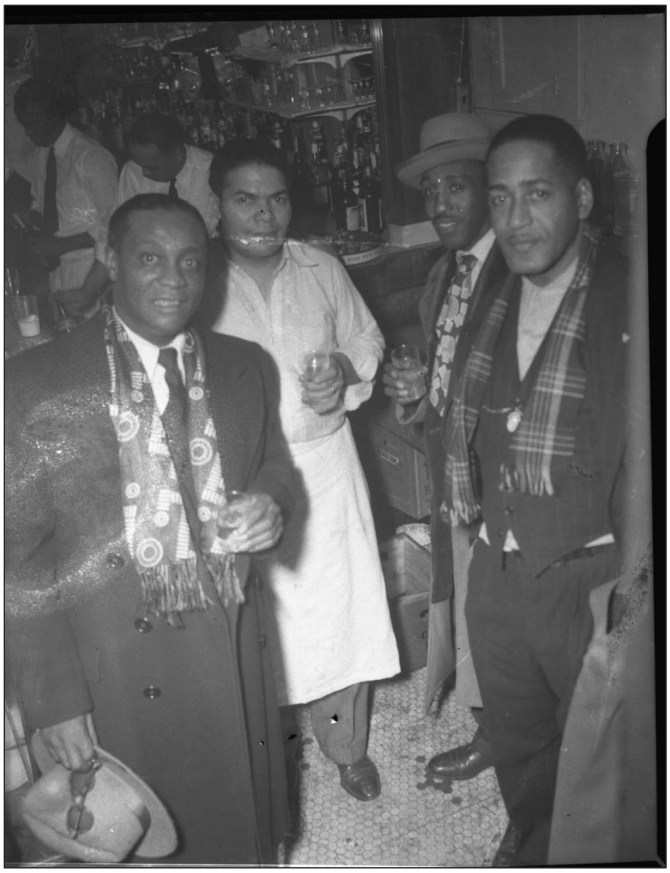


Figure 26. A.B. Cassius and Patrons of his Bar, circa 1940 (Glanton 1940a)

Archie and Phebe Givens

Born in North Minneapolis in 1919, Archie Givens, Sr., began his working life at the age of 14, following the loss of his parents. Givens married Phebe O'Shields, also from North Minneapolis, in the 1940s. In 1947, Givens launched his first of many successful business ventures, opening the Givens Ice Cream Shop at 701 Olson Memorial Highway (formerly 6th Avenue North, non-extant) (Minneapolis Directory Company 1950:447). Givens eventually moved on to working at the Minneapolis Housing Authority, where he cultivated an interest in developing affordable housing for seniors, minorities, and youth. Archie and Phebe eventually founded Givens Development, and they opened Minnesota's first racially integrated nursing home, Angelus Nursing Home (4544 4th Avenue South, extant), in the 1950s. Starting in 1953, Archie played a leading role in creating the Tilsenbilt Homes, one of the earliest interracial housing developments in the country (see Section 2.2). Phebe Givens became the first Black woman to be licensed within the state as a nursing home administrator. Givens became known as the state's first Black millionaire. The Givens family lived in a Tilsenbilt home at 4248 3rd Avenue South (extant) from 1956 to 1966, at which point they moved to 5701 Clinton Avenue (extant). In 1972, the couple launched the Archie and Phebe Mae Givens Foundation. The foundation started as a scholarship program for male African American students at Macalester College who were interested in business and was administered by Earl Bowman, Jr., then vice president of student affairs at the college. The mission of the foundation

has since expanded to sponsoring emerging Black authors, writers' conferences, and community reading campaigns. Givens passed away at the age of 54, but his namesake, The Archie Givens Sr. Collection of African American Literature and Life, includes more than 10,000 rare and first-edition books and manuscripts at the University of Minnesota. Phebe Givens died in 2015 at age 93 (CBS News 2022; Frenz et al. 2016:15; Jackson 2015c; Lerner 2015). Their legacy was carried on by their children, Archie Givens, Jr., and Roxanne Givens, through the operation of Givens Development, the Rainbow Land Development Co., and the Legacy Management & Development Corp., all of which continued to develop and manage affordable housing as of 2016 (African American Registry 2025a; Ahles 2012:16; Frenz et al. 2016:15; Jackson 2015c; Preston 2023).

Frederick McKinley Jones

Born in Kentucky in 1893, Frederick McKinley Jones moved from a farm in small-town Minnesota to Minneapolis in the 1920s after inventing a device that enabled silent movie projectors to play recorded sounds. His invention attracted the attention of Joseph A. Numero, who owned an audiovisual company in the city. He worked as an engineer and inventor at that company from 1927 through 1938. In the late 1930s, Numero challenged him with devising a method of long-haul refrigerated transportation for food, and Jones quickly engineered a working model that attached refrigeration equipment to the undercarriage of trucks, which then flowed chilled air into the trailer via refrigerant tubing. They called this initial device Thermo Control Model A. In 1938, Jones and Numero launched the US Thermo Control Company (renamed Thermo King Corporation in 1941) and, during his time at the company, he continued to tweak and develop new inventions to make refrigeration more efficient. In the 1950s, Jones consulted several branches of the government, including the Bureau of Standards and the Department of Defense. Jones died in Minneapolis in 1961, after having received at least 60 patents for his various inventions, which included a portable X-ray machine for hospitals and an ice cream machine. Jones was the first Black person to be inducted into the American Society of Refrigeration Engineers and the first to receive the National Medal of Technology (Hammond 2022; Lange et al. 2022; Minnesota Science and Technology Hall of Fame 2024).

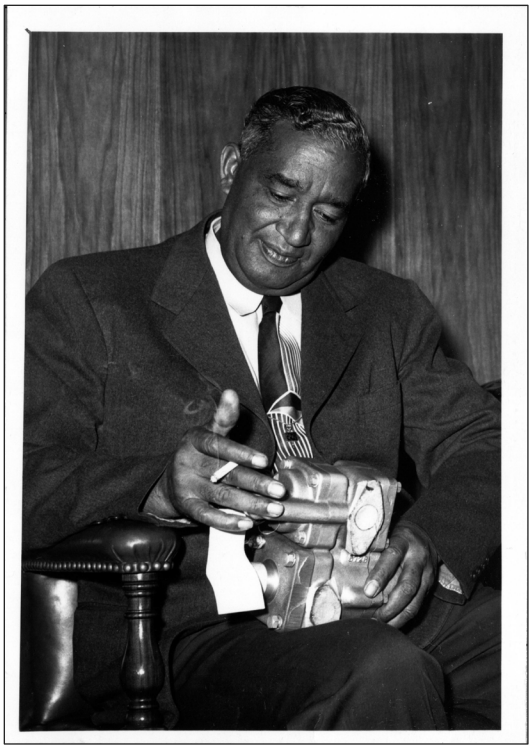


Figure 27. Frederick McKinley Jones, 1970 (Thermo King 1970)

Old Southside and "Black Wall Street"

Bordered by Nicollet and Chicago avenues to the west and east, and 38th Street and 46th Street to the north and south, Old Southside was one of the few areas in the city where Black people could own their own homes, properties, and businesses (see Section 2.2). The intersections nearby, including 38th Street East and 4th Avenue South, formed a vibrant commercial hub for Black Minneapolis and for Black-owned businesses in the decades immediately preceding and following World War II. In addition, many Black community leaders lived in the neighborhood immediately surrounding "Black Wall Street," including Lena O. Smith, Nellie Stone Johnson, A.B. Cassius, and Albert L. Allen, Jr. (Lange et al. 2022; Pike 2020; Ross 1981a, 1981b, 1981c).

The "Black Wall Street" commercial corridor, as the area has been called by some community members, served as the location of many Black-owned businesses, including what is now the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, the oldest continuously operated Black newspaper and possibly longest-lived Black-owned business in Minnesota (3744 4th Avenue South, HE-MPC-04847, extant and designated a local landmark); the Associated Negro Credit Union, which was established in 1937 (original location unknown[1]); Dick's Mobil Service Station, which eventually became one of the first Black-owned ice

[1] Sources regarding the original location of the Associated Negro Credit Union are conflicting. A secondary source notes that it opened at 3744 4th Avenue South in 1937, which is the address currently associated with the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building (Burnside 2017a). While the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* building was not constructed until 1958 and a different storefront may have been located at the same address prior to that, no listing

cream shops in the city, the Frostee Freeze (3800 3rd Avenue South, extant); Schofield's Soda Shop and 38th Street Delicatessen (3759 4th Avenue South, HE-MPC-21197, extant); Mr. Crown Records, Inc. (348 ½ 38th Street East, non-extant); Joanna Salon of Beauty (4807-4809 4th Avenue South, extant); and Crown Barbershop (344 38th Street East, non-extant). Several of the businesses located along the corridor were featured in the Minnesota section of the Green Book between the 1940s and 1960s (Google 2022; Lange et al. 2022; Minneapolis Directory Company 1963; St. Paul Recorder 1975; University of Virginia 2024c; Young 2024).

Old Southside's concentration of Black economic success and property ownership was significantly disrupted by the construction of I-35W just to the east of Nicollet Avenue, beginning in 1959 (see Section 2.2). In 1957, highway engineers considered three possible routes for the highway to be constructed in South Minneapolis: one just west of Bde Maka Ska and Lake Harriet; one directly through Old Southside; and one next to Cedar Avenue. In their decision making, the City Planning Commission "could find no functioning neighborhood" in the vicinity of the route through Old Southside, and that finding, along with the perceived lower value of the land there, were major factors in the decision to construct I-35W there. The construction of I-35W demolished 50 square blocks in Old Southside, and it permanently bifurcated the physically, socially, and economically cohesive Black community there. The present-day neighborhoods of Central, Bryant, and Field, which encompass Old Southside, retain concentrations of Black residents and business owners, but the community's concentrated economic success has been comparatively diminished since the construction of the highway (Donofrio 2020a; Pike 2020).

Employment: 1960-Present

In the decades following World War II, employment opportunities for Black Minneapolitans opened in a greater variety of sectors, likely due to both the Civil Rights Movement, the advancement of anti-discrimination laws following Executive Order 8802, and increased opportunities for Black students to access higher education. While African Americans had been employed in medicine, law, art, music, writing, hospitality, manufacturing and other sectors since arriving in Minneapolis, Black Minneapolitans gained employment in an even wider array of industries by 1969 (General Mills, IBM, Honeywell, telephone and electric companies, and more), education, media companies, banking, insurance, and travel. Walter Scott's 1969 *Minneapolis Negro Profile: A Pictorial Resume of the Black Community, Its Achievements, and Its Immediate Goals* features African Americans working in all of these fields, demonstrating not only the variety of employers they had, but also the variety of ages and types of positions—from entry-level to executive—that African Americans held at the time in Minneapolis (Scott 1969). Many individuals rose to prominence as the first African Americans in their roles and/or fields during this period.

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for the Associated Negro Credit Union could be found in city directories could be located to confirm this address. A reference to the credit union in a 1938 newspaper article lists the address as 3942 3rd Avenue South, which is a residential property that remains extant (St. Paul Recorder 1938:3).

Figure 28. Mr. Woodfin Lewis (left), Physicist at Honeywell, and Doris Jones Bailey (right), Clerk at First National Bank of Minneapolis (Scott 1956)

Northside

By 1930, 1,700 African Americans lived in the vicinity of 6th Avenue North and Lyndale Avenue North, roughly 41% of the Black population of Minneapolis as a whole (Peterson and Zellie 1998). Documentation about Black-owned businesses and businesses that appear to have been welcoming to Black patrons in Near North suggests that these businesses became more common in the neighborhood by the 1940s and 1950s, with Labrie's liquor store (324 Plymouth Avenue North, non-extant), Ann's Cleaners (919 7th Street North, non-extant), and the North Side Inn tavern (546 6th Avenue North, non-extant) featured in many issues of the Green Book for Minneapolis. Many of the small businesses of this era were demolished with the construction of the Olson Memorial Highway in the 1950s and I-94 in the 1960s (Taylor 1981; University of Virginia 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g).

In the summer of 1967, long-standing and widespread racial inequality and the demolition and displacement caused by large-scale urban renewal initiatives fueled an uprising in Minneapolis that caused significant unrest and property damage along the Plymouth Avenue commercial corridor in Near North. The uprising served as an urgent call for additional resources to help improve the living conditions and employment opportunities for the city's Black community, leading the area's businesses to launch a number of initiatives, including workforce training and financial services. In Minneapolis, various public and private entities developed new, and expanded existing, programs and services to address these grievances, including Northwestern National Bank of Minneapolis, built in 1969 (now Wells Fargo, 615 7th Street North, HE-MPC-16722, extant) (Minneapolis Tribune 1968a, 1968b).

Following the construction of the highway and the destruction of several smaller concentrations of small businesses in Near North, the commercial centers of the neighborhood grew along West Broadway Avenue, particularly at the intersection with Penn Avenue North, as well as near the intersection of Penn Avenue North and Plymouth Avenue North. Dr. Thomas Johnson moved to Minneapolis in the late 1930s, and after successfully establishing clinics in South Minneapolis, Johnson moved his primary clinic to Plymouth and Queen Avenues North (non-extant) in 1966 to better serve his patients, about 80% of whom lived in North Minneapolis. Eventually, Dr. Johnson's clinic expanded to include a dental office, a pharmacy, and a beauty salon, until the location closed as a clinic in 1988 (Google 2024; Hennepin County Assessor's Office 2024; Jackson 2015a; Lange et al. 2022). Another clinic, the Pilot City Health Center, was established by the City of Minneapolis in 1967 on the same block as Dr. Johnson's clinic in the former Beth El Synagogue (1349 Penn Avenue North, non-extant).[2] It was part of the city's Decision '67 action plan, which coincided with President Lyndon Johnson's national War of Poverty and Great Society programs. In 1973, after a reduction of federal funding, control of the facility was transferred to Hennepin County. Also in the 1970s, the Pilot City Neighborhood Services Center was constructed next door to the former synagogue, and, in 1977, John Bluford was hired as its administrator. Bluford served as both an administrative resident and director of admission at Cook County Hospital in Chicago prior to taking the role. The former synagogue was demolished, and a new facility was constructed in the 1990s. In 2004, Pilot City changed its name to NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center. NorthPoint continues to operated out the facility, which was significantly expanded in the 2020s (Hennepin County Library 2025a; Minneapolis Tribune 1977:5B).

Near to Dr. Johnson's clinic were several other prominent Black-owned businesses or establishments opened by Black people. The First Plymouth National Bank opened at 1723 Plymouth Avenue North in 1969 (non-extant) and, at the time, it was the one of, if not the only, Black-owned bank in the Twin Cities. The bank moved to 2000 Plymouth Avenue North in 1970, in a building designed by Lorenzo Williams. Sylvester and Pauline Young opened the Brothers Barber Shop and the Satin Doll Salon at 1908 Plymouth Avenue North (now 1918 Plymouth Avenue North, extant) following the building's construction in 1973, and it became a community gathering place. Until at least 2021, the location still served as a barber shop, then called Mass Appeal. At 2005 Plymouth Avenue North (extant), Leroy King, Sr., owned and operated King Supermarket, a franchise of the Red Owl supermarket chain, from 1975 to about 1991. King Supermarket served as a community staple, both for grocery shopping and as an employer. It was located within a strip mall that included other important local businesses, such as Coast-to-Coast Hardware Store, The Phone Store, J.C. Clark's Pharmacy, and Carl Eller Liquor Store. The location now serves as the University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), with the address 2001 Plymouth Avenue North. UROC houses multiple university programs that pursue research and outreach in partnership with individuals and organizations within the North

[2] The geographical proximity of this clinic to Dr. Johnson's, its establishment a year after Dr. Johnson is said to have relocated his clinic to North Minneapolis, and the similarities in services offered between the two facilities, suggests that the two were related, or may have been one and the same. Research conducted as part of this study, however, could not establish a definitive link between the two facilities.

Minneapolis community (Ammons 1996; McFarlane 2010; Minneapolis Tribune 1969; NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center 1969; Stroud 2015; Young 1997).

West Broadway Avenue is one of the longest contiguous commercial districts in Minneapolis, as well as one of the city's oldest commercial corridors. In recent years, West Broadway Avenue has served as the location of two prominent Black-owned restaurants. In an effort to expand fresh food options for the Northside community, entrepreneur and chef Sammy McDowell opened his successful Sammy's Avenue Eatery at 1101 West Broadway Avenue (HE-MPC-08031, extant) in 2012. The café serves not only as a restaurant, but as a gathering place for local organizers, arts groups, and other local business owners. McDowell passed away in 2024, but his business continues to serve the community. Chef Lachelle Cunningham collaborated with nonprofit Appetite For Change to open Breaking Bread Café in 2015 at 1210 West Broadway Avenue (extant). The restaurant, which closed in 2023, opened to provide more fresh food options in the community, as well as offer workshops and training to community members. Though the restaurant itself has closed, Appetite for Change and Chef Cunningham continue their work connecting food to social justice in other enterprises (Bush Foundation 2024; Jones 2024).

Control Data

The Control Data Corporation, a computer development and manufacturing company, was founded in Minnesota in 1957. As the company quickly became a leader in the burgeoning computer industry, its founder, William C. Norris, sought to use Control Data's influence and resources to foster positive social change. The 1969 construction of both the Control Data Institute (1001 Washington Avenue North, HE-MPC-16694, extant) and its neighboring Control Data Northside Manufacturing Plant (277 12th Avenue North, HE-MPC-16699, extant), was purposely carried out with this goal in mind. Norris intended these buildings to provide skilled job training and employment opportunities to low-income residents of North Minneapolis following the unrest of 1967. The manufacturing plant, which eventually employed more than 200 workers, consciously altered the company's employment screening process in order to hire residents who lived in the immediate area. Through these adjustments, the plant achieved an average employment of 65% minorities (primarily Black and Native American) and 50% women (Roise and Petersen 2011). By the time the Control Data center opened in 1970, the company operated seventeen similar facilities in which they provided computer training and servicing. Both the Northside Manufacturing Plant and the computer education center were constructed on land that the Minneapolis Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) sold to Control Data, and the education center was subsidized by a federal grant. The use of federal funds for the new training programs was met with criticism from African American leaders in the Twin Cities Opportunities Industrialization Center (TCOIC), who advocated that available federal funds should go to existing training centers. Despite the opposition, Control Data received the federal funding for the computer training education programs. Control Data's success began to wane in the 1980s due to changes in the industry and the company began to scale back operations. By 1988, the Northside Plant was occupied by Microtron, a minority-owned tech manufacturer (Don 1980; Roise 2011). At the height of the company's operations, Microtron had over 100 employees, the majority of whom were Black and lived in North Minneapolis (Bryson 2023).

Bryant Central Co-Op

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the concept of co-operatives, particularly natural food co-operatives, gained popularity throughout the US. The co-operative concept itself was not new, as it had been activated in a variety of ways, scales, types, and geographies for centuries. However, the iteration that was spurred in the 1960s and 1970s prioritized healthy food, small-scale production, and a lack of corporate intervention. The natural food co-operative movement in Minneapolis was one of the nation's largest and one of its most contentious (Cox 1994; The Co-Op Wars 2015).

In 1970, the creation of the People's Pantry started the natural food co-operative movement in Minneapolis. This establishment and warehouse provided natural food in bulk to the local community at wholesale prices. As more people became involved in the food co-operative movement in Minneapolis, an ideological shift began to emerge. The Coop Organization (CO) eventually formed as an independent entity, with the aim to centralize distribution, offer lower-priced foods, such as white bread and margarine, and incorporate Marxist ideology into their worker ethos. The CO pushed for significant change in the food co-operative movement, and by 1975, they sought to control the co-operative system in Minneapolis, running the People's Warehouse. The main opposition coalesced into the Distributing Alliance of the Northcountry Cooperatives (DANCe) (Cox 1994; The Co-Op Wars 2015).

While the food co-operative conflict brewed elsewhere in Minneapolis, Moe Burton, an activist and community organizer in Old Southside, was leading an effort to establish a food co-operative in the neighborhood. Burton had been a member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Black Panthers and, in Old Southside, he pursued a co-operative model that would provide conventional food at lower cost. Bryant-Central Co-Operative (3401 4th Avenue South, non-extant) further differentiated itself by paying its staff, while other stores generally relied on volunteers or paid only some positions. Bryant-Central also focused on hiring young people from the surrounding community to build resumes and work experience. According to Burton, Bryant-Central first collaborated with CO leadership to spread the word about their co-op and to advocate for lower cost goods being sold in co-operatives, generally. Eventually, though, CO leadership tried to claim credit for Bryant-Central's establishment and for the involvement of Black Minneapolitans in the movement. When Burton and other Bryant-Central leaders cut ties with CO, CO retaliated, and CO leader Bob Haugen physically attacked Burton, cut his phone lines, and firebombed his truck. Burton stood firm, and eventually Haugen and other CO leaders left Minneapolis for Chicago. Bryant-Central withdrew from the mostly white co-operative conflicts after that. Though Bryant-Central was only open from 1975-1978, its legacy and the desire for a food co-operative in Old Southside persisted for decades. In 2015, the most recent effort came to fruition, with the construction of the Seward Co-Op Friendship Store at 317 38th Street East (extant) and the leadership of a diverse, neighborhood-based team (Cox 1994; Seward Community Co-Op 2015; The Co-Op Wars 2015).

Figure 29. Moe Burton outside the Bryant-Central Co-Operative (The Co-Op Wars 2024)

Employment: Present Day

From the late twentieth century through to present day, African Americans in Minneapolis have continued to expand employment opportunities, advance professional growth, and innovate. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' May 2023 data set for Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metropolitan area (published July 2024), African Americans are represented in every employment sector studied. The sectors with some of the highest numbers of African American workers in the metro area include: registered nurses, psychiatric, health technicians, and home health aides (over 23,000); chefs, managers, food preparation (about 7,500); teachers and educators (nearly 4,000); labor and material movers (about 6,700); and counselors, social workers, and other community and social service specialists (nearly 3,200, or about 11% of the total sector workforce in the metro area) (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 2024).

2.5 Community, Social Organizations, Recreation, and Education

Overview

As Minneapolis' Black population grew and settled during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a sense of community and local identity developed alongside it. The community faced social and economic hardships, struggles which were exacerbated by a lack of access to educational opportunities. This necessitated the creation of social support programs which addressed specific social and civil rights concerns, as well as recreation and athletics which provided much-needed leisure and served as fertile ground for further civil rights advancement. The following theme explores

how Black Minneapolitans strove for equality, advancement, and excellence through the worlds of education, community organizations, and recreation, fighting not only for rights within their local neighborhoods, but within the nation at large.

Education

Segregation was rampant in Minneapolis' educational and academic facilities throughout much of the twentieth century, barring Black students from accessing many of the same spaces and resources that were available to their white counterparts. Although segregation in Minnesota schools was officially banned by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1869, the unwillingness of many white families to allow their children to attend schools with Black students resulted in de facto segregation that kept classrooms largely separated. As a result of this unequal access to education, as well as discrimination by local employers, Black Minneapolitans were mostly relegated to domestic and physical labor jobs from the late nineteenth century into the 1920s. Still, Black students and educators have persisted in their demands for access to educational spaces in Minneapolis for more than a century, overcoming barriers so that the same intellectual enrichment is available to all students (Taylor 1981:74; University of Minnesota 2017a).

University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota was established by charter in 1851, seven years prior to Minnesota achieving statehood (University of Minnesota 2024f). Although the university accepted applications from Black students, a Black student did not graduate until 1882. Information on the Black student population at the university in the 1880s and 1890s is sparse, as the school did not document their students' racial backgrounds at the time, and it is believed that an unknown number of Black students may have passed as white or mixed-race during their enrollment. The list of Black graduates at the University of Minnesota grew slowly: between 1882 and 1905, only seven Black students received degrees, and all but one of them were men. Black students were reportedly barred from major-specific undergraduate degrees at the beginning of the twentieth century, underscoring how segregation was enforced institutionally while remaining within the letter of the law (University of Minnesota 2017a). However, on-campus attitudes among white students towards their Black counterparts were reported to be welcoming. This relationship between Black and white students and faculty, however, grew more hostile in the 1920s, coinciding with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the state of Minnesota, particularly after a nationally publicized lynching of three Black men in Duluth in 1920 (discussed more below) (Taylor 1981:86). By the end of the 1930s, only 70 Black students were enrolled at the University of Minnesota. Issues of equity and discrimination became central to the experience of Black University of Minnesota students as the school established segregated on-campus student housing in 1931, a practice that remained in effect until 1954 (University of Minnesota 2017a). As a result, there was a surge of Black-led activism during the 1960s, with demands for an increased presence of Black students and faculty, as well the establishment of a Black history curriculum. Still, by 1973, when statistics were first collected on the university's racial makeup, only 2% of the student body was Black, illustrating the

ongoing lack of representation and access faced by Black students at the University of Minnesota (Maas 2019a).

Andrew Hilyer and Scottie Primus Davis

The first Black student to graduate from the University of Minnesota was Andrew Hilyer. At the time of his graduation in 1882, the school's law, pharmacy, and dentistry schools were open to Black students, allowing for a select few to gain the credentials necessary to enter the professional workforce in the Twin Cities. Those who were able to do so planted the seeds for an upwardly mobile professional class of Black Minneapolitans during the late nineteenth century. Hilyer, however, did not stay in Minneapolis, and instead relocated to Washington, D.C., where he studied law and worked for the US Treasury Department. In 1904, twenty-two years after Hilyer's graduation, Scottie Primus Davis became the University of Minnesota's first Black woman graduate (Brady 2002; Spangler 1961:76–77). After her graduation, Davis took a job as a teacher in Louisville, Kentucky, and attended Harvard University in the 1920s, from which she received her master's degree in education. She worked as a teacher until her retirement in 1951 (Trimble 2022).

Segregated Housing at the University of Minnesota

In 1931, University of Minnesota President Lotus D. Coffman decided to segregate on-campus student housing by race and religion, which barred Black and Jewish students from sharing housing with the rest of the student body. This prompted a coalition of Black students to form the Council of Negro Students in 1936 with Martha Wright as president (St. Paul Recorder 1936:1; Wright 2021). Group members included Charlotte Crump who detailed her experience as a Black student at a racist northern university in a written account titled "This Free North" and, thereby, changed on-campus attitudes towards segregated housing. Crump was also the first Black student to serve on the university's yearbook team and later went on to work for the NAACP's national office in Washington, D.C. (University of Minnesota 2017b). Helene Hilyer, granddaughter of Andrew Hilyer, also helped support the effort. Thanks to this on-campus activism, Coffman's successor, Guy Stanton Ford, ended segregated student housing at the university in 1937. However, in 1941, University President Walter Coffey established the International House, a residence hall only for Black male students, at 623 Washington Avenue Southeast (non-extant). This reignited student furor, leading to a renewed campaign led by student Garland Kyle and the Civil Rights Committee, another student organization. In April 1942, Kyle and Cecil Newman spoke at a protest at Coffman Union (300 Washington Avenue Southeast, HE-MPC-03178, extant) leading to press coverage, a deluge of letters condemning segregated housing, and the eventual integration of the International House in the summer of 1942. Off-campus boarding houses, however, did not adopt the same policy of integration—a move quietly supported by university leadership—until the University Senate demanded permanent integration of all housing in 1954 (University of Minnesota 2017a).

Figure 30. Charlotte Crump (University of Minnesota 2017b)

Afro-American Action Committee (AAAC)

In November 1966, a group of University of Minnesota students founded Students for Racial Progress (STRAP) as a response to increasing tensions caused by a lack of visibility and representation of Black students and faculty on the university's campus. In 1967, the group facilitated an on-campus appearance by activist Stokely Carmichael. The group later staged a sit-in protest at the university's opening convocation ceremony, motivated by the absence of an invitation for STRAP president Ida Elam. By early 1968, the group renamed themselves the Afro-American Action Committee (AAAC) and were largely led by student activists Rose Mary Freeman and Horace Huntley (see Section 2.7). Local Twin Cities groups like the Minneapolis Urban League, the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, and The Way offered their organizational support to the student activist group (Brady 2007:126–128).

Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, the AAAC issued a list of demands, drafted by John S. Wright II, to University President Malcolm Moos. These demands included the creation of scholarship programs for African American students and the establishment of an Afro-American Studies curriculum. As the 1969 winter semester began, the AAAC felt progress was moving too slowly and acted decisively to ensure their demands were met. On January 13, 1969, the group left a list of their demands in the office of President Moos: "We want a [sic] Afro-American Studies Department established by fall quarter 1969 leading to B.A. degree. We want all plans and progress submitted to us concerning the Afro American Studies Department. We want the plans and progres [sic]

up to date submitted to us…Deadline on these demands [is] 1 o' clock TOMORROW" (University of Minnesota 1969a).

The next day, January 14, following an unsatisfactory conversation with Moos, 70 students staged a sit-in inside of the Bursar's and Records Office in Morrill Hall (100 Church Street Southeast, HE-MPC-03286, extant). The occupation was successful, with the university agreeing to a number of terms, including the development of an Afro-American Studies program as well as providing the AAAC with sufficient funds to facilitate a Black students' conference. Despite the protest's success, Huntley and Freeman were indicted for aggravated criminal property damage and rioting. The charges prompted more campus protests but, ultimately, both students were convicted of unlawful assembly and given a one-year probation. The actions of the AAAC, however, resulted in the formation of the Department of Afro-American and African Studies (now the Department of African American & African Studies) at the University of Minnesota which is still in existence today (Burnside 2024).

Figure 31. Morrill Hall Protest Leaders (University of Minnesota 1969b)

Central High School and Bryant Junior High School

Central High School (non-extant) opened in 1878 at the corner of 4th Avenue South and 11th Street South and was the only public high school in the city of Minneapolis at the time. The city's population boom during the late nineteenth century eventually rendered the school's smaller facilities obsolete and, in 1913, the school relocated to a new site at 3416 4th Avenue South (non-extant). The building, designed by architect William B. Ittner, was celebrated for its scale and design (Hennepin History Museum 2019). As the Black population in the neighborhoods surrounding Central High increased and social and economic tensions grew more pronounced during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the school created programs that celebrated Black history and culture. In 1973, the school instituted Black History programs which came to include dance routines, renditions of the Black national anthem, and performances that included students portraying famous Black figures such as Harriet Tubman,

Mohammed Ali, and Jesse Jackson. The Mixed Blood Theater (see Section 2.6) also performed for students in 1981 and 1982 (Central High School 1982:28).

Figure 32. Central High School, 1930 (Minnesota Historical Society 1930)

The school produced several notable Black alumni. Some of the most noteworthy include jazz artist Bobby Lyle; pioneering football player Bobby Marshall; stage actor and director Lewis Whitlock; philanthropist Archie Givens, Jr.; Joyce A. Hughes, the nation's first Black woman to be a law professor at a major university; and Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles-Belton (Central High School 1982:47–49; Dickey 2024). Bobby Marshall also served as the school's football coach in 1907, becoming the first Black head coach in the state of Minnesota (Johnson 2024).

Bryant Junior High School (310 38th Street East, HE-MPC-04390) played a similarly important role for younger students in South Minneapolis. The school was opened in 1923 and served as an important educational and social fixture for the community. It produced many notable graduates, including Prince Rogers Nelson (see Section 2.6). The school closed in 1978 and was sold to the Sabathani Community Center in 1979 (Minneapolis Public Schools 2025).

North High School

North High School was first opened in 1888 and existed in several different buildings in North Minneapolis during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1896, a large brick building was constructed at 1719 Fremont Avenue North (non-extant) to house the school. During its earliest years, the school catered to a significant Jewish population, but the student body became predominantly Black as the demographics of North Minneapolis shifted over the course of the twentieth century (see Section 2.2). In 1974, the school was demolished and a new building was constructed nearby at 1500 James

Avenue North (HE-MPC-08160, extant). The school has served as a central institution in North Minneapolis. Its importance to the community was illustrated by the public response to a proposal to close the school in 2010. Citing declining enrollment, the Minneapolis Board of Education sought to shutter the school, leading to a large community rally in its defense. The vocal protest caused the Board of Education to rescind its proposal and the school remains open (Minneapolis Star 1974a; Mitchell 2010; West Saint Paul Antiques 2025).

Hale-Field Pairing and the End of Segregation

In 1970, the Minneapolis School Board proposed the "pairing," or merging, of Hale (5330 13th Ave South, HE-MPC-04725, extant) and Eugene Field (4645 4th Ave South, HE-MPC-04409, extant) Elementary Schools to undo the unofficial segregation of Minneapolis public schools that had existed for decades. At the time of the proposal, Hale's student body was 98% white while Field's was 57% students of color, with a large majority of Black students. The proposal was met with immediate pushback from parents of Hale students, where 70% of families opposed the pairing. These families formed the Concerned Parents of Hale group to fight the proposal, securing support from then-Mayor Charles Stenvig. In 1971, Olaf K. Uvlog, a parent of a Hale student, filed a lawsuit with the aim of stopping the pairing, arguing that it was "detrimental to the health and safety of students" (Hennepin History Museum 2022).

Despite the efforts to stop the school pairing, including the introduction of state legislation that proposed dissolving the Minneapolis School Board, a mixed-race coalition of Hale and Field parents formed the Hale Neighbors for Improved Education to advocate for the pairing of the two schools. The group organized coffee parties hosted in parents' homes where they could facilitate intimate, small-scale conversations about the proposed pairing. Thanks to these dialogues, sufficient support for pairing was secured and the proposal moved forward. The schools' student bodies were officially merged on September 2, 1971, marking the first time the Minneapolis School Board made an exception to their busing policy. At the time of the pairing, both schools had a 30% student of color population. Further steps taken to bolster the pairing's success included a requirement that at least 10% of staff be non-white as well as instituting a curriculum that included Black history education (Hennepin History Museum 2022).

Figure 33. Children participating in the Hale-Field Pairing Program (King 1971)

Key Organizations and Social Groups

Black organizations and social groups in Minneapolis have long provided a sense of community, aid, and support while also providing opportunities for Black Minneapolitans to fight for civil rights and equity. Many of the most prominent groups in Minneapolis were local chapters of national organizations. Groups like the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP and the Minneapolis Urban League were born of the need to advocate for civil rights, desegregation, and improved employment opportunities on the ground in Minneapolis, with the support of their larger national leadership and structure. Meanwhile, community and social groups were established to address specific community needs in local neighborhoods and connect Black Minneapolitans based on shared interests, professions, or identities. Employment groups like the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers (founded in 1995) promoted Black professionals in specific career fields, while other organizations like the Urban Coalition of Minneapolis (founded in 1968 by Harry Davis, Sr., and members of the business community) functioned as a voice for working-class minority groups (Franklin, Robert 1989; Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers 2024:2B). Public libraries, such as the Hosmer Library (347 36th Street East, HE-MPC-04687, extant) and Sumner Library (611 Emerson Avenue North, HE-MPC-08081, designated local landmark, extant), provided space for social organizations to meet and children to gain supplemental education related to Black history (Minneapolis Spokesman 1998; Paul 1938; Peterson 1996). Thinktanks focused on racial and social issues, like the University of Minnesota's Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice (founded in 1992), have also flourished in Minneapolis (University of Minnesota 2024g).

Minneapolis NAACP

Following the 1909 founding of the NAACP, prominent Black lawyer Frederick McGhee gathered a group of St. Paul community activists in March 1912 to form a civil rights organization of their own. McGhee was the first Black lawyer in the state of Minnesota and had aided W.E.B. Du Bois in founding the

Niagara Movement in 1905, which directly led to the establishment of the NAACP (discussed more in Section 2.7). This new organization, the Twin City Protective League, was officially formed on March 25, 1912, and voted to formally align itself with the NAACP. McGhee died just months later, but the group's efforts continued with the St. Paul chapter receiving their official NAACP charter in the fall of 1913. Shortly after, the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP was established by lawyer Gale Pillsbury Hilyer, son of Andrew Hilyer (Kenney 2024; Roberts 2024; Spangler 1961:86). The Minneapolis NAACP envisioned itself as a multiracial group, given that the city's Black community experienced much of the same discrimination faced by the Jewish community in North Minneapolis. As a result, the group selected Samuel N. Deinard, a rabbi at Temple Israel, as its first president (Furst 1995:12A).

Figure 34. Frederick McGhee, circa 1890 (Nelson 2025)

The St. Paul and Minneapolis chapters of the NAACP worked closely on many issues during their initial years of existence, including a fight to halt screenings of D.W. Griffith's notorious film *The Birth of a Nation*, a Civil War epic that perpetuated offensive stereotypes of Black people and glorified the Ku Klux Klan. The Minneapolis chapter, in particular, fought a screening of the film at multiple theaters throughout the city in 1915 and 1930 (see Section 2.7) (Juergens 2001; Kenney 2024; The Minneapolis Journal 1915:12). Although the NAACP's objections were supported by then-Mayor Wallace G. Nye, a board of censors ultimately overrode Nye's decision to ban the film, allowing screenings to proceed on November 24, 1915 (Minneapolis Journal 1915:10). The two chapters of the NAACP also united after the 1920 lynching in Duluth. The incident involved three Black circus workers who were being held in the local jail as suspects in an alleged rape. On June 15, 1920, a mob broke into the jail and killed the three

men. Following the lynching, seven additional Black men were indicted for the same alleged rape despite a lack of evidence, prompting both chapters to hire attorneys to represent the men while fighting for the charges to be overturned. Ultimately, only one man was convicted while the rest were either acquitted or had their changes dismissed. The activities of the St. Paul and Minneapolis branches of the NAACP in the case ultimately resulted in the creation of a Duluth chapter of the NAACP (Kenney 2024).

The Minneapolis NAACP remained active throughout the twentieth century, notably leading protests in the late 1930s at the downtown lunch counters of Kresge's and Woolworth's (both non-extant) where Black people were forbidden from dining. In the early 1970s, as Minneapolis schools slowly and reluctantly desegregated, the NAACP sued, resulting in a busing program to promote integration (see discussion of Hale-Field pairing above) (Furst 1995:12A). The Minneapolis NAACP has attracted numerous members and leaders who were important local figures including Tela Burt, one of the first African Americans to work in Minneapolis real estate and founder of the first Black American Legion baseball team; Nellie Stone Johnson, a linchpin of progressive Minneapolis politics and the first Black elected official in Minneapolis (see Section 2.7); Curtis Chivers, a business partner of Cecil Newman's who helped develop the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder* and served as president of the Minneapolis NAACP at various times during his life (see Section 2.6); and Matthew Little, who was involved in the organization for over 40 years and served as the chapter's president from 1985 to 1993 (see Section 2.7) (Furst 2014; Minnesota Historical Society 1998; Prescod 2023). The Minneapolis NAACP remains active today, advocating for civil rights advancements and policing and criminal justice reform, as well as fighting for increased access to economic, educational, and political resources.

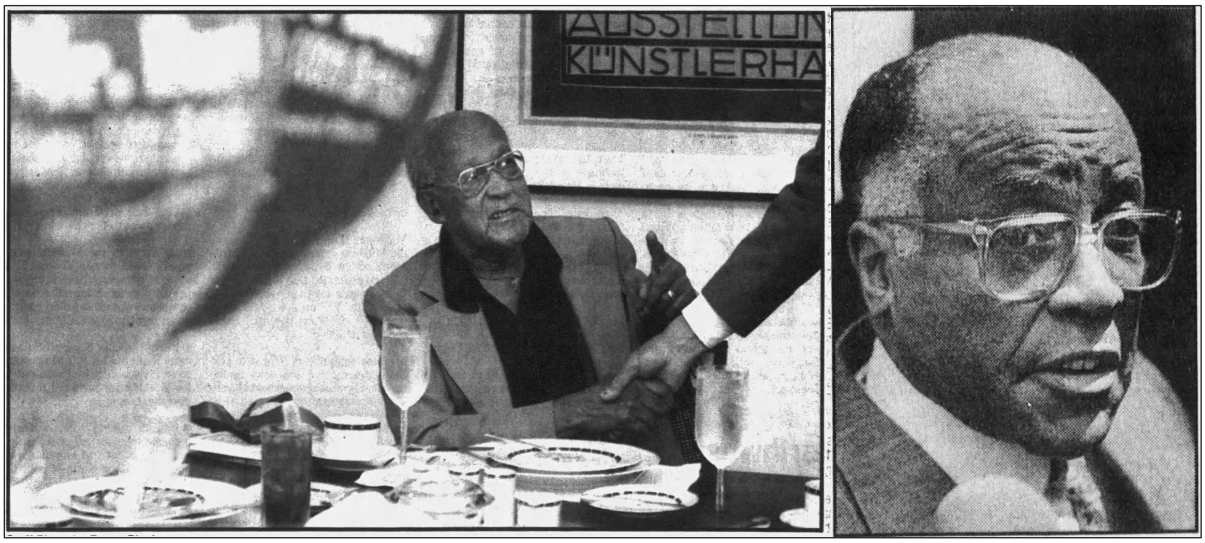

Figure 35. Tela Burt (left) and Matthew Little (right) (Star Tribune 1993:3B; Sundstrom 1991:1D)

Minneapolis Urban League

The Minneapolis chapter of the Urban League was founded in 1925, two years after St. Paul founded their own branch of the nationwide civil rights organization that was originally established in 1910 in

New York City (National Park Service 2016). The Minneapolis chapter was first led by Dr. Abram L. Harris, Jr., although other important local leaders contributed to the branch's establishment, including Twin Cities lawyer Lena O. Smith (see Section 2.4) (DeCarlo 2024b). Harris would go on to publish the influential *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* in 1931, eventually becoming a distinguished professor in economics at the University of Chicago (Gavins 2016:124–125). While the Urban League was originally founded as a settlement organization to help southern Blacks in their relocation to the North during the Great Migration, the group's mission soon encompassed a host of issues in the Black community including funding research work to negate racist perceptions of African Americans and supporting labor unions (National Park Service 2016). The Minneapolis chapter was no different, beginning as an interracial coalition of members who sought to improve the quality of life of Black people in their city. By 1956, the local Urban League program focused on six primary areas: industrial relations (including vocational counseling, job placement, professional contacts, and occupational information), community services (including advisory, informational, and consultative services to public, social, and civic organizations), community education (including the interpretation of problems of adjustment, feelings of prejudice, and acts of discrimination between racial groups), community planning (involving cooperative interracial planning for community development), housing (including support programs for non-segregated public and private housing), and research (in support of the other areas of the Urban League's program) (Scott 1956:78). Owner of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*, Cecil Newman, was the organization's first Black president when he was elected in 1946 (St. Paul Recorder 1946:1). Later directors of the organization, such as white Minneapolis businessman Douglas J. Dayton, demonstrate the commitment to interracial cooperation that was core to the Urban League's mission. The Minneapolis Urban League attracted notable Black leaders from around the city, including board member B. Robert Lewis who was sworn in as Minnesota's first Black state senator in 1973 (Dornfeld 1973:5).

Figure 36. Dr. Abram L. Harris (Selassie 2012)

The group strove to improve employment conditions for Black Minneapolitans, successfully placing Black employees at a number of Twin Cities factories and businesses, such as Honeywell, Northwestern Bell Telephone, and International Harvester between the 1920s and the 1940s. Thanks to the efforts of the Urban League, Black workers achieved positions with prominent employers, often for the first time in those company's histories (Spangler 1961:106; St. Paul Recorder 1960:1B-2B). The Minneapolis Urban League functioned as a roaming group for many years. With no central office, the group often met in churches or homes but, as the organization grew, the Minneapolis Urban League settled in downtown offices. Research suggests that the earliest permanent office for the Minneapolis Urban League was located in the Times Annex Building (57 4th Street South, non-extant) (Lewis 1945:4). Known addresses for the Minneapolis Urban League include the Marquette Building (510 Marquette Avenue, HE-MPC-00344, extant but heavily altered), 411 38th Street East (extant), 2000 Plymouth Avenue North (extant), 100 7th Street North (non-extant), a building located on the northwest corner of the intersection of 38th Street East and 4th Avenue South (non-extant), and 2100 Plymouth Avenue North (extant) (Brandt 2015; Burnside 2017a; St. Paul Recorder 1963:4). In the 2010s, the Minneapolis Urban League expanded its footprint to encompass the larger Twin Cities metropolitan area and is now known as Urban League Twin Cities. The organization continues to advocate on behalf of the African American community as it seeks to empower Black residents to take an active role in shaping the trajectory of the Twin Cities (Urban League Twin Cities 2024).

Stairstep Initiative and Foundation

The Stairstep Initiative began in the early 1990s to "tackle [the North Minneapolis] community's problems without social workers, treatment programs or expensive social services" (Hopfensperger 1993:1B). In its early years, the program, which was founded by Reverend Alfred Babington-Johnson and based out of a house at 1404 14th Avenue North (extant), facilitated grants for minority-led businesses

and initiatives in North Minneapolis. The program's first success was aiding in the opening of a Dairy Queen at 818 West Broadway Avenue (extant) by Joe Lyell, a local Burger King manager. The Dairy Queen, of which Lyell would eventually own 65% as part of the program, was decorated with Black artwork that depicted the importance of family and education in the community. Employment at this Dairy Queen also offered classes on faith and creating stable domestic environments. The initiative received support not only from community members, but also high-profile locals including Minnesota Vikings players Steve Jordan and John Henderson (Hopfensperger 1993:1B; Taylor 1997:A13).

The Stairstep Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to community faith and development, grew out of this program, with early financial aid from Northwest Airlines. The organization undertook a wide range of community-based programs including taking Black youth to Ghana, organizing conversations about North Minneapolis community violence, and producing other offshoot programs, such as the Community Reclamation Project in 1995, which connected young community members to church congregations (Hopfensperger 1993:1B; Minneapolis Star Tribune 1997:9; Nelson 1994:1B). Today, the Stairstep Foundation operates out of 2115 Plymouth Avenue North.

Key Neighborhood Groups

In the absence of adequate investment from the private sector and/or support from public policy programs, Black residents often organized themselves to ensure the needs of the community were met. Formal neighborhood groups were one way in which Black Minneapolitans organized themselves, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century. In 1968, for instance, the Sumner-Olson Residents Council (SORC) was established to represent the interests of those who lived in the Sumner Field Homes housing development (see Section 2.2). SORC was founded to ensure that the needs of residents were heard by the Minneapolis HRA and informed the use of a $2 million grant that it received to modernize the housing development. Beyond this initial mission, SORC also provided a variety of services for those it represented. These included sponsoring annual social events and holiday celebrations, administering a food bank and job program, and serving as a referral agency for a city-run employment training program for youth (Clark 1983; Minneapolis Star 1968; U.S. Department of Labor 1992:4–1).

In 1969, Van White, who would go on to become the first Black member elected to the Minneapolis City Council in 1980, convened the first meeting of the Willard Area Progressive Association, which was attended by 29 residents of the Willard-Hay neighborhood in North Minneapolis. The association was formed to address persistent concerns over the deteriorating housing stock, lack of code enforcement, and insufficient sanitation services in the neighborhood. The group was also motivated by the fact that the community's future was being determined by economic and political decisions made without the input of residents. In 1970, the association merged with its counterpart in the Homewood area (the portion of Willard-Hay located south of Plymouth Avenue) to form the Willard-Homewood Organization (WHO). WHO developed a working relationship with the Minneapolis HRA to carry out projects informed by the needs of residents. The group also worked to secure loans and grants to conduct housing

rehabilitation, including federal community development funds. The group is credited with increasing homeownership, improving physical conditions, and stabilizing the community in the Willard-Hay neighborhood at a time when white flight and economic disinvestment brought significant challenges to North Minneapolis (Ellingson 1977; Martin and Lanegran 1983:74). Van White lived at 800 Washburn Avenue North (extant) with his wife, Javanese, from around 1976 until his death in 1993.

In some instances, individuals took it upon themselves to advocate for the needs of their neighborhoods in both within and without existing institutions. Bernadette (Bernie) Anderson was one such individual. Anderson was a local leader widely recognized for her work with North Minneapolis youth. She was a staff member of the local YWCA for over twenty years and served as director of Metro Youth Services for six years. In 1987, the Uptown YWCA established an alcohol-free club for teenagers called Bernadette's, named in her honor. Anderson also worked as a social worker's assistant in Minneapolis schools. After Anderson's retirement from the YWCA, she served as director of radio station KMOJ-FM, the Phyllis Wheatley Center, and later, President of the Minneapolis Urban League Guild. She was also actively with the League's Street Academy, an alternative school. Anderson instituted an "open door policy" at her home on Russell Avenue North in which neighborhood children were allowed to visit whenever they had personal or family issues (Collins 2003:B8). Her son, André Cymone, often practiced music with his friend Prince Rogers Nelson in the basement of the Anderson family home located at 1244 Russell Avenue North (extant, see Section 2.6 for more). Anderson passed away in 2003 at the age of 71 (Collins 2003:B8). In 2024, the Minneapolis City Council renamed a portion of Russell Avenue North as Bernadette Anderson Way in her honor (Williams 2024).

Figure 37. Bernadette Anderson outside of her Home at 1244 Russell Avenue North (Hanson 2024)

Community Centers

The Black population of Minneapolis has, historically, been smaller than other northern urban centers, but the city nevertheless attracted a large population influx during the Great Migration of the twentieth century. Due to racial covenants that prohibited Black people from living in certain neighborhoods, dense and tightly-knit Black communities arose in parts of Minneapolis where they were allowed to acquire housing (Burnside 2017a). Within these neighborhoods, African American community centers arose to address the many needs of their neighbors. These centers, which varied in focus from educational, recreational, and religious, sought to support other Black Minneapolitans through the economic hardships of the Great Depression and the Great Migration, civil rights struggles, and urban disinvestment. These centers were essential to the growth and celebration of Black culture in Minneapolis. They provided spaces where Black Minneapolitans were connected to other community members and activities that, due to segregation, were otherwise out of reach for many African Americans.

Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House

Named after eighteenth-century poet and enslaved woman, Phyllis Wheatley, the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House was established in Minneapolis on October 17, 1924, at the former Talmud Torah Hebrew School (808 Bassett Place, non-extant) in North Minneapolis. Phyllis Wheatley Settlement Houses appeared in multiple American cities as the Great Migration brought single Black women north with nowhere to land when they arrived. These settlement houses not only provided housing for new arrivals, but also social services, recreation, and community integration. The Minneapolis Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House was established with W. Gertrude Brown as the first head resident. Brown had come from the Federation of Social Service for Negroes in Dayton, Ohio, and, at the inception of the Wheatley House, only oversaw a two-person staff consisting of an office secretary and a part-time

worker. As the program expanded, Brown came to manage a staff of at least 14 employees and 33 part-time workers by 1935 (Thurston 1935). The home's population swelled quickly after its establishment and, on October 17, 1929, the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House relocated to a new building at 809 Aldrich Avenue North (non-extant) which contained a library, daycare center, and a medical clinic (Heller 2016).

The organization soon evolved beyond its original purpose, eventually functioning as a boarding house for Black University of Minnesota students barred from segregated housing and hosted visiting Black figures like Langston Hughes who were turned away from the city's segregated hotels. By the 1930s, the Wheatley House had further expanded its scope, allowing for racially integrated services (Thurston 1935). Ethel Ray Nance—who became one of the city's first Black female police officers in 1928 due to a hiring effort spearheaded by the Wheatley House—was hired as the assistant head resident in 1926 (Heller 2017). Originally from Duluth, Nance relocated to Minneapolis from New York City circa 1926 and was a formative figure in developing the Wheatley House's cultural programming (Wintz and Finkelman 2004:857). In Harlem, Nance developed close relationships with a variety of literary and civil rights figures including Arna Botemps, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, and Langston Hughes. Nance also had close ties with W.E.B. Du Bois, whom she met in her hometown of Duluth when he spoke at a meeting of the local NAACP chapter, which had been founded by her father. These deep connections meant that the Wheatley House became a destination for many Black luminaries of the 1920s and 1930s, including Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Ethel Waters (Glasrud and Wintz 2012:143–144).

The Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House on Aldrich Avenue North was demolished in 1970 to make way for I-94 (Heller 2016). A new space was constructed that same year at 1301 10th Avenue North (HE-MPC-07807, extant) as part of an innovative urban renewal project spearheaded by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the Minneapolis School Board in which they aimed to develop a combined school-park-social service complex. The new building was constructed as part of the Bethune Complex (HE-MPC-17919), which also included Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School (917 Emerson Avenue North, HE-MPC-09893) and Bethune Park (HE-MPC-7900). When the Phyllis Wheatley organization relocated to this new property, it also shifted its focus away from settlement house services and toward community services, as the need for temporary housing was less severe. The organization, now known as the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, remains at 1301 10th Avenue North as of 2025 (Mead and Hunt, Inc. 2018:37–39; Meier 1970).

Figure 38. The Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, circa 1930 (Works Progress Administration 1930)

Pillsbury Settlement House

The Pillsbury Settlement House has its roots in an 1879 effort by members of the Plymouth Congregational Church to begin a Sunday school for the city's children, known as the Bethel Mission. By 1897, the Bethel Mission reorganized itself as the Bethel Settlement and expanded its services to align with the broader settlement house movement of the era (discussed above). In 1906, the Bethel Settlement established a new house in the Seven Corners neighborhood (320 16th Avenue South, non-extant) and named it Pillsbury House in honor of the Pillsbury family, who provided a $40,000 donation for the project. It offered a range of facilities and services to the community, including a gymnasium, auditorium, club rooms, and a nursery. During the 1960s, the Pillsbury House was slated for demolition due to its proximity to several urban renewal projects, including the construction of I-35W and I-94, the development of Riverside Plaza, and the expansion of the University of Minnesota's West Bank Campus. The building was razed in 1968, and its services were consolidated with the Waite House located in the Seward neighborhood of South Minneapolis, forming Pillsbury-Waite Neighborhood Services. In 1978, Pillsbury-Waite Neighborhood Services returned to Cedar Riverside within the opening of the Currie Center at 1507 5th Street South, which catered to residents of Riverside Plaza (Pillsbury United Communities 2025). In 1980, a new Pillsbury House community center was constructed in South Minneapolis at 3501 Chicago Avenue South (extant) and officially opened in April 1981. In addition to daycare facilities and other community services, the building contained a 96-seat theatre that was developed into a professional theatre under the leadership of Ralph Remington in the early 1990s. The community center and the theatre initially functioned as separate entities but merged in 2009 to form Pillsbury House + Theatre. Pillsbury House + Theatre remains an important community institution in South Minneapolis as of 2025. In 1993, the Currie Center in Cedar Riverside was replaced with the Brian Coyle Center (420 15th Avenue South, extant), which expanded the services offered to the

neighborhood's residents. It remains an important resource for the large East African immigrant community in the area (Pillsbury United Communities 2025).

Oak Park Center

The Oak Park Center (1701 Oak Park Avenue, extant, HE-MPC-07587) was originally constructed in 1939 to serve as a settlement house and community center, known as the Emanuel Cohen Center (ECC), for the Jewish residents of North Minneapolis. The predecessor to the ECC, the Social Service Department, was first established in 1918 as an offshoot of the Talmud Torah, a school that educated Jewish children with regard to Jewish tradition and culture. After first operating out of the Talmud Torah building (818 Bassett Place, non-extant), the Social Service Department moved into its own building at 809 Elwood Avenue (non-extant) in 1924 and changed its name to ECC the same year. In 1934, the ECC incorporated as a separate entity from Talmud Torah. In the 1960s, following the steady relocation of North Minneapolis' Jewish community to the suburb of St. Louis Park, the ECC left the property and eventually re-opened at 4330 Cedar Lake Road South (extant, HE-SLC-01320). The property changed ownership several times until it was purchased by Pillsbury United Communities in 1982 (Pillsbury United Communities 2025; Stark 2000; Twin Cities PBS 2017). Pillsbury United Communities once again used the building as a community center, the Oak Park Center, which remains in the property as of 2025 (Pillsbury United Communities 2025). Since its opening in 1982, Oak Park Center has been an important source of social, cultural, and educational services for North Minneapolis' Black residents. Examples of these services include annual Juneteenth celebrations, classes on starting a small business, and educational tutoring for high school athletes (Inskip 1988:13A; Star Tribune 1995:3; Taylor 1990:21A).

Sabathani Community Center

The Sabathani Community Center was founded in 1966 by the Sabathani Baptist Church (see Section 2.3), first operating out of an adjacent building at 3809 3rd Avenue South (non-extant). The center soon split from the church due to differences in missions: the center felt the church preached patient nonresistance while the center wanted to pursue a more active role in addressing pressing issues of the time, such as police brutality and school integration. By the end of the 1970s, the Sabathani Community Center operated out of a much larger facility at 3801 1st Avenue South (extant) and received much of its financial support from the United Way, which has offered national fundraising help for community organizations since the middle of the twentieth century. Sabathani offered much-need services to South Minneapolis residents, including food kitchens, adult education classes, counseling, and housing and meals services for local elderly citizens (Peterson 1978:1B). Today, the Sabathani Community Center operates at 310 38th Street East in the former Bryant Junior High School building, across the street from its original location.

The Way

The Way, a local community center, was founded in 1966 in the wake of a moment of civil unrest that preceded the larger uprising of 1967. A meeting of community members attended by then-Mayor Art Naftalin and then-Governor Karl Rolvaag led to the creation of the community space, established in a vacant fish market located at 1913 Plymouth Avenue North (non-extant) in North Minneapolis. The

Way's first director, and one of its original founders, was Syl Davis. Born in South Minneapolis, Davis envisioned the center as a supportive space for Black youth in a disinvested neighborhood during a tumultuous period of racial and economic strife. Davis was joined by his wife Gwyn Jones-Davis as The Way's program director.

The Way was enriched by Jones-Davis's programming, which included Black history classes taught by author and professor Mahmoud El-Kati. As a center of Black culture in late 1960s Minneapolis, The Way was even visited by prominent guests like James Brown and Muhammad Ali. The Way was also notable as a gathering place for Black musicians, including a young Prince. Programming budgets were heavily cut following the 1967 uprising after The Way was accused of encouraging the unrest. By all accounts, however, Davis was credited for planning a dance on July 21 during the uprising that helped cool tensions along Plymouth Avenue. Davis resigned in 1970 and was replaced by Bert Davis (no relation to Syl or Gwyn Davis) who steered The Way towards a goal of interracial unity, encouraging involvement and attendance by all community members regardless of race. The Way relocated to a property located at 1315 12th Avenue North near Humboldt Avenue North in 1984 before closing due to financial challenges in 1986 (Furst 2016a; Hennepin County Library 2025b). In 1987, the building located at 1913 Plymouth Avenue North was demolished and, in 1987, the Minneapolis Police Department built the 4th Precinct Headquarters on the site (Furst 2016b; Gendler 1992; Rosenbaum 2019).

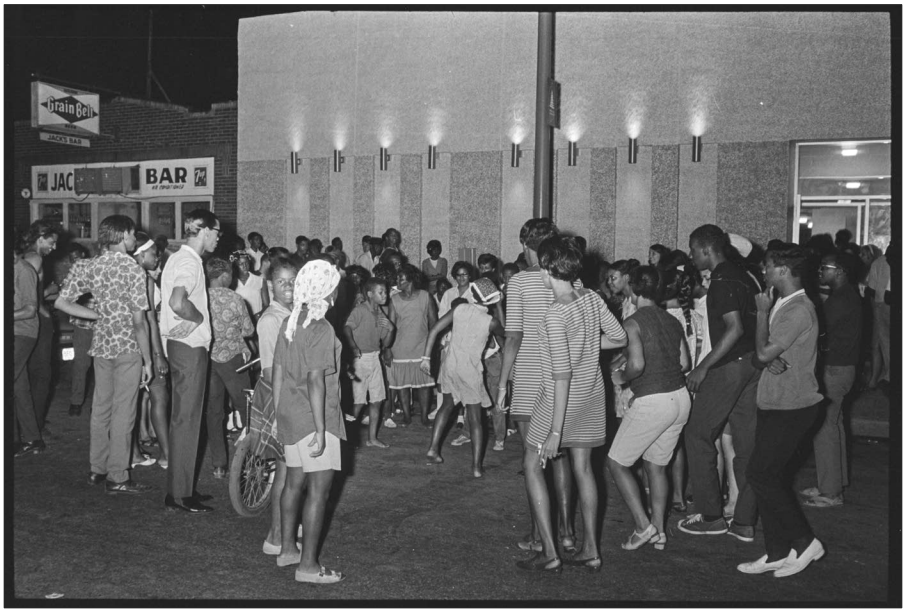

Figure 39. Dance outside of The Way, 1967 (Rosenbaum 2019)

Recreation and Athletics

Athletics in Minneapolis at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century were defined by segregationist policies, both official and unofficial. Decades before pioneers like Jackie Robinson made headlines for breaking color barriers in baseball and other sports, Black athletes in Minneapolis were overcoming barriers locally and nationally on the playing field. Sports like baseball and golf barred Black players from games and facilities in Minneapolis up until the mid-twentieth

century, which meant that Black players were often playing purely for the game, rather than being signed to paid teams like their white counterparts. Black Minneapolitans excelled at athletics even after their respective sports had been integrated, with many notable athletes continuing to make strides in their fields and attain new achievements as the battle for civil rights and the twentieth century stretched on.

Early Black Baseball and the Minneapolis Keystones

Baseball first arrived in Minnesota in the years following the end of the Civil War as returning soldiers brought the game home with them. Matches played against East Coast soldiers, where the game had existed in some form since at least the 1840s, popularized the sport with soldiers from the rest of the nation. During these early years, the game was exclusionary: in December 1867, the National Association of Base Ball Players banned any team from membership that had one or more African Americans players (Mumford 2016).

As a result, up until Jackie Robinson's famous breaking of the "color barrier" in 1947, Black baseball players were excluded from playing in the major leagues. This exclusion forced Black players to join semi-professional leagues and informal clubs that were exclusively Black. While Minnesota's first Black baseball player was Prince Honeycutt of Fergus Falls, who first began playing in 1872, the bulk of baseball played by Black athletes took place in the Twin Cities. The era's most famous Black team was the St. Paul Colored Gophers but their rival team, the Minneapolis Keystones, was also a notable powerhouse at the time (Mumford 2016). The team produced multiple players of note, arguably none more accomplished than Allen Hurley McNair who attained a .350 batting average and .630 slugging average in 1911.

Phyllis Wheatley Athletics

In addition to social services and arts education, the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House also provided residents and locals the opportunity to participate in recreational athletics (Thurston 1935). Due to the effects of the Great Depression, widespread unemployment meant that recreational activities increased in popularity at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House in the years following the Depression. Among the sports offered by the Wheatley House were "basket ball [sic], baseball, football, hiking, swimming, tennis, skating […] and dances" (Hase 1994:156). The Wheatley House partnered often with their St. Paul counterpart, the Hallie Q. Brown settlement house, to provide Black youth the chance to compete in the center's various athletic offerings. Consequently, the Wheatley House, along with the Brown House, became a "center of the sports scene in the African American community" in the Twin Cities (White 2016:21). The Wheatley House notably provided a place for young women to partake in athletics, negating a commonly held perception that there was no place for Black girls and women in competitive team sports (White 2016:46).

Successful teams grew out of the community center, like the Phyllis Wheatley House Cardinals who occasionally played baseball in the Minnesota Valley League in the 1930s, despite an unofficial ban on

Black players (White 2016:73). The Wheatley House also established a popular boxing program that saw success in the 1940s and 1950s, an initiative that was started to keep young Black men occupied and active in athletics. The program, guided by local leader Harry Davis, Sr. (see Section 2.7), won nine titles at the Upper Midwest Golden Gloves during this period. Davis oversaw the boxing program from 1943 to 1966, later going on to manage the United States's 1984 Olympic boxing team (Rippel 2006:319–320).

Figure 40. Wheatley House Girls Softball Team, circa 1925 (Mumford 2016)

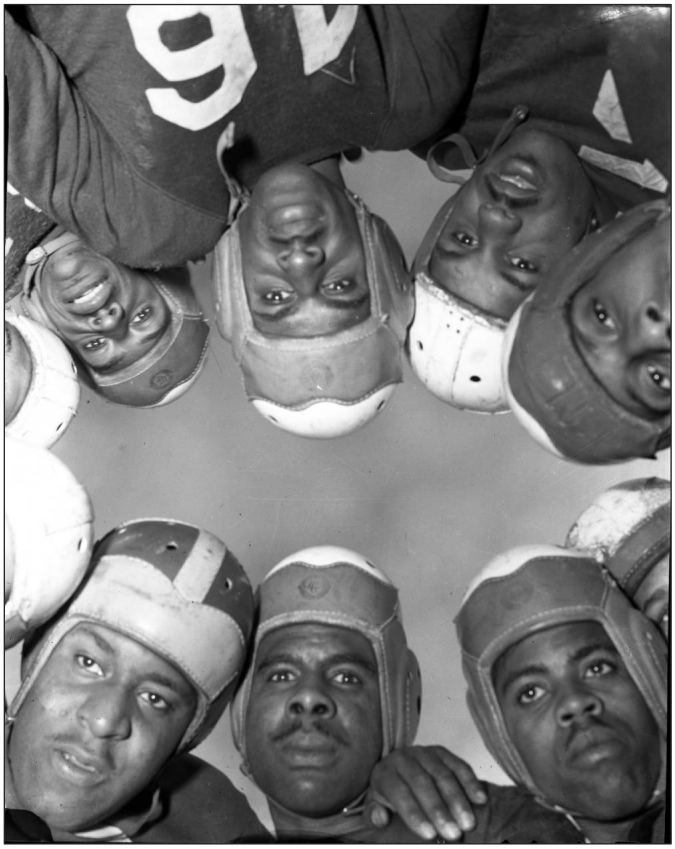

Figure 41. The Phyllis Wheatley Football Team, circa 1940 (Glanton 1940b)

Solomon Hughes, Sr. and the Hiawatha Golf Course

Born in 1908 in Alabama, Solomon Hughes, Sr., learned golf as a caddy master in the segregated South. Hughes eventually joined the United Golfers' Association (UGA), a Black golfers' league for players who were not allowed to play for the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA). After a series of high-profile wins, as well as providing golf lessons to famous boxers Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson who were stationed at nearby Fort McClellan, Hughes gained notoriety within the game. He and his family relocated to Minneapolis in 1943, where he further developed a well-respected reputation in the region (Berhow 2023). While also working as a Pullman porter, Hughes became one of the top-ranked golfers in the UGA. In 1948, while barred from playing in the PGA-sponsored St. Paul Open, Hughes and fellow golfer Ted Rhodes began a multi-year fight to change the league's segregationist stance. Joe Louis lent the effort his support and, in 1952, Hughes and Rhodes were allowed to play on the first day of the St. Paul Open, becoming the first Black professional golfers to play under the PGA banner. The PGA eventually dropped their segregation policy in 1961. Hughes died in 1987 (Solomon Hughes Sr. Golf Academy 2024).

Dredged from 1.2 million cubic yards of soil, Lake Hiawatha was created by the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners (now the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board) as part of a larger effort to open a golf course in the Ericsson neighborhood. One of five courses opened by the park board between 1900 and 1930, the Hiawatha Golf Course (4553 Longfellow Avenue, HE-MPC-01743, extant) was developed as the sport was becoming popular in the United States (Roise et al. 2022:24). The course opened on July 30, 1934. It was located near a redlined area of Minneapolis and, as a result, the course became popular with local Black golfers, even though they were barred from entering the course's clubhouse. Meanwhile, white golfers who played at Hiawatha Golf Course enjoyed "preferential tee times and special treatment from course managers" and, as members of the private club board, they were able to prevent Black golfers from becoming members for decades (Roise et al. 2022:24).

Hughes taught golf lessons at Hiawatha Golf Course after his relocation to Minneapolis. Much like his efforts to desegregate the St. Paul Open, he, along with the all-Black Twin City Golf Club (TCGC) lobbied the Lake Hiawatha clubhouse to eliminate their exclusionary policies, which the course eventually did in 1952. In 1966, the Hiawatha Golf Club invited a Black golfer, James (Jimmy) W. Bowman, to join for the first time in the club's history. Its reputation as a site of civil rights advancement within the world of golf has made Hiawatha a destination for many Black golfers. Since 1968, the course has also hosted the Bronze Open Golf Tournament (originally called the Negro Open, established in 1939), the longest-running, Black-operated golf tournament in Minnesota. In honor of Hughes's successful efforts, the course's clubhouse was renamed the Solomon Hughes Sr. Clubhouse in 2022 (Berhow 2023; Roise et al. 2022:24–25). In 2022, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board approved a master plan for Hiawatha Golf Course to deal with perennial flooding issues. The plan calls for transitioning the current 18-hole course to a nine-hole configuration with reduced groundwater pumping, improved water management, expanded recreation opportunities, and interpretive information that exposes visitors to the rich history of Black golfers associated with the property (Reach Twin Cities 2025).

Bobby Marshall

Born in Milwaukee on March 12, 1880, Bobby Marshall moved to Minneapolis in his youth and attended Central High School. After graduating in 1901, he enrolled at the University of Minnesota where he became the school's first Black athlete but, because he was both Black and Jewish, Marshall was barred from living in campus dormitories (Hoffbeck 2005:60). While playing football, Marshall also played first base for the university's baseball team, ran track, and competed in hockey and boxing. After his graduation in 1907, Marshall played for two professional Minneapolis football teams, the Deans and the Marines. On September 26, 1920, Marshall played for the Rock Island Independents against the St. Paul Ideals. This match was played under the newly formed American Professional Football Association, which was later renamed to the National Football League (NFL), making Marshall the first African American to play in an NFL game (Craig 2020:C1–C11; National Football Foundation 2024a).

Marshall was joined in the league two weeks later by Fritz Pollard. During the following decade and a half, between 1921 and 1933, eleven more Black players joined the league before NFL leadership quietly decided to keep Black players off their teams—a policy that remained in place until 1946. In addition to his accomplishments on the field, it is also believed that Marshall was the first Black person to play professional hockey and the first to be appointed to employment in Minnesota's grain department. Marshall lived at 3650 4th Avenue South (HE-MPC-12526, extant) from roughly 1937 until his death in 1958 at the age of 78 (Craig 2020:C11; Minneapolis Directory Company 1937:938, 1950:869).

Sandy Stephens

Sandy Stephens was the first Black football quarterback in the state of Minnesota. In 1960, Stephens led the Minnesota Golden Gophers to a national championship victory and, at the 1962 Rose Bowl, Stephens was crowned Most Valuable Player after guiding the University of Minnesota to a 21-3 win over UCLA. He stated about his groundbreaking achievements, "I was going to be more than a Big Ten quarterback who was Black. I was going to be a Big Ten quarterback who took his team to the Rose Bowl." In fact, he led the Gophers to the Rose Bowl twice during his time with the team (in 1961 and 1962). He finished fourth place in the 1961 voting rankings for the Heisman Trophy, was inducted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame, and went on to play for two Canadian footballs teams: the Montreal Alouettes and the Toronto Argonauts. He died in 2000 at the age of 59 (National Football Foundation 2024b).

Harris "Black Pearl" Martin

Born in Washington, D.C., on April 2, 1865, Harris "Black Pearl" Martin arrived in Minnesota during the late 1880s (Bell 2023). His earliest documented matches were at midnight on December 5, 1886, in "a room back of Sixth street [sic] saloon" against Jim O'Brien and another Black boxer, Dan Sommers (St. Paul Daily Globe 1886:7). Martin won both fights. On May 2, 1887, Martin fought boxer Frank Taylor in a well-publicized, 38-round match in which Martin was the final victor, effectively elevating his status as a talented pugilist. Despite his notable successes, Martin's career declined over the following decade due to a publicized arrest and a string of losses in the ring. Martin died in 1903 at the age of 38 (Bell 2023).

2.6 Arts, Design, Music, and Culture

Overview

Media and the creative arts have always played a central role within Minneapolis' Black community. As the city's Black population expanded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Black-owned and -operated press provided an essential means of sharing information, shaping political discourse, and building community identity. These publications laid the groundwork for long-standing newspapers and other media outlets that continue to serve this purpose in the present. Likewise, the performing arts, music, and design have served as an outlet for creative expression while providing a crucial means of employment, particularly when job opportunities for Black residents were limited. Additionally, media and creative arts proved to be fertile grounds on which to push for the advancement of civil rights during the first half of the twentieth century, as racial discrimination permeated these spaces as it did all areas of public life in Minneapolis.

Media

African American press and media have long served as a way to document and publicize stories about Black life in the US. Since the publication of *Freedom's Journal* in 1827, the first Black-owned and -operated newspaper in America, Black newspapers have advocated for the advancement of civil rights while encouraging solidarity within the community itself (Jordan 2001:1–3). Prior to the establishment of long-running publications like the *Twin City Star,* the *Minneapolis Messenger*, and the *Minneapolis Spokesman*, Black newspapers with notable longevity in the Twin Cities operated mostly out of St. Paul. Papers like the *Afro-Independent* and the *Western Appeal* did not have offices in Minneapolis but nevertheless spoke to the Black experience in the Twin Cities at large. Publications headquartered in Minneapolis in the decades leading up to the establishment of the *Twin City Star* were often short-lived. Newspapers like the *Minneapolis Observer* (established in 1890), *The Protest* (established in 1892), and *The Afro-American Advance* (established in 1899) were in operation anywhere from a few months to a year (Minnesota Historical Society 2024a).

The Twin City Star and the Minneapolis Messenger

The first long-running African American newspaper based in Minneapolis, the *Twin City Star*, was published between 1910 and 1919. The paper was operated by Charles Sumner Smith and was a four-page weekly publication that highlighted Black businesses, social events, and news, both local and national. After its publication ceased, Smith established the *Minneapolis Messenger* in 1921*,* another local publication focused on Black issues in the Twin Cities that ran for three years until 1924 (Minnesota Historical Society 2024b).

Cecil Newman and The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder

On August 10, 1934, prominent Minneapolis businessman Cecil Newman founded two separate newspapers focused on Black issues and concerns in the Twin Cities: the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and

the *St. Paul Recorder* (see Section 2.7 for more biographical information) (Minnesota Historical Society 2024c). After founding and editing the *Twin-City Herald* between 1927 and 1934, Newman was moved to establish the *Spokesman* and the *Recorder*. Newman wrote in the inaugural issues of both publications: "Time and time again during our ten years of local Negro weekly journals, we have been told that the colored citizens of these two communities would not support a newspaper devoted to the particular interests of the Negro. After ten years we are convinced that there is no truth to such charges…Editorially both papers will speak out fearlessly and unceasingly against injustices, discriminations and all imposed inequities, no matter what group or nationality they are visited upon" (Newman 1934:1). In 1939, Newman was joined by Curtis C. Chivers, who was described in his obituary as "the first and for many years the only black Minnesotan to make a full-time career of advertising" (Minneapolis Spokesman 1976:1). Chivers played a key role in establishing the papers as influential advertising platforms and making the publications financially sustainable (Minneapolis Spokesman 1976:1).

The two papers covered local news, events, and gossip for the Black community in Twin Cities, but also served as a potent source of civil and political news. The national civil rights landscape was of the utmost importance to both papers, which covered landmark civil rights issues such as the trial of the Scottsboro boys in the 1930s, racism in the military during World War II, and the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* US Supreme Court decision (Minnesota Historical Society 2024c). Outside of his newspaper, Newman was a dedicated activist. In 1935, he organized and advertised a boycott in both of his newspapers against Twin Cities breweries, including Hamm, Schmidt, and Grain Belt, which refused to hire Black employees (see Section 2.7). In 1948, he was selected to be the first Black president of the Minneapolis Urban League (see Section 2.5). He also maintained close ties to then-Mayor Hubert Humphrey, beginning with Newman's appointment to the Minneapolis Council on Human Relations, a relationship which lasted for decades. Newman passed away in 1976, leading to Newman's widow, Launa Q. Newman, assuming control of both papers. She later merged them into the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* in 2000 (Foss and Wilder 2017; Westerlund and Jillian Odland 2022). In 2024, the newspaper celebrated its 90th anniversary, under the leadership of Cecil and Laura's granddaughter, Tracey Williams-Dillard. The newspaper's headquarters at 3744 4th Avenue South was designated a local landmark by the Minneapolis City Council.

Figure 42. Cecil Newman, 1946 (Minneapolis Daily Times 1946)

Timely Digest

From April 1931 to May 1932, Cecil Newman also published *Timely Digest*, a monthly magazine concerned with Black social and political issues. Upon its release, it claimed to be the first and only Black-focused magazine in the region. Editors and contributors included Ethel Ray Nance, diplomat John Frederick Thomas, and journalist Nell Dodson Russell (Dodson, Nellie 1932:5; Thomas, John Frederick 1931:5; Timely Digest 1931:1)

Gordon Parks

Sixteen-year-old Gordon Parks moved to St. Paul in 1928, finding himself homeless only a few years later. As a musician, he eventually found work playing piano in a Minneapolis brothel. During this time, Parks was enrolled in Central High School in Minneapolis but was forced to drop out following the Great Depression. By 1937, Parks was working as a server when he was inspired by photos of migrant workers to buy his own camera and learn photography. He was hired as a staff photographer by the *St. Paul Recorder* in 1939. In 1940, Parks moved to Chicago and soon found major success as a photographer. Two years later, Parks won the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship which secured him a role working as a photographer for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the producer of the migrant worker photos that had inspired him to pick up his first camera (Ding 2020).

Parks went on to work for the Office of War Information (OWI) and, while there, shot photographs for *Glamour* and *Ebony*, further elevating his fame and acclaim. He was soon hired as the first Black staff photographer for *Life*, then one of the most popular magazines in the US. Parks took photos of some of the most famous Black figures and leaders of the time including Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, but arguably his most famous photos were of the working class. Images like "American Gothic" (1942) poignantly captured the economic realities of many Americans during that period, especially Black Americans. Parks' renown extended beyond photography: in 1971, he directed *Shaft*, a box office hit and an important moment in the development of the Blaxploitation film genre. Parks' work can be found in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. He died in 2006 at the age of 93 (The Gordon Parks Foundation 2024).

Charles Chamblis

Known to most as "the Pictureman," Charles Chamblis was a staple in the Twin Cities Black cultural and music scenes of the 1970s and 1980s. A freelance photographer for the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, Chamblis spent years documenting everyday life and leisure for Black people in the Twin Cities. Chamblis' friend Roosevelt Gaines said of the photographer: "He didn't like to take pictures where folks were all sad and depressed. Because there was a lot of sadness going on back in those days. He wanted to get the best shot of you that he possibly could" (Scholtes 2014). Chamblis' photos captured moments of joy in the Twin Cities, both on the streets and in social spaces. His collection contains photos of everyday people as well as local musicians and nightlife figures, including soon-to-be-famous musicians such as Prince and Terry Lewis. The Flame Café, the Cozy Lounge, and the Fox Trap are some of the popular venues that feature prominently in his work, with his images demonstrating that these places were defined by vibrant community, fashion, and culture. His photos also documented thriving Northside business corridors, providing a positive view of Black Minneapolis as thriving and flourishing. Chamblis died in 1991 at the age of 63 (Eler 2017:E1–E12; Scholtes 2014).

KMOJ

Long-running Minneapolis radio station KMOJ began operation on June 22, 1976, in two apartment units at 810 5th Avenue North (non-extant) in the Glenwood Homes housing development and has focused on Black music since its inception. The station name was derived from the Swahili word "umoja" which translates to "unity." KMOJ's relatively weak transmitter meant the station was only able to broadcast within the immediate neighborhood, but word eventually spread and KMOJ became a citywide success and the only minority-owned radio station in the state of Minnesota (Bryan R. Peterson 1979:12B; KMOJ FM 2024a). The station was relocated several times, including to 501 Bryant Avenue North (non-extant) and 555 Girard Terrace (non-extant), but is currently housed at 2123 West Broadway Avenue (HE-MPC-07015, extant). Notable KMOJ DJs include Walter "Q Bear" Banks and Freddie Bell (KMOJ FM 2024b; Maynard 2001; Roise et al. 2018:128).

Performing Arts

Segregation permeated all aspects of public life in Minneapolis, much as it did nationwide, during the first half of the twentieth century, including within the performing arts. One of the most notable early legal fights against this injustice took place at the Pantages Theatre (710 Hennepin Avenue, HE-MPC-05603, extant) when Lena O. Smith and four other Black men were stopped from sitting in the whites only floor section of the theater. Smith and the men promptly filed discrimination suits against the Pantages. Smith lost her lawsuit, but subsequent suits brought an end to the theater's segregated seating policy in 1921 (The National Trust for Historic Preservation 2024).

Johnson & Dean and Minstrel Vaudeville

Charles E. Johnson and Dora Dean, more commonly known as Johnson & Dean, were one of the most popular turn-of-the-century American vaudeville acts. Born Dora Babbige in Kentucky, Dora Dean was a showgirl living in Indiana when she met Charles E. Johnson who was performing in the same production as her, *Creole Show*. Johnson, born in Missouri on July 27, 1871, had moved to Minneapolis as a youth and had developed a reputation as an eccentric dancer while in *Creole Show*. Their time in that production gave Johnson & Dean the stage training needed to eventually become an international success.

An 1899 article in the *Minneapolis Daily Times* made the claim that "[c]olored performers have advanced to an estate of importance in vaudeville. There are hundreds of negroes now doing specialties, and they are reported to be courteous and well behaved. Their salaries are as high as the white preformers [sic] and they seem to stand well in the esteem of the public." However, these Black performers were often relegated to the performance of minstrel shows which leaned heavily on exaggerated and harmful racial stereotypes. Where once Black characters in minstrel shows were performed by white actors, Black actors soon began to occupy these roles as the nineteenth century came to a close. As the 1899 article notes, "In time past the negro as a mimic has been giving [sic] to imitating the white performance. Now that he is impersonating himself, he is succeeding better" (Minneapolis Daily Times 1899:1).

Johnson and Dean were married in 1893 and eventually left the production of *Creole Show* by May 1895. On August 30, 1897, Johnson & Dean received the honor of securing top billing at Tony Pastor's Theater in New York City, operated by Tony Pastor, "the dean of vaudeville" (New York Public Library 2024; Smith 1996:162). In 1897, Johnson was the first dancer to introduce tap dancing into a vaudeville performance while Dean popularized the use of suggestive tights onstage. By 1902, Johnson & Dean had become known abroad, performing at the famed Folies Bergère in Paris (The Duluth Evening Herald 1902:4). They came to prominence across much of the European continent over the following years. The duo lived together in a South Minneapolis home at 811 36th Street East (HE-MPC-13928, extant) during their retirement but are confirmed to have also owned another home across the street at 816 36th Street East (HE-MPC-13930, extant) (City of Minneapolis 1925; St. Paul Recorder 1951a:2).

Figure 43. Dora Dean and Charles Johnson, 1946 (Minneapolis Morning Tribune 1946)

The Mixed Blood Theater (or Theatre)

The Mixed Blood Theater opened in the summer of 1976 in a reused firehouse at 1501 4th Street South (HE-MPC-04636, extant). Its opening coincided with the establishment of the Penumbra Theatre in St. Paul, the first and only Black theater company in Minnesota, the same year. The Mixed Blood Theater was the first mixed-race theater company in Minneapolis with an ensemble that featured ten African American employees and players, as well as six Native Americans and seven white people. The venue, in conjunction with the Penumbra Theatre, offered new opportunities for Black Minneapolitans to enter the world of theatre. Described by its founder Jack Reuler, as an "identity-conscious organization," the theater continues to "disrupt injustices, advance equity, and build community" (Mixed Blood Theatre 2024; Penumbra Theatre 2024; Preston 2022).

The Capri Theater

The Capri Theater (2027 West Broadway Avenue, HE-MPC-06986, extant) was originally built in 1927 and functioned as a movie theater. Between 1933 and 1967, it was known as the Paradise Theater. It underwent several renovations during that time and the name was eventually changed to the Capri Theater. The renovations created more space and allowed the theater to begin hosting live performances. In 1979, Prince gave his first performance as a solo artist at the venue. In 1984, it was taken over by the Plymouth Christian Youth Center, which continues to own and operate the venue as of 2025. The Capri Theater places an emphasis on uplifting the talents of local artists and provide cultural enrichment for North Minneapolis residents (City of Minneapolis 2025; Swensson and Cohen 2014).

Music

Jazz

Minneapolis' location along the Mississippi River meant that the city was easily connected to New Orleans during the height of the steamboat era. This laid a foundation upon which Minneapolis developed its own local jazz scene. The scene's subsequent expansion was fueled largely by the movement of millions of Black southerners to the North during the Great Migration (see Section 2.1). The nascent jazz scene in Minneapolis was heavily segregated, with Black musicians restricted from playing in downtown jazz bars. On occasion, venues like the Leamington Hotel (1014 3rd Avenue South, non-extant) allowed Black musicians to play there (Goetting 2011). As a result of this segregation, a separate strip of jazz venues cropped up in the Black business district located in Near North, clustered around the intersection of 6th Street North and Lyndale Avenue North (Roise et al. 2018). Following the onset of national Prohibition in 1920, bars and clubs around 6th and Lyndale became after-hours venues, and these places reportedly became more integrated than many of the downtown bars. Venues like the Clef Club (637 Olson Memorial Boulevard, non-extant) remained popular after Prohibition's end and defied social restrictions by becoming relatively well-integrated, attracting fans of jazz from across the region. There were many other popular jazz clubs at this corner, including the Cotton Club at 718 6th Avenue North, the 639 Club at 639 6th Avenue North, and Old Southern Barbecue at 700 Lyndale Avenue North—all of which are no longer extant.

The jazz scene in Minneapolis produced a lengthy list of notable musicians. These include saxophonist Irv Williams, who played with Ella Fitzgerald and Dinah Washington; the Prince Rogers Trio, led by John Rogers, father of Prince; the Rogers Café Jazz quartet; Oscar and Ira Pettiford, brothers who played bass and trumpet, respectively; and saxophonist Percy Hughes (African American Registry 2025b; Goetting 2011; Minneapolis Star Tribune 2019; Nelson 2022; Roise et al. 2018:18; Star Tribune 1981:10).

Figure 44. Prince Rogers Trio, 1940 (Howard 1940)

Blues

Minnesota did not develop a blues scene until the 1950s, although blues musicians like Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey were known to have traveled through the state prior to this decade. Once the style gained popularity in the Twin Cities, musicians like Leonard "Baby Doo" Caston and "Lazy Bill" Lucas found success in Minneapolis in the 1950s and 1960s playing at popular venues like the Key Club (1329 Washington Avenue South, non-extant). In Minneapolis, blues artists had a strong effect on the Minneapolis music scene of the mid-twentieth century, contributing to a sound that fused the blues with folk and rock (Roise et al. 2018:33–36).

Jackie Harris and Black & Proud Records

Beginning in 1961, Jack "Jackie" Harris began operation of KUXL, a local radio station dedicated solely to showcasing Black artists, out of a motel in Golden Valley. The station quickly established itself as the go-to source for the most current Black sounds in the Twin Cities. Harris, who went by "Old Daddy Soul" on air, created the Jackie Awards in 1969 in response to racial discrimination by local music institution, the Connie Awards. The ceremony was a success, resulting in the region's most effective display of local R&B talent up to that point. To further showcase the local R&B scene, Harris hosted lively dance parties at Honeywall Union Hall (2636 Portland Avenue South, non-extant) before eventually establishing Black & Proud Records in 1969. The label only produced five records, one of which was "Sock-A-Poo-Poo '69" by Maurice McKinnies and the Champions, but it is today notable for being the first Black-owned record label in the state of Minnesota (Swensson 2017a:84–95).

Prince and The Minneapolis Sound

Born Prince Rogers Nelson on June 7, 1958, iconic singer and songwriter Prince is Minneapolis' most well-known and influential musician. He was born at the former Mount Sinai Hospital (HE-MPC-19231, extant) on Chicago Avenue between 22nd and 24th Streets and lived at 2201 5th Avenue South (HE-MPC-12559, extant) in Apartment 203 for only six months. In 1958, the Nelson family moved to 915 Logan Avenue North (non-extant) where they lived until 1965, when they purchased a home at 2620 8th Avenue North (HE-MPC-10020, extant). It was at this property where Prince first began to hone his musical and songwriting skills, learning how to play guitar, bass, piano, and drums. Prince and his cousin Charles "Chazz" Smith would often play for local kids at Smith's home at 927 Sheridan Avenue North (extant), as well as at The Way at 1913 Plymouth Avenue (non-extant), a youth center established in 1966. At The Way, Prince crossed paths with many other young, talented Black teenagers who would also become notable figures in the Minneapolis music scene, including André Cymone and Terry Lewis. Prince, Chazz, André, and Terry formed their first band, Grand Central, in the early 1970s while Prince was attending Bryant Junior High School. Prince and André often rehearsed in the basement of the Anderson family home (1244 Russell Avenue North, HE-MPC-11285, extant), which is considered the birthplace of the Minneapolis Sound (described further below). While in school, Prince met and bonded with James Samuel Harris III, more commonly known today as Jimmy Jam (Zschomler et al. 2020:12–16).

Prince eventually signed a record label contract with Warner Brothers in 1977 at the age of seventeen. While his first few albums were modest successes, especially his early hit "I Wanna Be Your Lover" released in 1979, Prince's star began to rise with the release of his 1982 album *1999.* Despite a lack of number one hits, Prince managed to convince his label to allow him to star and produce in a semi-autobiographical film, *Purple Rain*. The movie and its soundtrack album were smash hits, producing classics songs "When Doves Cry," "Let's Go Crazy," and the title track which won an Academy Award for Best Original Song Score. Now a global superstar, Prince's subsequent albums *Around The World in a Day, Parade* and *Sign 'O' The Times* produced a number of other classic songs including "Raspberry Beret" and "Kiss." In 1987, Prince opened his famous Paisley Park recording studio complex in Chanhassen. Although he continued to release music until his death on April 21, 2016, the 1980s was the most prolific and influential period of Prince's career (Zschomler et al. 2020:40–47).

In developing his own personal musical style, Prince was responsible for being the core leader of creating what is known as the Minneapolis Sound. The musical style was defined by its innovative fusion of R&B, funk, rock, and New Wave. It eschewed drums for drum machines and replaced funk's traditional horn section with keyboards and synthesizers. The result was a more electronic approach to the previous decade of popular Black music and the sound came to influence artists both within Minneapolis and beyond during the 1980s (Thiede 2019; Zschomler et al. 2020:25).

The Time

The Time, another notable developer of the Minneapolis Sound, was formed by Prince in 1981 from members of local bands Enterprise Band of Pleasure and Flyte Time. These members included Jimmy

Jam, Terry Lewis, Morris Day, Jellybean Johnson, and Jesse Johnson. The band's hits included the 1984 singles "Jungle Love" and "The Bird," the latter of which was performed by The Time in *Purple Rain.* Day acted as the lead vocalist and central figure of the band, leading to the group sometimes being called Morris Day and The Time (Zschomler et al. 2020:59).

Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis

Born James Samuel Harris III and Terry Steven Lewis, respectively, the songwriters and producers more popularly known as Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis were both members of The Time beginning with its formation in 1981. Jimmy Jam was born in Minneapolis in 1959 with an immediate connection to Minneapolis Black music history: Jam's father is Cornbread Harris, a Minneapolis blues musician and jazzman, who famously played on Minnesota's first rock & roll record, "Hi Yo Silver" by the Augie Garcia Quintet. Lewis was born in 1956 in Omaha, Nebraska, but moved with his family to Minneapolis in the early 1960s. Jam and Lewis met in high school, connecting over their love of music, and eventually became local figures in the Minneapolis R&B scene of the late 1970s. Lewis eventually came to play in Flyte Time and, by 1981, had invited Jam to play keyboards for the group. During this time in Prince's orbit, Jam and Lewis became deeply familiarized with the music world, culminating in the formation of their own production company, Flyte Time Productions, in 1982 (King 2024). However, in 1983, after missing an Atlanta performance due to a conflicting recording session, Prince fired them from the group (Bream 2024).

The duo quickly found success producing records for prominent artists of the era, including Gladys Knight and the Pips, Cheryl Lynn, and Thelma Houston, heavily influencing and defining the landscape of post-disco R&B and soul. Jam and Lewis were soon recruited to produce music for Janet Jackson, resulting in the recording of her 1986 album *Control* which brought Jam, Lewis, and Jackson to new levels of worldwide fame (King 2024). Album single "Nasty," in particular, is noted as an early and influential moment in the creation of the New Jack Swing genre that came to define numerous R&B and rap songs throughout the 1980s (Ripani 2006:132). *Control* was the beginning of Jam and Lewis's long partnership with Jackson, resulting in the recording of other Janet Jackson albums including *Rhythm Nation* in 1989 and *Velvet Rope* in 1997, as well as an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song for "Again" from the 1993 film *Poetic Justice* (King 2024).

Jam and Lewis produced records for hundreds of other prominent popstars including The Human League, Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey, George Michael, and Rod Stewart. They received eleven Grammy nominations for Producer of the Year Non-Classical, winning in 1987, and have scored Number One Billboard hits across four decades. Flyte Time Studios at 4100 76th Street West in Edina, where Jam and Lewis produced most of their records, was demolished in 2018 (Bream 2018).

Other Artists

The period between the 1960s and the 1980s in Minneapolis produced many other notable artists who achieved various levels of local and national prominence. These include Lipps Inc., fronted by singer

Cynthia Johnson, known for their hit “Funkytown;” jazz saxophonist Morris Johnson; R&B and soul singer Maurice McKinnies who sang for and contributed to local bands The Big M’s, The Champions, and the Blazers; singer Shirley Witherspoon who was discovered by Duke Ellington; long-running group Sounds of Blackness, formed in 1971, who have performed at both the Olympics and the White House; Gary Hines, director of the Grammy-winning vocal and instrumental ensemble, Sounds of Blackness; and singer Alexander O’Neal known for a number of hit songs including the 1985 song “Saturday Love” (Bream and Riemenschneider 2021; Robinson 2025).

Music Venues

Due to racial covenants established in 1910 (see Section 2.2), music venues catering to Black Minneapolitans were often restricted to longstanding Black neighborhoods. The Dreamland Café at 3755 4th Avenue South (extant) was one of the most prominent of these early Black social spaces. Opened by labor activist and entrepreneur A.B. Cassius in 1937, it was one of the first permanent spaces outside of community centers or Northside social spaces where Black Minneapolitans could congregate (Bos 2021b). The Dreamland Café also hosted Black musicians who could not perform elsewhere in the city and attracted its own fair share of notable patrons: Lena Horne famously visited the Dreamland Café after performing in Minneapolis. It also provided an early place of safety for interracial couples (Freedman 2023:235).

The Key Club at 1329 Washington Avenue South (non-extant) was considered the premier venue at which to see top-tier blues and jazz performers in Minneapolis during the 1950s and 1960s. The venue was opened in 1951 by Henry Leonard Sabeswitz, a Jewish American of Russian descent who also owned the adjacent South of the Border bar (1327 Washington Avenue South, non-extant). A range of performers played at the Key Club over the course of its existence, including nationally renowned musicians such as La Vern Baker, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Sarah Vaughan, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, Etta James, and Cab Calloway. In 1962, the venue came under the scrutiny of city authorities due to allegations of drug use, prostitution, and violence at the club, and Sabeswitz’s liquor license was revoked. Cecil Newman, operator of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and *St. Paul Recorder*, came to the venue’s defense in a letter to the editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. Newman noted the Key Club, in addition to being the best venue in which to see contemporary jazz music, was the first night club in Minneapolis to break the color line and hire Black artists. It was also one of the few establishments to hire Black waiters, bartenders, and maintenance workers, and it was one of the only music venues in which Black patrons felt welcome. Following an appeal to the Minnesota Supreme Court, Sabeswitz was allowed to keep the club open until the court rendered a final decision. The court ultimately upheld the city’s decision and Sabeswitz closed the club in March of 1963. The venue reopened that July under new ownership as Frank Seifert’s, but the name was changed back to the Key Club in 1964. The venue remained in operation until the building was demolished in 1966 (Twin Cities Music Highlights 2025).

Minneapolis robust music scene from the 1960s to 1980s produced a wide array of popular venues where Black Minneapolitans would congregate to listen and dance to the Minneapolis Sound, R&B funk,

and disco. This was particularly true along Hennepin Avenue in downtown, which hosted a variety of nightlife establishments that catered to a diverse crowd of patrons (Roth 2018). Amid the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s, many Black artists were forced to play in informal spaces like ballrooms and meeting halls rather than the larger, more established venues. Some of these casual and improvised spaces became legendary gathering places for Black Minneapolitans, despite their modest settings. One of the most famous was the Nacirema Club at 3949 4th Avenue South (HE-MPC-04886, extant) which operated from 1955 to 1987. In addition to community meetings and parties, the Nacirema Club hosted musical acts ranging from jazz to R&B, including Prince and Flyte Time in the 1970s. The building operates today as El Bethel Baptist Church (Beckey 2018:53).

Figure 45. Patrons of the Nacirema Club, 1980 (Twin Cities Music Highlights 2024c)

The Cozy Bar & Lounge (522 Plymouth Avenue, non-extant), which had existed since the 1950s but was transformed into its most famous iteration in the mid- to late-1960s, was operated by nightlife figure and business owner, Jimmy Fuller. The venue hosted R&B and soul acts, including Prince, Jimmy Jam, and Terry Lewis, for years before it was demolished to make way for the construction of I-94. Fuller soon opened Riverview Supper Club (2319 West River Road, non-extant) in 1980 with help from his son, Jimmy Fuller, Jr. The Riverview Supper Club hosted a wide range of Black artists including B.B. King, Gil Scott-Heron, Chi-Lites, Bobby Womack, and Count Basie (Anderson 2017; Harlow 2022).

Other popular music venues of the era included the Regal Tavern (546 Olson Highway, non-extant); the Blue Note (622 11th Avenue North, non-extant); King Solomon's Mines at Foshay Tower (821 Marquette

Avenue South, HE-MPC-00446, extant), the first downtown R&B club; the Fox Trap (14 5th Street North, HE-MPC-16265, extant); and Peacock Alley (214-220 5th Street North, non-extant) (Roise et al. 2018; Swensson 2017b).

Art

Minneapolis Afro-American Cultural Arts Center

The Afro-American Cultural Arts Center was established in July 1970 with funding by the Minneapolis Model City project. It operated out of the Fifth Avenue Congregational Church, owned by the Sabathani Community Center, at 3205 5th Avenue South (non-extant) and offered music and arts lessons, housed a library of books on Black art, displayed the Pillsbury collection of African sculpture, and supported Black artists such as Seitu Jones and Ta-Coumba Aiken (Regan 2024; The Minneapolis Star 1970a). In 1971, the Sabathani Community Center had purchased a former Masonic lodge at 24 31st Street East (non-extant) following a fire at the Fifth Avenue Congregational Church that damaged the center's equipment and projects. The Afro-American Cultural Arts Center relocated to that property the same year (The Minneapolis Star Tribune 1971b). The Center held cultural events outside in public spaces, such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Powderhorn Parks, and collaborated with other organizations, including the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Walker Art Center, and the West Bank Music Association. In 1976, the Center relocated to downtown Minneapolis (258 Hennepin Avenue, non-extant) after the city purchased the Masonic lodge and razed it to make way for a shopping center. By 1980, it had moved again to a space on the campus of Augsburg University (2429 8th Avenue South, non-extant). Consistent funding challenges caused the Afro-American Cultural Arts Center to close by 1985 (Minneapolis Tribune 1978, 1980; Regan 2024).

Seitu Ken Jones

Seitu Jones was born in 1951 and raised in the Sumner Field Homes in North Minneapolis (see Section 2.2). His family has been in Minnesota for six generations following his great grandfather's arrival in Red Wing in 1870. Jones is a multi-disciplinary artist and community organizer who seeks to raise awareness of history and community assets through public art installations. Notable works include A Community Meal (2014), a project focused on access to healthy food in which 2,000 people were gathered for dinner at a half-mile-long table in St. Paul; Turnip Greens (2019), a sculptural installation at the Nashville Farmers Market, inspired by the city's bounty of food and Black culture; and Shadows of Spirit (1992), in which Jones collaborated with Ta-coumba T. Aiken to create sculpture of human silhouettes cast in bronze and embedded in the Nicollet Mall sidewalks in downtown Minneapolis. Jones now lives in St. Paul (Black Art Story 2025; Jones 2025; Public Art Saint Paul 2023)

Architecture

Lorenzo D. Williams

Born in 1923, Lorenzo D. "Pete" Williams was born in 1923 in Louisville, Kentucky. After graduating from Howard University, Williams was employed in the offices of Benjamin A. Gingold & Associates in 1959.

At that firm, Williams met James W. O'Brien with whom he started a new firm in 1962, and, by 1970, the firm had officially assumed the name of Williams/O'Brien Associates. The firm was guided by Williams's dedication to solving social issues, particularly for the local Black community, as well as providing designs for Black clients. Early important works for the community include Zion Baptist Church (621 Elwood Avenue North, HE-MPC-07572, extant) built in 1963; Sabathani Church (3805 3rd Avenue South, non-extant) built in 1964; the Luther T. Prince, Jr. House (3521 24th Street West, extant) built in 1967; and the Holland Hi-Rise project (1717 Washington Street Northeast, HE-MC-02147, extant) built in 1968 (Cunningham 1964; Docomomo-US 2024a; Mack 1986; St. Paul Recorder 1962; The Minneapolis Star 1968).

Williams was appointed to the National Commission on Architectural Barriers in 1966 by President Lyndon B. Johnson to study how building design could be reformed to better accommodate people with disabilities. He was also the first Black president of the National Council of Architectural Registration Board. He was particularly active in urban renewal and redevelopment projects, especially in Black Minneapolis neighborhoods following the civil unrest of the late 1960s. He was part of Residents Committed for Grant Development which guided the redevelopment of Grant Park in Near North and designed the Grant Park/Bethune Park development in 1970, as well as his most acclaimed work, Findley Place (3105 Pillsbury Avenue, HE-MPC-06575, extant). Later important works by Williams/O'Brien Associates include First Plymouth National Bank (2000 Plymouth Avenue, extant), built in 1970 for the only Black-operated bank in Minneapolis at the time; North Community YMCA (1711 West Broadway Avenue, HE-MPC-08033, extant) built in 1974; and the Northside Child Development Center (1313-1327 Dupont Avenue North, extant) built in 1977 (Docomomo-US 2024a; The Minneapolis Star 1966; The Minneapolis Star Tribune 1967, 1970).

Lonnie O. Adkins

Although based in St. Paul, Lonnie O. Adkins was an early contemporary of Williams who contributed to multiple Minneapolis projects of note. In 1958, Adkins formed Adkins-Johnson, Inc. with architect Reuben Johnson, a firm that still exists today as The Adkins Association. Like Williams, Adkins consulted on the Grant Park urban renewal project and was also involved in the early stages of the Minneapolis Model City project before his death in 1971 at the age of 45 (Docomomo-US 2024b; The Minneapolis Star Tribune 1971a). Despite his accomplished standing in the Twin Cities, Adkins was nevertheless a victim of housing discrimination. When Adkins put in a full-price offer for a home at 2137 June Avenue in St. Paul, neighbors offered the seller, Dr. Leonard Linnell, more money to keep a Black man out of their neighborhood. Linnell, in turn, sold the house to Adkins anyway with a further $500 discount (White 2016:138–139).

Jay W. Tyson

Architect Jay W. Tyson was a North Carolina native who moved to Minneapolis in 1952 to pursue an architectural career. Tyson lived in a home he had built at 4254 5th Avenue South (extant) in 1957 before moving to another residence at 1724 James Avenue South (extant) by 1970 (St. Paul Recorder

1970:1). In 1963, Tyson joined Hendrix & Associates, Inc. as an architect (American Institute of Architects 1970:935; Architecture Minnesota 1986:94). In 1970, he was appointed to the Minneapolis Planning Commission and in 1977, he established his own firm, Tyson Associates, Inc. at 711 Lake Street West (HE-MPC-6323, extant) (The Minneapolis Star 1970b).

2.7 Segregation, Discrimination, Civil Rights, and Reclamation

Overview

Minneapolis's history of African American civil rights is one of contradictions. From its admission to the Union, Minnesota was a free state. Yet many did not protest slavery and were happy to profit from the institution. Individuals were also enslaved at Fort Snelling through a legal loophole that allowed the practice at military installations (see Section 2.1). Black men in Minnesota were granted suffrage two years prior to the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment and early laws banned segregated schools and discrimination in public accommodations. However, these outwardly liberal laws often obscure a long history of segregation and discrimination against African Americans – a history marked by racial violence, discrimination in economics, housing, and education, and longstanding tensions between the Black community and the police. At the same time, there is an equally long history of civil rights advocacy and activism by African Americans, who have worked tirelessly to secure better conditions and futures for their community.

Civil Rights Advocacy and Litigation

Slavery and Abolition

In the nineteenth century, Minnesota and Minneapolis had a relatively small population of African Americans. Despite this, African American civil rights in the state made significant progress. When Minnesota was incorporated as a territory in 1849, it did so as a free state and when the state was admitted into the Union in 1858, its constitution prohibited slavery (Golden 1991; Spangler 1961).

Prior to statehood, slavery was a low-priority issue for Minnesota and many of its political leaders were part of the pro-slavery Democratic Party. There were very few African Americans living in the Territory, and little is known about Underground Railroad activity Minnesota. However, it was the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which opened the possibility of new slaveholding states joining the Union, which jump-started the abolitionist movement in Minneapolis. Many in the state switched parties from the pro-slavery Democratic Party to the anti-slavery Republican Party, and a fervent abolitionist movement grew in the Minnesota Territory (Golden 1991; Spangler 1961).

Eliza Winston

In 1859, the Hennepin County Anti-Slavery Society was formed and began lobbying for a 'personal liberty' bill that would have made slaveholding in Minnesota a penal offense. Their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, but abolitionists in Minneapolis continued efforts to free enslaved individuals

who were brought to Minnesota. For example, in 1860, Eliza Winston was brought to Minneapolis from Mississippi by slaveholder Richard Christmas (see Section 2.1). After she sought help in gaining her freedom at the local Black barbershop of Ralph and Emily Grey, three local white abolitionists, W.I. Babbitt, William S. King, and F.R.R. Cornell came to her aid. They filed a writ of *habeas corpus* to free Winston (Golden 1991; Spangler 1961). While the enslaver's attorney argued, based on the recent US Supreme Court *Scott v. Sandford* decision (see Section 2.1), that Winston had no grounds to sue for freedom, the abolitionist attorney for Winston argued that the State's constitution prohibited enslavement. On August 21, 1860, the judge quickly granted Winston's petition and her freedom, despite Dred Scott's case. However, pro-slavery agitators formed a mob and threatened Winston, by some accounts forcing her to flee the state (Golden 1991; Green 2000; Spangler 1961).

The Civil War began just three years after Minnesota gained statehood. Minnesota was an active participant in the war, sending over 20,000 men to fight on behalf of the Union, including nearly 100 Black men. In the decades that followed, African Americans began migrating North in large numbers (see Section 2.1). While Minnesota was seen as a relatively friendly state to migrating African Americans, it still promoted racial animosity. There were efforts, ultimately unsuccessful, to bar African American migration into the state and the newcomers were often intimidated and harassed. The end of the war and the emancipation of enslaved African Americans began an increased push for civil rights, with a primary focus on securing suffrage for Black men (Golden 1991; Spangler 1961).

Ralph and Emily Grey

In 1855, Ralph Grey moved to St. Anthony from York, Pennsylvania, to join his brother. He entered a small but growing contingent of African Americans in the area. He was followed two years later by his wife, Emily O. Goodridge Grey, and their son. When Ralph arrived, he lived in the Jarrett House, a hotel on the Mississippi River in St. Anthony, where he opened a barber shop. Emily Goodridge Grey was the daughter of William C. Goodridge, a prominent freed businessman, abolitionist, and member of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania. When Emily arrived in Minnesota to join her husband, she found work as a seamstress and developed a strong community of women, both Black and white, in St. Anthony (Cannon and Harpole 1998; Green 2021; Luke 2018b).

The Greys were ardent abolitionists. In 1860, they played a key role in helping Eliza Winston receive her freedom from her enslaver (see Section 2.1 and above). In 1865, Ralph Grey was part of a group of Black barbers who lobbied for the amendment to the Minnesota constitution that would grant suffrage to Black men, which passed in 1869. When the amendment was ratified in 1869, Ralph Grey was selected to read the Emancipation Proclamation at the "Grand Mass Meeting of Colored People of Minnesota." The Greys were well connected to the national abolitionist movement – they were friends with Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass, who stayed in the Greys' home when he visited Minnesota in 1873. Emily led an ultimately unsuccessful campaign to stage an exhibit on Black women's achievements at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Ralph passed away in 1904, while Emily died in 1916. Both are buried in Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis (Cannon and Harpole 1998; Green 2021; Luke 2018b).

Suffrage

In 1849, the US Congress created the Territory of Minnesota. While Minnesota was incorporated as a free territory and, in 1858, as a free state, it still denied African Americans and other people of color (as well as all women) the right to vote. African American suffrage was a key issue in the early history of Minnesota and its bid for statehood. When Minnesota formed a constitutional convention in 1857, African American suffrage proved to be a crucial divide among its participants. Pro-slavery and anti-Black legislatures argued that African Americans were not citizens and therefore did not have the right to the vote. The outcome of the negotiations that followed was the McClure Resolution, which empowered the state legislature to bring the question of African American suffrage to a vote by the already-enfranchised people of the state, but it could not be included as part of the initial state constitution (Green 1998; Reicher 2014; Spangler 1961).

At the end of the Civil War, pro-suffrage Republicans pushed for Minnesota to eliminate the word 'white' from its voting requirements. They argued that pushing for African American suffrage and rights in the South without granting them in the northern states was hypocritical. In 1865 and 1867, two constitutional amendments were proposed, yet they each failed. Finally, in 1868, an amendment was passed to allow all non-white men in Minnesota to vote, two years before the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which guarantees the right to vote regardless of race, color, and previous condition of servitude (Green 1998; Reicher 2014; Spangler 1961).

McCants Stewart and the Civil Rights Act of 1897

McCants Stewart was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1877 and attended Tuskegee Institute in 1893. In 1897, Stewart moved to Minneapolis and attended the University of Minnesota Law School, where he was elected secretary of the senior class and sheriff of the Moot Court. In 1899, Stewart became the third African American to graduate from the Minnesota Law School. Stewart was also the business manager and associate editor of the *Twin City American*, a Black newspaper, and was well known in the African American community of Minneapolis (Smith 1988).

In 1898, when McCants Stewart was still a law student, he went into a restaurant on Central Avenue owned by John Flangstad. After Flangstad refused Stewart service, Stewart and Flangstad got into a verbal argument. Stewart reportedly said "I did not know I was in Georgia. I thought I was in the state of Minnesota where a colored man was entitled to the same rights as any other citizen" (Golden 1991). Stewart filed an administrative complaint with the Minneapolis City Attorney's office under a civil rights amendment passed in 1897. Stewart's case was the first to test the new civil rights law which banned discrimination. After deliberating for fifteen minutes, a jury convicted Flangstad of violating Stewart's civil rights (Golden 1991; Smith 1988).

Civil Rights Movement: circa 1950-circa 1970

The Civil Rights Movement was a national grassroots movement that protested racial discrimination, segregation, and violence. Several of the movement's important national figures were from Minnesota,

including Roy Wilkins and Hubert Humphrey. In Minneapolis, the Civil Rights Movement grew out of the actions of the previous decades, following leaders like Cecil Newman, Harry Davis, Sr., Josie Johnson, and Nellie Stone Johnson. Civil rights actions in Minneapolis included efforts to end discrimination and segregation in employment, education, and housing, as well as promoting voting rights and political participation (Kurtenhof 2022; Newville 2022).

Black Student Movement at the University of Minnesota

In January of 1969, 70 Black students occupied Morrill Hall on the University of Minnesota's campus for 24 hours to protest institutional racism and the treatment of Black students on campus. At the time, there were fewer than 90 Black students attending the University. The students, led by Rose Mary Freeman, Horace Huntley, and Anna Stanley, were members of the Afro-American Action Committee (AAAC) (see Section 2.5). Following the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, students in the AAAC drafted a set of seven demands for the University. They included the creation of an Afro-American Studies curriculum, scholarships to encourage local Black students to attend the University, academic and recruitment support for Black students, and changes to the treatment of Black athletes. While the school administration appeared amenable, with University president Malcolm Moos calling the demands "eminently reasonable," little progress was made on actually addressing the demands (PBS 2020). On January 14, 1969, following a meeting with President Moos, students of AAAC staged the takeover of Morrill Hall, the university's administrative building. The students were committed to nonviolent direct action and ensured that the demonstration did not turn violent despite angry counter protestors (Burnside 2024; Maas 2019b).

The students who took over Morrill Hall expected to be arrested immediately. Instead, several members of the AAAC and the University administration met to negotiate the students' demands. The Morrill Hall sit-in resulted in the creation of the Department of Afro-American and African Studies (now the Department of African American & African Studies), the dedication of funds to a Black students' conference, and addition of several community members to the board of the MLK scholarship fund (Burnside 2024; Maas 2019b; Sabrowsky 2019).

While students were not initially arrested, three of the main leaders of the sit-in – Horace Huntley, Rose Mary Freeman, and Warren Tucker, Jr. – were eventually indicted by a grand jury for aggravated criminal damage to property, rioting, and unlawful assembly. Their indictment sparked protests by thousands of people, including students and local community members, who blasted the charges as politically motivated. Huntley and Freeman were convicted of unlawful assembly but were acquitted on all other charges. They were given a 90-day suspended sentence and a one-year probation. Tucker was acquitted of all charges (Burnside 2024; Maas 2019b; Sabrowsky 2019).

Figure 46. Students Rally in front of Morrill Hall, 1969 (Burnside 2024)

Minnesota Freedom Riders

As part of their ongoing protest of racial segregation in the south, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) began to organize freedom rides in 1961. These bus journeys brought both Black and white activists, often students, to the South as a nonviolent action protesting racial segregation in interstate bus travel. The earliest freedom ride was led by Bayard Rustin in 1947, travelling through the Upper South. In 1961, a group out of the University of Minnesota, Students for Integration, raised money to support 12 people to participate in the freedom rides. They ultimately recruited six Minnesotan freedom riders, including four University students, to participate in the action. When the riders arrived at their destination of Jackson, Mississippi, they were almost immediately arrested and eventually sent to the state penitentiary (Delegard 2014; Nelson 2017).

1966-67 Plymouth Avenue Uprisings

On August 2, 1966, a group of around 50 teenagers destroyed several businesses along Plymouth Avenue North in the Northside neighborhood of Minneapolis. This set off a year of violent conflict along the corridor, culminating in a series of acts of arson, assaults, and vandalism over three nights from July 19-21, 1967. While these actions were seen by many as riots or criminal activity, the young people who participated in them saw their actions as rebellions and political resistance. As one demonstrator asserted, they were protesting “the hostility, the fear, frustration and the feeling of powerlessness which black people feel in an alien white society… People start feeling like they’re living in an occupied country” (Delegard 2015c).

In August 1966, civil rights were not widely seen by white Minneapolitans as a central issue in the city, despite the decades of activism and work by the African American community. For example, a city

commission argued that “many people in Minneapolis feel that our ‘negro or slum problem’ is not serious” (Delegard 2015c). Mayor Arthur Naftalin was elected to office in part by allying himself with the national Civil Rights Movement, promising to promote racial equality. When violence exploded on Plymouth Avenue on August 2, it was filled with the frustrations of a community experiencing racial prejudice and white supremacy (Delegard 2015c; Marks 2015).

The day after the rebellion, Mayor Naftalin and Governor Rolvaag met with the protestors at a local park, promising to keep police away. He listened as community members expressed their frustrations and voiced their experiences. In response, Naftalin acknowledged the lack of opportunities for people in the neighborhood and promised change. At the meeting, he announced that the Plan for Progress, a group representing 20 major Minneapolis firms, would promise 60 jobs to African Americans (Delegard 2015c; Minneapolis Star 1966). However, from the start, the community was skeptical. One of the protestors, Wayne Russell, called the jobs a “pacifier,” stating that the promise of 60 jobs was not enough to change the structural issues underpinning people’s frustration (Minneapolis Star 1966). Another, Gwyn Jones-Davis, called on the mayor to provide scholarships instead, arguing that what people needed was education, not just jobs (Minneapolis Star 1966).

Despite the mayor’s promises, by the summer of 1967, many in North Minneapolis did not feel that conditions had improved. On July 19, unrest once again erupted on Plymouth Avenue. People were angry at the Minneapolis Police Department’s violence and racism toward the Black community. In particular, in the days preceding the uprising, police did not intervene as buses refused to bring Black people back to the Northside after the Aquatennial Parade. Nor did they help when a white crowd began throwing glass bottles at groups of Black people at the celebration, and when a group of four white boys violently attacked a Black boy. When the boy asked the police to take him to the hospital, the police responded with racial slurs, declaring that there was nothing wrong with him. As people walked the five or six miles back home after the parade, they began to protest the discrimination and violence they suffered at the hands of the police, as well as the discrimination they felt from Jewish business owners and residents in the neighborhood. The uprising became violent, as people vandalized and looted stores along the street. Police arrested 13 people that night, and the next day protestors took to the streets again. Naftalin requested that the Minnesota National Guard be dispatched, and for over a week hundreds of troops were stationed in North Minneapolis and 29 arrests were made (Marks 2015; MPD 150 2020).

The mayor again met with community members and promised to address the ongoing racial inequality of Minneapolis. Naftalin proposed a broadened civil rights ordinance, the creation of a cadet system for the police department, and a renewed effort on diversity in hiring. However, he did not acknowledge police wrongdoing and his efforts at reform were largely ineffectual. While the state offered few reconciliations or changes that might ameliorate the conditions people protested, the community itself developed alternative infrastructures out of the protests. Syl Davis and a group of protestors took over a vacant building on Plymouth Avenue and used the space to establish The Way (see Section 2.5). The

Way would become an important community center in North Minneapolis for decades to come (Delegard 2015c).

Figure 47. Civilians and National Guard Troops on Plymouth Avenue, 1967 (Marks 2015)

Integrating the Minneapolis Fire Department

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, employment within public services was part of a limited set of job opportunities available to Black Minneapolitans. The city's fire department, in particular, provided a welcome alternative to often low-paying jobs in the service industry, despite the racial discrimination Black workers faced (see Section 2.4). By 1949, however, a hostile work environment and discriminatory hiring practices had eliminated all Black firefighters from the city. It took sustained activism on the part of the Black community to re-integrate the fire department. In 1970, civil rights activists Ron Edwards and William Smith recruited Matthew Little, a member of the NAACP who had been rejected by the fire department in the 1950s despite passing the physical and written entry exams, to serve as a witness brought by the Minneapolis Legal Aid Society against the all-white department. In 1971, a US District Judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered the fire department to desegregate. The City appealed the ruling all the way to the US Supreme Court, which ultimately refused to hear the case. As a result, the Minneapolis Fire Department hired 10 people of color (four of them Black) in 1972. As of 2021, approximately 31% of the department's 414 sworn personnel were people of color (Que and Gallo 2021:39–40).

Organizations

The Protective and Industrial League

The Protective and Industrial League was established in 1887 in response to the discrimination faced by African Americans in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The League worked to promote economic opportunities for African Americans, while also seeking to increase their quality of life, broadly construed. For example, the League attempted an ambitious project of securing federal land for newly arrived African Americans to encourage new Black settlers to the state. While that project did not come to fruition, the League did offer some material assistance to African Americans in the state (Golden 1991; Spangler 1961).

NAACP

While there had been a series of organizations and groups in Minneapolis committed to African American civil rights in the second half of the nineteenth century, the formation of the NAACP in 1909 fundamentally changed the landscape for civil rights activism. When the NAACP was established at the national level, several African Americans from Minnesota, including Dr. V. D. Turner and prominent lawyer Frederick McGhee, attended the national conventions (Kenney 2016; Spangler 1961).

On March 12, 1912, McGhee, Turner and other members of the African American elite created a new organization, the Twin City Protective League. The League was made up of residents from both cities and was formed to discuss the establishment of a local branch of the NAACP. McGhee had been instrumental in bringing a predecessor to the NAACP, the National Afro-American Council (NAAC), to St. Paul for its annual meeting in 1902. That meeting brought together Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells and other prominent Black crusaders to the Twin Cities. They held the closing ball for the annual meeting at the University of Minnesota's Armory in Minneapolis (PBS 2020; Nelson 2014). While McGhee died later in 1912, the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP was established in 1914. Samuel N. Deinard was the first president of the branch, while Gale Hilyer served as the first secretary (see Section 2.5).

The NAACP played a crucial role in providing legal support for African American civil rights cases throughout the twentieth century. Early campaigns by the Minneapolis NAACP included the attempt, in coordination with the Minnesota Club (see below), to block showings of the white supremacist film, *The Birth of a Nation*. Their attempts to block the film were part of a larger coordinated campaign to promote positive images of African Americans in the media, and to protest denigrating, offensive, or violent imagery. *The Birth of a Nation* was all three. The film promoted a positive image of the Ku Klux Klan and was linked to the lynchings and violent brutalizing of African Americans across the country. The film, originally released as a silent film in 1915, was reissued in the 1930s with sound. The NAACP acted against its showing both in 1915 and in 1930. In January of 1931, the NAACP, led by Lena O. Smith, lobbied the mayor of Minneapolis, William F. Kunze, to shut down the film, which was scheduled to premiere at the Lyceum Theater (85 11th Street South, non-extant). The mayor agreed to prohibit the screening. The theater and the NAACP went back and forth through the courts. While Smith and the

NAACP succeeded in temporarily blocking the film, the theater eventually won the battle to show the film. In 1940, the film was popular once again, and the Esquire Theatre (729 Hennepin Avenue, non-extant) sought to screen it. This time, Smith and the NAACP had more success, and were able to negotiate an abbreviated run for the film (Juergens 2001; Kenney 2016; Minneapolis Spokesman 1940).

In the early twentieth century, the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP was particularly focused on housing segregation and discrimination. For example, in November of 1920, the NAACP Legal Redress and Legislation Committee, which included Lena O. Smith, responded to a group of white homeowners in the 13th Ward who organized to protest Black homeownership in the area. The group of white people accused Black men and women of moving into the area in order to drive down home prices and coerce white homeowners to pay them to move out, a common refrain at the time. The arguments of the white residents neglected the fact that between 50-100 Black families had owned homes in the ward for years. Due to cases like this, the NAACP began to actively dissuade Black families from accepting settlements or pay outs to move out of neighborhoods (Juergens 2001).

The NAACP encouraged homeowners to stand their ground and provided material support when white residents attempted to drive them out of neighborhoods. They employed a variety of tactics. For example, they would coordinate meetings between the mayor and the police chief to seek city support and protection for families facing racial animosity. An important case in this regard was that of Nellie and W. T. Francis in St. Paul, who faced intimidation and violence when they attempted to move into their new home at 2092 Sargent Avenue in 1924. Despite the tactics of the white homeowner's association for the neighborhood, which included twice burning a cross on their front yard and offers to buy them out, the Francises moved into and remained in their home with security and support from the NAACP. This set a precedent for the organization which they followed in similar cases in the following years (Juergens 2001).

The most widely publicized case of housing discrimination that the NAACP prosecuted was that of Arthur and Edith Lee, described in detail in Section 2.2.

White politicians and elites were often members of the NAACP, including Mayor Thomas Van Lear and Congressman Thomas Schall. This contributed to the idea that racism and civil rights were not as much of a problem in Minnesota as elsewhere in the country. However, it also helped the NAACP with its quieter strategies. While the NAACP often took a legal approach to achieving civil rights, in the early half of the twentieth century they also used backdoor routes and private conversations to great effect. At the same time, these quieter routes did not force the majority of the population to confront the enormous discrimination African Americans encountered (Juergens 2001).

Minnesota Club

The Minnesota Club was a group of African American civil rights organizers who organized to prevent the white-supremacist film *The Birth of a Nation* from being screened in Minneapolis in the 1930s. The

group included A. B. Cassius, Lena Olive Smith, Dr. William Brown, Herbert Howell, and Clifford Rucker. In an oral history from 1982, Cassius recalled that the group met once a month at the Foster's Sweet Shoppe (6th Avenue North and Lyndale Avenue North, non-extant), where the owners simply requested that they buy a dish of ice cream while they met (Delegard 2015a; Ross 1981a).

People

Frank Wheaton

Frank Wheaton was the first Black member of the Minnesota State House of Representatives. Wheaton was born in Maryland in 1866 and studied at Storer College in Virginia, as well as at Howard University. In 1893, Wheaton moved to Minneapolis, where he attended the University of Minnesota Law School. Wheaton paid for law school by working as a hotel waiter and a railroad porter, and he graduated in 1894. Wheaton was the first African American to graduate from the University of Minnesota Law School, and the fourth African American to graduate from the University writ large. Despite working at the same time, he finished the two-year program in a single year (Cameron 2015; Spangler 1961).

In 1898, Wheaton was elected to represent the 42nd District in Minneapolis, serving a single term. In addition, Wheaton served as a congressional clerk, a Minnesota legislative clerk, deputy clerk of the Minneapolis Municipal Court, and a representative of Minnesota to the Republican National Convention of 1896 (Spangler 1961). Even with a successful career, Wheaton faced repeated race-based discrimination. For example, in 1895 he filed a lawsuit against the Creamery Restaurant in Minneapolis after he was refused service. In 1897, Wheaton was accused of stealing from a white man while eating at St. Paul's Metropolitan Hotel. Wheaton again filed a lawsuit seeking damages for false arrest and imprisonment. It is unclear what the outcome of these suits were. However, they may have prompted Wheaton's run for office and his dedication to civil rights. For example, during his tenure in the State Legislature, Wheaton proposed an amendment to the 1885 equal rights and accommodations act which would exhaustively extend its protections across all businesses. The bill was signed into law on March 6, 1899 (Cameron 2015).

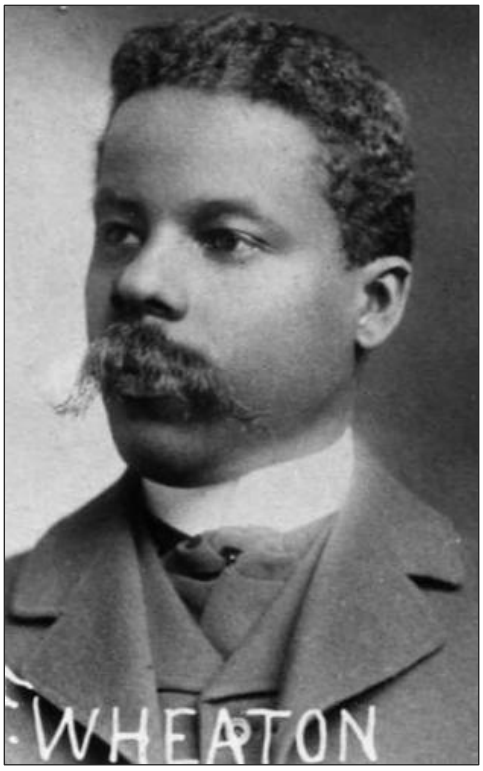

Figure 48. Frank Wheaton, circa 1899 (Cameron 2015)

Frederick McGhee

Frederick McGhee was born in Mississippi in 1861 to enslaved parents and arrived in Minnesota after attending Knoxville College in Tennessee and practicing law in Chicago for three years. When he arrived in St. Paul in 1889, he was the first African American lawyer admitted to the bar in the Minnesota. McGhee was the legal director of the National Afro-American Council for eight years and one of the founding members of the Niagara Movement. McGhee was instrumental in bringing the NAACP to the Twin Cities in 1912, the final year of his life (Spangler 1961).

William R. Morris

William R. Morris was the first African American to practice law in Minneapolis. He was born in Kentucky to enslaved parents and attended Fisk University, where he studied law. In 1889, Morris moved to Minneapolis where he practiced law for over 35 years. That same year, Morris helped found the Afro-American Law Enforcement League in Minneapolis. Morris was a founding member and leader in the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP and was the executive chairman of the branch when it was founded in 1914. Morris also became captain of Company D of the Sixteenth Battalion of the Minnesota Home Guard. He died in 1930 (African American Registry 2024; Spangler 1961).

Lena Olive Smith

Lena Olive Smith (also discussed in Section 2.4) was a leading advocate for African American civil rights in Minneapolis in the 1920s and 1930s. When Smith was accepted into the bar in 1921, she was the first

and only Black woman to practice law in the state of Minnesota until 1945. Smith was a leader in the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP and provided legal aid in important civil rights cases, including representing Arthur and Edith Lee as they protested housing segregation (Juergens 2001).

Smith was born in 1885 in Lawrence, Kansas, and moved to Minneapolis in 1906 with her mother and siblings. Smith had many jobs and careers early in her life, including as a hairdresser, a dermatologist, and an embalmer. Importantly, Smith also became a realtor, an industry known for its prejudice against women and minorities. As a realtor, Smith became intimately familiar with the widespread racial housing segregation in the Twin Cities. This experience prompted Smith to attend law school and, in 1916, she enrolled at Northwestern College of Law (predecessor to William Mitchell College of Law) (Juergens 2001).

Even while attending law school, Smith began to challenge segregation through litigation. In December of 1916, she and four Black men attempted to sit in the white section of the Pantages Theatre (710 Hennepin Avenue, HE-MPC-05603, extant). She and each of the men sued the theater for violating Minneapolis' anti-discrimination law. Though Smith lost the suit, the string of lawsuits contributed to the theater's integration by the time her case was decided (Juergens 2001). Smith graduated law school and was admitted to the bar on June 16, 1921. Her first case was on behalf of John and Mary Parkinson, an elderly Black couple who sued white landowners who tried to cheat the Parkinsons out of their home at 2417 5th Avenue South in Minneapolis (non-extant). Smith won the case for the Parkinsons, beginning an illustrious career defending African Americans against racial discrimination (Juergens 2001).

Smith was the primary attorney for the Minneapolis NAACP in the mid to late 1920s, and the head of the NAACP's Legal Redress Committee from 1926-1930. In 1930, she became the president of the organization. Smith litigated several important cases on behalf of the NAACP. These included the Arthur and Edith Lee case (see Section 2.2), the Frances McHie case against the University of Minnesota Nursing School, and the case against the Nicollet Hotel. Throughout much of her life as a lawyer, Smith lived at 3905 5th Avenue South in Minneapolis (HE-MPC-04887, extant and designated a local landmark). Smith died in 1966 at the age of 81. She was still practicing law, and had lived long enough to see the passage of the national 1964 Civil Rights Act (DeCarlo 2024a; Juergens 2001).

Josie R. Johnson

Dr. Josie Robinson Johnson was born in 1931 in Houston, Texas, and attended Fisk University and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she earned an M.A. and an Ed.D. Johnson is known as Minnesota's First Lady of Civil Rights for her enormous impact on education, fair housing, and voting rights in the state. Johnson's dedication to civil rights began at an early age, when she campaigned with her father against a poll tax at fourteen years old. She moved to Minneapolis in the 1950s after her husband was hired by Honeywell, and became involved with various organizations, including the Urban

League, the League of Women Voters, and the board of the Minneapolis NAACP (Davis et al. 2024; Jackson 2023; The HistoryMakers 2002).

Johnson was instrumental in getting Minnesota's fair housing law passed and, in 1963, Johnson led a group of Minnesotan civil rights organizers in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In 1971, Johnson became the first Black person to sit on the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents. She taught in several departments at the University, including the Afro-American Studies Department, the College of Education, and the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Johnson also worked in politics, including serving as Tennessee's deputy campaign manager for Jimmy Carter in 1980, serving as executive assistant to the lieutenant governor of Colorado from 1975-8, and working as a legislative and community liaison for the Mayor of Minneapolis in the 1960s (Davis et al. 2024; Jackson 2023; The HistoryMakers 2002).

Figure 49. Josie Johnson (center) with other Minnesota Delegates at the 1963 March on Washington (University of Minnesota 2023a)

Harry Davis, Sr.

Harry Davis, Sr., was born in 1923 in North Minneapolis and graduated from North High School in 1941. He was the great grandson of John Wesley Harper, a soldier of Native and African American descent who was stationed at Fort Snelling in 1867 and subsequently settled in Minnesota. Davis worked at ONAN corporation, becoming one of the first Black executives at a major Minnesotan corporation. He also coached boxing at the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House/Community Center for nearly 20 years and served on the US Olympic boxing committee. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Davis helped found the Minneapolis Urban Coalition, a non-profit advocating on behalf of communities of color. Davis also served on the Minneapolis School Board for over 20 years, including during the height of desegregation campaigns. In 1971, Davis ran for mayor of Minneapolis – the first Black mayoral

candidate in the city. While campaigning for mayor, the Davises endured racially-motivated threats and violence, prompting round-the-clock police and FBI surveillance and protection. Davis passed away in 2006 (Benson 2006; Jackson 2015b). According to his son Harry Davis, Jr., the Davis family lived at 3621 Portland Avenue (extant) from 1955 to 1973.

Anthony Brutus Cassius

A. B. Cassius (also discussed in Section 2.4) was born in 1907 in Oklahoma. At the age of 13, he fled racial violence in Oklahoma and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. Upon arriving, Cassius took a job at the Merchant Hotel in St. Paul, sleeping in the basement of the hotel while attending Central High School. After attending Macalester College for two years, Cassius moved to Minneapolis and took a job as a waiter at the Curtis Hotel. At the Curtis Hotel, all the waiters and staff were Black, while the management and clientele were exclusively white. Soon, Cassius became aware that the Black waiters at the hotel made significantly less than their white counterparts in other hotels across the Twin Cities. Cassius attempted to organize Black waiters with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, but the union refused to admit Black workers. In 1930, Cassius organized the first all-Black waiters' union in Minnesota – the Local #614 Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, chartered by the AFL. Local 614 sued the Curtis Hotel, winning equal pay with white waiters as well as back pay, all without the workers going on strike. In 1935, Cassius partnered with Nellie Stone Johnson and leaders representing various ethnic groups of people employed in the hotel and restaurant industry to organize the first integrated union in Minnesota – the Local #665 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Union (Bos 2021b; Delegard 2015a; Delton 2002; Lakewood Cemetery 2018; Ross 1981a).

Cassius was an active civil rights organizer throughout his life. He participated in the campaigns to prevent screenings of *The Birth of a Nation* as part of the Minnesota Club, which he helped found. In 1939 Cassius opened the Dreamland Café and Tavern at 38th Street and 4th Avenue South, the heart of the historically Black Old Southside neighborhood, to provide a safe social space for African Americans. The Dreamland Café was known as a nice restaurant that served Black and white patrons alike, at a time when most African Americans could not go to the restaurants in downtown Minneapolis. It was a social hub for African Americans, providing a space for African Americans to meet and discuss and organize around civil rights. Cassius would go on to open the Cassius Club Café restaurant and bar, also known as the Cassius Bar and Playroom, in downtown Minneapolis after a protracted fight over the financing and liquor license. Cassius was the first African American to receive a liquor license in Minnesota. The bar was originally located at 207 3rd Street South but moved to 318 3rd Street South due to neighborhood redevelopment. It remained there until it burned down in 1980 (Bos 2021b; Delegard 2015a; Delton 2002; Lakewood Cemetery 2018; Ross 1981a).

Nellie Stone Johnson

Nellie Stone Johnson was born in 1905 on a farm in Dakota County, Minnesota. She came to Minneapolis in 1922 to complete her high school degree and was hired as an elevator operator at the Minneapolis Athletic Club. Johnson met communists, political radicals, and union organizers during

these years, who, along with her experience at the Athletic Club, impressed upon her the importance of labor and cooperative organizing. Johnson quickly became involved in the labor movement in Minneapolis and helped to organize the union at the Athletic Club. She attended the University of Minnesota, where she met union organizer Swan Assarson who mentored Johnson as a labor organizer. When the Athletic Club organized under the Local #665 of the Hotel Employees Union, Johnson was one of the first women to sit on the negotiating committee. Johnson also helped push the Athletic Club to integrate its staff facilities, including the locker rooms and the cafeteria. In 1936, Johnson was elected vice president of her local union and sat on a statewide hotel and restaurant workers' council. She became involved with the Farmer-Labor Association (FLA), which was the educational arm of the Farmer-Labor Party. She was also a member of the United Labor Committee. Both organizations endorsed, funded, and campaigned for local pro-union political candidates. Through her experiences with the groups, Johnson developed a passion for politics and political campaigns (Beer 2015; Delton 2002).

In 1945, Johnson made a successful bid for a position on the Minneapolis Library Board. By winning the seat, Johnson became the first African American in Minneapolis to hold an elected office. She was encouraged by then-mayor Hubert Humphrey, and the two campaigned alongside one another. Johnson would sit on the library board for six years. In the late 1940s, Johnson became known for her political pragmatism. For example, in the 1948 election, she worked with both the Democratic and Progressive parties, despite their ideological differences. Johnson helped the Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties merge, building what she hoped would be a multi-racial and labor-oriented political party. Johnson was instrumental in the passage of Minnesota's Fair Employment (1955) and Fair Housing Laws (1957). In 1963, Johnson retired from the hotel industry and opened a small tailoring and alterations shop in downtown Minneapolis. Johnson would also serve as a campaign manager for Van White, who was the first Black member of the Minneapolis City Council, was appointed to the State University Board, and served as a member of the Democratic National Committee from Minnesota. Johnson died in 2002 at the age of 96. In 2022, a statue of Johnson was permanently installed in the Minnesota State Capitol, honoring her work and life (Beer 2015; Delton 2002; Jackson 2022).

Matthew Little and Sylvia Booker Little

Matthew Little was born in Washington, North Carolina, in 1921. In 1943, he graduated from North Carolina A&T and was subsequently drafted into the US Army and served in an all-Black infantry regiment during World War II. He left the Army in 1946 and moved to Minneapolis in 1948. After arriving in the city, he was shocked to see that the racial discrimination that he experienced in his native North Carolina was not a strictly Southern phenomenon. He quickly observed the Black residents were limited to buying homes in certain areas of the city, Black visitors were denied rooms at major hotels, and unwritten rules prohibited Black applicants from serving in many jobs, including with the Minneapolis' all-white fire department, which Little was rejected from despite meeting all of the qualifications. Little subsequently became an active member of the local Civil Rights Movement, working within the local chapter of the NAACP for over 40 years and serving as its president between 1985 and

1993. He was involved in many high-profile civil rights efforts, including a federal lawsuit to integrate the Minneapolis Fire Department, challenging the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the City of Minneapolis in state court over the poor housing conditions forced upon people of color, leading the state delegation to Washington, D.C., in 1963 to attend the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and helping to create the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission (Furst 2014; Hobbes 2014).

Sylvia Booker Little was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1930. While in school, she was often the only Black person in her classes (Insight News 2010). When Little was 18, she was hired by the Internal Revenue Service and was subsequently transferred to the Minneapolis office. At the age of 19, she met Matthew Little and the two married shortly after. While Sylvia Little was perhaps best known as a classically trained opera singer, having performed for Coretta Scott King at the Sabathani Community Center, she was also deeply committed to social justice. She was a life-long advocate for children and seniors, in particular, having established one of the first food banks for seniors living in high-rise housing. Sylvia and Matthew had six children together before they divorced in 1974 and imparted to them a strong work ethic and a spirit of service. Their children and descendants have continued the Littles' legacy of community service, including through the WE WIN Institute, a non-profit run by their daughter, Titilayo Bediako, that focuses on providing free programs and services to local Black youth (Furst 2014; Insight News 2010; Sindiswa Georgiades to Erin Que, personal communication, December 20, 2024).

Cecil E. Newman

Cecil Newman (also discussed in Section 2.6) moved to Minneapolis in 1922, fleeing racial violence and segregation in Kansas City, Kansas, where he had been born in 1903. From an early age, Newman knew that he wanted to work in journalism, and upon arriving in Minneapolis he took jobs with various papers, including the African American *Northwest Bulletin*, the *Twin City Herald*, and the *Chicago Defender.* In 1934, Newman began the sister papers the *Minneapolis Spokesman* and the *St. Paul Recorder*. The papers documented the Black communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, including important local and national news, editorials, arts and sports coverage, and accounts of local social events (Bergin 2021; Nathanson 2010). Newman promised to use the papers to "speak out fearlessly and unceasingly against injustices, discriminations, and all imposed inequities" (Bergin 2021). The papers' circulation grew steadily and by the early 1940s, over 7,000 people subscribed to the *Spokesman* (Nathanson 2010).

Newman used the *Spokesman* to call attention to the discrimination African Americans faced in the Twin Cities and to argue for their civil rights. In one well-known campaign, Newman orchestrated a boycott of local breweries. After the end of prohibition in 1933, local Twin Cities breweries went on a hiring spree. Yet, in 1935, not a single one, including Hamm's, Schmidt's, and Gluek's, employed African Americans. Newman encouraged the Black community to refuse to purchase the local beers and asked that the restaurants, bars, and nightclubs which depended on African American business do the same. The campaign was largely effective and the local breweries, feeling the strain from the boycott, offered to

purchase an advertisement contract in the *Spokesman/Recorder*, which Newman rejected (Bergin 2021; Nathanson 2010).

Newman continued successfully to push for increased employment opportunities for African Americans. For example, during World War II, Newman was instrumental in securing jobs for African Americans in the defense industry at places like the Twin Cities Army Ammunitions Plant. Newman was personally brought on by Charles Horn, the owner of the plant, to review job applications of African Americans, bypassing the existing personnel managers. Later, in the 1960s, Newman would push the owner of the Minnesota Twins to desegregate the spring training lodgings. The newspapers and their constantly growing reach were also instrumental in other campaigns for racial equality. For example, when Black students at the University of Minnesota pushed for Black student housing, the *Spokesman/Recorder* published extensive coverage of their fight. Ultimately, the University reversed course, in part because of the negative attention the papers' news coverage had brought (Bergin 2021; Nathanson 2010).

As the Civil Rights Movement gained traction and influence in the 1960s, Newman and the *Spokesman/Recorder* reported on its impacts both nationally and within the Twin Cities. While Newman lauded Martin Luther King, Jr., and sent reporters to the nation's capital to report on the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Newman was also critical of some of the more militant strains of the movement. In 1967, he condemned the uprisings on Plymouth Avenue. In turn, some in the movement grew disillusioned with Newman for what they saw as his acquiescence to the white power structure (Bergin 2021; Nathanson 2010).

Over his lifetime, Cecil Newman became a deeply important and well-connected figure in Twin Cities political life. Newman was a close friend and ally of Hubert Humphrey as he first became Mayor of Minneapolis and eventually moved on to his national renown. Newman had a connection to each Governor of Minnesota since the 1920s, as well as important local businessmen. Newman died in 1976 at the age of 72. He was eulogized at his funeral by Rev. E. Alexander Hawkins, Carl Eller, and Hubert Humphrey. Newman's wife, Launa Newman, took over as president of the newspaper. The *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* continues to publish and is one of the longest running Black newspapers in the country. It is currently helmed by Newman's granddaughter, Tracey Williams-Dillard. The paper continues its focus on issues affecting the African American community, in addition to civil rights and discrimination more broadly (Bergin 2021; Nathanson 2010).

Segregation and Discrimination

Economics and Consumption

In 1885, the Minnesota Legislature passed an equal rights and accommodation act, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race or color at all public places, inns, and public conveyances. However, the passage of the law often did not prevent discrimination against African Americans in public spaces, nor the reality of segregation in places like hotels and restaurants. For example, in 1887, almost

immediately following the passage of the Equal Rights Act, William Hazel was repeatedly denied rooms at several St. Paul hotels. When Hazel sued for nearly $2,000 in damages, a jury awarded him less than $50. This spurred many members of the Black community to form the Minnesota Protective and Industrial League in December of that year. The League worked to monitor civil rights infringements against African Americans and attempted to improve the overall quality of life for the community (Golden 1991).

Labor and Employment

In the nineteenth century, job opportunities for African Americans were generally limited to work in the hotel and restaurant industry, and in the railroad industry (see Section 2.4). After World War I, many employers, driven by xenophobia and anger at the growing Black communities in the North, refused to hire African Americans. In 1924, The NAACP conducted a survey of 300 businesses in Minneapolis and found that most of the employers not only had no employees of color but were also unwilling to hire any. The next year, the Minneapolis Urban League complemented the study with a survey of Minneapolis unions. They found that the vast majority of unions either explicitly forbade or refused to admit African Americans, and only eight of the 47 unions had ever had African American members (Burnside 2017b; Juergens 2001).

Military

During the Civil War, nearly 100 African American men from Minnesota joined the Union ranks, alongside African Americans across the North. Often, African American soldiers were organized into all-Black regiments overseen by white officers. When the Spanish-American War began in 1898, Minneapolis organized a company of 54 Black men. Before reporting for duty, however, these men, alongside a similar company from St. Paul, sought to be placed under the leadership of Black officers. They made their appeal directly to the governor with help from Frank Wheaton. The governor granted the charters for the companies but insisted that they be led by white officers. The two companies rejected the offer, but the war ended before it could be negotiated further (Spangler 1961).

While the Spanish-American War relied on volunteers and existing officers, World War I was a much larger conflict and invoked compulsory conscription. The messaging around WWI promoted it as a fight for equality and democracy. African Americans across the nation, who participated ardently in the war effort, argued that they contributed as citizens and ought to be treated as equal citizens. They were vocally opposed to discrimination against African Americans in the military, including segregation and the exclusion of African Americans from certain sectors and functions. Minneapolis also registered two African American units in the Minnesota Home Guard, under captains Gale Hilyer and Charles S. Smith (Spangler 1961).

Schools and Education

In the early nineteenth century, schools in Minneapolis were not officially segregated. This was, in part, due to the small number of African Americans who lived in the city. In the 1850s, as a small influx of African Americans migrated to Minnesota, anti-Black racism spurred a greater concern for the racial

demographics of public schools. However, most of these efforts were focused on St. Paul. After the St. Paul Board of Education established an all-Black school in 1857, the state legislature passed an act to end segregated schools in 1869, which withheld funds from any school that barred entry based on "color, social position, or nationality" (Spangler 1961). While this act legally prevented segregation in schools, it did nothing to encourage integration and most schools remained racially segregated (Spangler 1961).

At the turn of the century, there was an increasing number of highly educated African Americans in the state. However, many of them had attended college outside of Minnesota, and the numbers of Black students enrolled in college remained low. This was partly due to the cost and also attempts by university leaders to discourage or reject African American applicants (Spangler 1961).

Mary Jackson Ellis

Mary Jackson Ellis became the first full-time Black elementary school teacher in 1947. Ellis was initially denied a position as a classroom teacher on the basis of her race. However, after hearing about this discrimination, Cecil Newman appealed to then-mayor Hubert Humphrey. Together, Humphrey and Newman pressured the Minneapolis Public Schools' (MPS) superintendent to hire her. Ellis taught in the district first at Hawthorne Elementary, then Hale Elementary School. She also went on to become a published children's book author and to publish several teaching guides (Luke 2018a).

Frances McHie and the University of Minnesota Nursing School

In 1929, Frances McHie was denied admission to the University of Minnesota's nursing school. The director of the program, Marian Vannier, was explicit: she rejected McHie because she was Black. Vannier wrote that "the question of the admission of Negro citizens has been taken up before, and because there are no colored wards in connection with the hospitals of the school, we are unable to provide the necessary field experience" (Juergens 2001:433). The case was brought before the State Legislature by the NAACP, led by Lena O. Smith. At first, the legislature insisted that McHie had not been rejected due to her race. After being read aloud the letter and hearing McHie's testimony first-hand, however, they wrote to the Board of Regents urging them to reverse the decision. The NAACP drafted a lawsuit, but they never needed to file it – the nursing school changed course and admitted McHie, albeit a month after classes had begun (Juergens 2001).

Racial Violence

The following content describes acts of racial violence which may trigger intense emotions in readers. Additionally, some of the events described occurred beyond the boundaries of Minneapolis but, nonetheless, have had reverberating effects on people throughout the area. More information may come to light about specific incidents with the passage of time and the development of legal proceedings.

The Ku Klux Klan

On September 12, 1922, the Ku Klux Klan was officially incorporated as a non-profit within the State of Minnesota and admitted 100 new members in the woods on the outskirts of Minneapolis. The Klan, the national presence of which had waned since its initial founding in the aftermath of the Civil War, was revived in response to the immigration and labor changes brought by World War I and the northern migration of African Americans. The NAACP actively protested its incorporation in Minnesota, appealing directly to Governor J .A. O. Preus, the Minneapolis Mayor, and the US District Attorney. Their appeals were unanswered, and the Klan boasted over 1,000 members in Minnesota in 1922. They held two mass meetings that same month, one in St. Paul with over 1,000 attendees, and one in Minneapolis with over 3,000 attendees (Juergens 2001; Minnesota Historical Society 2024d). The Klan was an active presence in Minneapolis, intimidating African Americans who advocated against injustice and for their civil rights. For example, in 1923, members of the Klan participated in the University of Minnesota homecoming parade, wearing full regalia and brandishing shot guns (Mapping Prejudice 2023). By 1923, Minnesota at large boasted 51 chapters of the Klan with over 30,000 members. The Klan published at least two newspapers in the state – *The Call of the North* and *The Minnesota Fiery Cross.* These propaganda outlets emphasized the Klan's message of nativism, racial violence, and "militant, old-fashioned Christianity and operative patriotism" (Minnesota Historical Society 2024d). The racial fear and animosity promoted by the Klan created a severe unemployment crisis for African Americans after the boom years of World War I faded and the Great Depression hit. African Americans across the state struggled to find gainful employment. By the onset of World War II, Klan activity had mostly died out in Minnesota (Minnesota Historical Society 2024d).

The Police

Police brutality against African Americans was reported as early as the 1880s and 1890s in newspapers such as the *Western Appeal* and the *Appeal.* However, as police departments became larger and more professionalized in the early twentieth century, coinciding with the rising Black population of the Twin Cities, there were increasing numbers of reported cases of police violence. Already by that point there were calls for reform in Minneapolis. For example, in the early hours of the morning of June 20, 1922, Officer Fitzpatrick headed to the streets of North Minneapolis. Fitzpatrick had supposedly heard that some Black men on the Northside had invited several white women to a dance. Fitzpatrick was visibly drunk and approached several men who were waiting for food outside of Elk's Hall. When the men did not heed Fitzpatrick's demands that they leave the area, Fitzpatrick violently attacked and then arrested several of them. Several more police officers returned to the area an hour later, breaking up a crowd of people and demanding that the Black clubs in the area close for several days. That same evening, another Minneapolis police officer attacked two young Black men. One of the young men was able to wrest away the officer's gun and ran away with it into the night. When the events were reported to the press the next morning, the police presented them as disorderly conduct cases. However, both Black and white witnesses reported what they had seen, laying the blame for the events at the feet of the police. The Black community held a protest meeting on June 25, which was facilitated by the NAACP. At the meeting, leaders and community members passed a resolution demanding that the officers be

charged for their misconduct and pushing for an increase in the number of Black women police officers. However, these calls went mostly unanswered by the City (Delegard 2015b; MPD 150 2020).

During the first half of the twentieth century, there were no viable means of recourse for Black Minneapolitans to file complaints against the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) heard by the City. Up until 1963, any reports of police brutality were made directly to the Department, who were not required to record the complaint. Throughout the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, calls were made for police reform. In 1963, a report by a State-led civil rights investigation recommended the creation of a citizen-led police review program. Though a Civilian Review Board was created, it had no real power and was disbanded shortly after its establishment. In the late 1960s, MPD created the Internal Affairs Unit (IAU), which is tasked with investigating complaints against officers. In 1967, the City Council established the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission in response to the Plymouth Avenue Protests of 1966-67. The Commission was given the power to investigate complaints against police officers. However, following the election of Charles Stenvig, former head of the police union, as mayor in 1969, the commission was stripped of its investigative powers.

In the wake of the 1967 Plymouth Avenue uprisings, several community patrols were started with the goal of protecting people from police violence, in the image of the Black Panthers. This included the "Black Patrol" and the "Soul Force," which were multi-racial and dedicated to nonviolence and violence prevention. The two groups would often work together, successfully deescalating situations so that there was no need to call for the police (MPD 150 2020).

Curtis Jordan

On July 19, 1937, Curtis Jordan was violently assaulted by two drunk off-duty police officers. Jordan was a waiter, and the police apparently took offense to him resting his head on the counter of the café where he worked. The two officers beat him violently and then took him back to the police station where they assaulted him further. Cecil Newman was called by a witness to the police station, along with other eyewitnesses. The police chief set a hearing for the following evening. Lena O. Smith and the NAACP were called in as legal representatives for Jordan. However, Jordan had a criminal record and did not want to appear in court, despite Smith's desire for the police officers to face justice. Jordan settled with the City and was paid fifty dollars. The officers were transferred out of the Northside (DeCarlo 2024a).

Oliver Lyle

In 1969, Oliver Lyle was pulled over nine times in six weeks while travelling from his apartment in Dinkytown to the Point Supper Club in Golden Valley to perform. Lyle, a Black musician and student at the time, decided to sue the Golden Valley Police for a "pattern of prejudice" evidenced by their continual harassment of him (Hyatt 2021). At the time of Lyle's lawsuit, the Golden Valley Police Department had received more complaints of officer misconduct than any other department in the metro area, and one out of every five people they arrested were Black despite the fact that Golden

Valley only had 59 Black residents. In 1970, an all-white jury found the Golden Valley Chief of Police and three other officers guilty of conspiring against Lyle to deprive him of his civil rights and awarded him $4,000 in damages. It was a significant win in the history of Civil Rights in Minnesota (Hyatt 2021).

Eric J. Benford

In 1976, Eric J. Benford, a 21-year-old Minneapolis native and the son of Robert Benford, Sr., who served as director of the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department from 1969 to 1974, was shot and killed by an Eagan police officer. The Eagan police responded to a shoplifting call at the SuperAmerica service station on January 13, where they encountered Benford, his brother, and three friends. After running background checks on the group, the officers learned that there was a misdemeanor arrest warrant out for Benford. A scuffle broke out as three officers attempted to restrain Benford. One of the officers, George Kasat, shot and killed Benford. According to his brother, who witnessed the altercation, Benford was unarmed and backed away from the officers with his arms raised after breaking free from them. He stated that Kasat fired without warning. The shooting generated outrage throughout the Black community, many of whom viewed the incident as racially motivated. Robert Benford, Sr., took the case to a federal grand jury after a Dakota County grand jury declined to indict Kasat. Over 100 people gathered to hold vigils and demonstrations outside of the federal courthouse in Hastings. The federal grand jury also decided not to issue an indictment (African American Registry 2025c; Charnley 1976:15A; McCabe 1976:17A).

Lillian Weiss and Lloyd Smalley

On the evening of January 25, 1989, the MPD assisted the Crystal Police Department with executing a no-knock raid at the home of Lillian Weiss and Lloyd Smalley. Weiss and Smalley were two Black elders who were sharing their home with friends who had recently been evicted. The police apparently concerned that the home had been booby-trapped by a local gang, threw a grenade through a window, which sparked a fire in the home. Police ignored the onlooker's attempts to warn them about the couple still sleeping in their back bedroom. By the time the fire department arrived, Smalley and Weiss had died from smoke inhalation. When the police searched the home for guns and drugs, they found nothing and were forced to release the other members of the household, whom they had arrested. The Black community was outraged and over the course of the next two months, hundreds of people protested, pushing for police accountability. At a protest at Minneapolis City Hall, a group of protesters interrupted a City Council meeting, where a young Keith Ellison read a list of demands. None of the officers involved in the raid were disciplined. A wrongful death lawsuit filed by Lloyd Smalley's family against the city was settled outside the court. The City Council, relenting to public protest and pressure, created the Civilian Review Authority in 1990. The authority was a community-supported reform that was meant to hold police accountable, yet had very little actual authority or oversight (MPD 150 2020).

Tycel Nelson

On December 1, 1990, Minneapolis Police Officer Dan May chased, shot, and killed 17-year-old Tycel Nelson. Police had been called to a party where a fight had broken out and two people had been shot.

The police quickly cleared May of any wrongdoing, arguing that Nelson had a pistol and was implicated in shootings from earlier in the night. However, the evidence did not align with Officer May's story of the events. Witnesses from the party did not recall Nelson having a gun, and the gun found near his body did not have his fingerprints on it. In addition, ballistics reported that he was shot in the back, but May claimed that he shot Nelson in the chest. On December 6, community members gathered at North High School in protest and marched to the 4th Precinct. Two weeks later, after ongoing community pressure, the Hennepin County Prosecutor yielded to community demands and brought in a special prosecutor, William McGee, Executive Director of the Legal Rights Center. However, an all-white jury still cleared Dan May of all charges in March 1991, and an FBI investigation yielded no charges. A wrongful death suit filed by Nelson's mother against the city was settled. In 1993, the MPD awards committee recommended Dan May the Medal of Valor for the incident in which Nelson was killed. When the chief of police refused to award it, the entire committee resigned. In 2006, the awards committee again attempted to award May the medal. Though they were successful this time, May returned the award amidst renewed community protest (MPD 150 2020).

Julius Powell

In August 2002, 11-year-old Julius Powell was hit by a stray bullet fired by MPD. Police were in North Minneapolis raiding a home at the corner of 26th Avenue North and Knox Avenue North. The home was suspected of being associated with the drug trade, and police were executing a search warrant. An officer attempted to shoot a dog, which they claimed the owner of the house had set on them. However, they missed, and the bullet ricocheted and hit Powell in the arm. The shooting set off a wave of protests among people in the neighborhood frustrated by the police violence in the area, which at times turned violent (Williams 2002). A mediator sent by the US Department of Justice helped broker a five-year agreement between the community and the police to create the Police Community Relations Council (PCRC). The PCRC was forced to disband on December 31, 2008, after the City Council declined to extend the original agreement. At that time, over 40 of the reforms promised in 2002 were still unfulfilled (Edwards 2008:4; MPD 150 2020).

Courtney Williams

On October 23, 2004, 15-year-old Courtney Williams was killed by Minneapolis Police Officer Scott Mars. Williams had been at a friend's birthday party and was walking to another friends' house with a group of other children, one of whom had a toy pistol. Officer Mars was dispatched after calls which reported a group of Black youths with a gun. When the group of teenagers realized that they were being pursued by police they panicked and ran. Williams, who ended up with the toy pistol, heeded the demands of Officer Mars. Mars, allegedly fearing for his life, shot the 15-year-old boy twice. Williams was pronounced dead shortly thereafter. In the aftermath of the shooting, hundreds showed up at Williams' funeral and Mars was placed on desk duty. However, an internal MPD investigation cleared Mars of any wrongdoing. Williams' mother, Tahisha Brewer, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the city which was eventually settled out of court in 2013, after dragging on for nearly a decade (MPD 150 2020).

Mill City 5

In 2007, five Black police officers sued MPD for systemic racism and discrimination. The five officers, Medaria Arradondo, Donald Harris, Charlie Adams, Dennis Hamilton, and Lee Edwards, responded to attacks and discrimination against Black officers within the department. Within the lawsuit, the officers included several examples of the department "tolerating racist and discriminatory remarks by its white police officers and [engaging] in discriminatory conduct against its African American police officers" (MPD 150 2020). These examples included 12 Black police officers receiving death threats signed by the Ku Klux Klan, sent internally from within the department. They also demonstrated that Black officers were systematically denied opportunities for advancement and were disciplined at higher rates than white officers. The city reached a settlement with the five officers, awarding them $2 million and committing to the creation of a new unit focused on race, diversity, and discrimination. However, the City Council rejected the original settlement, and the City only paid $740,000 to the Mill City 5. Medaria Arradondo would go on to be appointed the first Black police chief of the MPD in 2017 (MPD 150 2020).

CeCe McDonald

CeCe McDonald was a 23-year-old Black trans woman who studied fashion at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. On the evening of June 5, 2011, McDonald and several friends were on their way to the grocery store. As they walked, several patrons standing outside the Schooner Tavern (2901 27th Avenue South, extant) began yelling racist and transphobic slurs at the group. They then attacked McDonald, slamming a glass bottle over her head with force. McDonald, fearing for her life, defended herself with a pair of sewing scissors, stabbing Dean Schmitz. Schmitz, who had a swastika tattoo and was a proud white supremacist, later died from the injury. McDonald was charged with two counts of second-degree murder and her bail was set at $500,000. McDonald, fearful that the jury would never sympathize with her, accepted a plea deal and was sentenced to 41 months in a men's prison in St. Cloud. Activists across the country organized in solidarity with her through "Free CeCe" campaigns. McDonald was released after 19 months of incarceration – she spent the majority of that time in solitary confinement. Since her release, McDonald has been a leading voice for Black trans civil rights and police abolition nationally (MPD 150 2020; Pasulka 2012).

Terrance Franklin and Ivan Romero

On May 10, 2013, police responded to reports of a burglary near 27th Street and Lyndale Avenue South. They gave chase to Terrance Franklin, a 22-year-old Black man. Eventually, the police cornered Franklin in the basement of a nearby home. Police claimed that, upon entering the basement, Franklin attempted to escape by grabbing one of the officer's guns and shooting two officers in the legs. Officers Lucas Peterson and Mike Meath then each fired several rounds at Franklin, killing him. Franklin's family dispute this account, citing a cell phone video recorded across the street in which Franklin begging to be let go and the officers using racial slurs can be heard. Lucas Peterson already had 13 excessive force complaints filed against him and had killed another Black man, Christopher Burns, while he was in handcuffs. Officers called for backup and Officer Joshua Young, while en route, hit Ivan Romero and Joselin Torrejon-Villamil on a motorcycle. Romero died at the scene. Young did not confirm whether or

not there were vehicles in the intersection when he drove through. Despite this recklessness, he was not disciplined for the incident. Community members gathered three weeks later in protest, marching to downtown Minneapolis to demand accountability for all officers involved in both deaths. A grand jury declined to indict any of the officers involved in the death of Terrance Franklin. In May 2014, Franklin's family filed a wrongful death suit against the City (MPD 150 2020). Mary Moriarty, who was elected Hennepin County Attorney in 2022 on a platform that included prosecuting police for misconduct, has noted her interest in reopening the Franklin case. As of 2025, there have been no public updates from the Hennepin County Attorney's office with regard to the case (Vick 2023).

Jamar Clark

Early in the morning of November 15, 2015, RayAnn Hayes called 911 and requested paramedics. She had injured her ankle breaking up a fight at a party a few blocks away from the MPD's 4th Precinct. When paramedics arrived, they placed Haynes in an ambulance. When police arrived moments later, they asked Hayes' 24-year-old boyfriend, Jamar Clark, to step away from the ambulance. When he did not immediately comply, Officers Mark Ringgenberg and Dustin Schwarze attempted to arrest Clark and wrestled him to the ground. Sixty-one seconds after they arrived, the officers shot Jamar Clark in the head. He was removed from life support on the evening of November 16 (Mannix 2015; MPD 150 2020).

Clark's death prompted community outcry and protest. Protesters occupied the 4th Precinct building and marched from James and Plymouth Avenues North to I-94 stopping traffic for hours. The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the FBI were tasked with the investigation of the shooting. They refused to release footage of the incident, prompting ongoing occupation of the police precinct as protesters demanded the video evidence be released. The protests continued to escalate, as the police forcibly removed the protesters from the precinct. The occupation outside the precinct on Plymouth Avenue continued to grow, even as officers began to use force in their attempts to break up the demonstration (Mannix 2015; MPD 150 2020).

The second week after the demonstrations began, white supremacist Allen Scarsella and three accomplices open fired on the protesters, shooting five people. Scarsella received a 15-year prison sentence. In response to the shooting, around 1,000 people marched on City Hall in the largest protest against police brutality in Minneapolis up to that point. The occupation of the precinct continued until December 3, at which point then-Mayor Betsy Hodges authorized the forceful removal of the protestors. Actions and demonstrations continued, however, as protesters shut down parts of the Mall of America and MSP Airport demanding that the Hennepin County Attorney charge and prosecute Schwarze and Ringgenberg, rather than send the case to a grand jury. In March 2016, then-Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman declined to bring charges against the officers, again prompting protests. The federal government also declined to bring charges and, by October 2016, Schwarze and Ringgenberg were returned to duty. In 2017, Jamar Clark's family sued the officers for violating Clark's civil rights. They settled with the City of Minneapolis in 2019 (Molmud 2021; MPD 150 2020).

Philando Castile

On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile was pulled over by the Falcon Heights Police near the Minnesota state fairgrounds. Castile's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, and her four-year-old daughter were also in the car. Castile informed the officer that he had a licensed firearm in his car before proceeding to retrieve his driver's license as the officer, Jeronimo Yanez, had requested. Yanez fired on Castile seven times at close range, hitting him five times. Castile died approximately 20 minutes later. Diamond Reynolds posted a live stream of the incident on Facebook, and it immediately drew national and international outrage. Protests began just three hours after the shooting and, as news of Castile's death spread, hundreds gathered outside the Governor's residence in St. Paul. After two days of peaceful protests and vigils, violence erupted between the police and the protestors. 102 people were arrested, and 21 officers were injured. While criminal charges were brought against Yanez, he was acquitted of all charges in 2017. It is believed to be the first time that a police officer in Minnesota was charged for an on-duty fatal shooting. Both Castile's family and Diamond Reynolds settled with the City of St. Anthony. Castile was an elementary school cafeteria manager. After his death, his mother Valerie Castile began advocating for free school lunches and donating to eliminate lunch debt at schools. She was instrumental in the passage of a free school lunch bill that was signed into law by Governor Tim Walz in 2023 (DeLong and Braunger 2017; Dernbach 2023; Smith 2017a, 2017b).

George Floyd

On May 25, 2020, in the midst of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, MPD responded to a call from Cup Foods (3759 Chicago Avenue, extant). The store's clerk said that a man, 46-year-old George Floyd, had paid for cigarettes with a counterfeit $20 bill. Police officers Derek Chauvin, Thomas Lane, Tou Thao, and J. Alexander Kueng responded to the call. The officers demanded that Floyd get out of his car and then handcuffed him and attempted to put him in the back of a squad car. Floyd repeatedly asked them not to put him in the car, informing the officers that he is claustrophobic. Floyd was pulled through the other side of the vehicle and was placed on the ground by police. Three of the officers then proceeded to pin Floyd to the ground, while Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck. George Floyd repeatedly told officers that he could not breathe. Chauvin remained kneeling on his neck for nine minutes and 29 seconds, despite Officer Keung being unable to find Floyd's pulse after six minutes (CNN 2021; New York Times 2022; Taylor 2021; Waxman 2020).

The incident was captured on video by a witness, who shared it on social media. The following day, police chief Medaria Arradondo announced that the four officers involved had been fired and he called for an FBI investigation into the discrepancies between the official police report and the video evidence. Protestors took to the streets that evening and the protests continued throughout the following days. The police responded violently with tear gas and rubber bullets, while individuals, including both local protestors and people who had traveled to the city amidst the unrest, employed arson and vandalism against nearby businesses, primarily along Lake Street in South Minneapolis. On May 28, Governor Tim Walz deployed the Minnesota National Guard in response to a request from Mayor Jacob Frey. By that time, the protests in Minneapolis set off a national, and then international, protest movement in

defense of Black lives. Police and protestor confrontations erupted at protests around the country, frequently becoming violent. Curfews were imposed, including in Minneapolis, and the National Guard was deployed in over two dozen states (CNN 2021; New York Times 2022; Taylor 2021; Waxman 2020).

On May 29, Derek Chauvin was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Chauvin agreed to plead guilty to the charges, but the US Attorney General, William P. Barr, rejected the deal which had come with a promise of no federal charges. Chauvin already had a record of at least 22 complaints against him. In April of 2021, Chauvin was convicted of second- and third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter and sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. Thomas Lane, J. Alexander Kueng, and Tao Thao were charged with aiding and abetting the killing of George Floyd (CNN 2021; New York Times 2022; Taylor 2021; Waxman 2020).

Instances of police violence in Minneapolis and its surrounding suburbs have persisted after the murder of George Floyd. Some of the most notable examples include the killings of Duante Wright and Amir Locke. In April 2021, 26-year-old Duante Wright was shot and killed during a traffic stop when Brooklyn Center police officer Kim Potter allegedly mistook her service pistol for her Taser. The killing, which occurred just under a year after the murder of George Floyd, sparked protests that led Governor Walz to impose a curfew and mobilize the Minnesota National Guard (Sepic et al. 2021). In February 2022, Minneapolis police shot and killed Amir Locke while executing a no-knock warrant. Locke, who was not the subject of the warrant, was asleep on the couch within the apartment and shot within seconds of the police entering. Police body camera footage showed Locke laying on the couch, covered by a blanket, and holding a pistol as he removed the blanket in response to the noise. He did not point the gun at police before being shot. Locke had no past criminal history and was in legal possession of the gun he was holding at the time of the incident (Chappell 2022).

Reclamation

Just as segregation, discrimination, and the struggle for civil rights have been constant throughout history, and in the present-day, for African Americans, Black Americans, and African immigrants in Minneapolis, reclamation and a continuous push for equal status have also been ever present.

Green Book

In 1936, postal worker Victor Green published the first edition of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, with assistance from his wife, Alma. It would later be known as *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* as well as the "Green Book" for short. Although it wasn't the first travel guide for African Americans, it became the most popular and grew to national renown. Catering to the emerging Black middle class who had increased access to automobiles, the Green Book identified places where Black travelers would be welcome. This included places to stay (motels, campsites, and tourist homes), restaurants, bars, tailors, service stations, liquor stores, and more. The Green Book was an essential tool for Black mobility, offering some assurance of safety, especially as folks traveled to and from the Jim Crow South to visit family. The writers also shared travel tips and wrote articles on topics relevant to the time. When Victor

retired as publisher in 1952, Alma took the helm. The final issue was published in 1966-67, two years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in public accommodations (National Park Service 2025; Sorin 2020:ix–xviii, 176–214; University of Virginia 2024h; Victor H. Green & Company 1939).

The first edition highlighted businesses in and around New York City, where the Greens lived. The content quickly expanded across the country and later globally, with readers submitting suggestions of places to include. Many, but not all, businesses were owned by Black people. In this way, the Greens helped promote Black-owned businesses and encourage consumers to patronize them. The first Minnesota listings appeared in the 1939 edition and included the Phyllis Wheatley House in Minneapolis. Over nearly 30 years of publication, approximately 87 sites in Minnesota were listed, most of which were in the Twin Cities. The Minneapolis sites were generally concentrated in Near North, Downtown, and Cedar-Riverside, with a few also in the Old Southside. One such location was the Boulevard Motel (5637 Lyndale Avenue South, extant), which was opened in 1953 and was included in the 1961 Green Book (under the name Boulevard Hotel) (Hennepin County Library 2025c; Victor H. Green & Company 1961). Today, less than a quarter of the sites in Minnesota remain standing, largely lost to freeway construction and urban renewal initiatives. In 2025, nearly a century after the first Green Book was published, the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder* launched the MSR Black Business Directory to promote Black-owned businesses across the state amidst growing attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (National Park Service 2025; Sorin 2020:ix–xviii, 176–214; University of Virginia 2024h; Victor H. Green & Company 1939).

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement began in 2013 and was started by three Black female organizers – Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan Cullors, and Opal Tometi. The movement began in the immediate aftermath of the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012 but grew in scope following the killings of Michael Brown in Missouri and Eric Garner in New York in 2014. The Black Lives Matter movement protests systemic racism and the ongoing deaths of Black people at the hands of the police. Black Lives Matter Minneapolis started in 2014 in response to the death of Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio. In 2015, the death of Jamar Clark in Minneapolis and the resulting occupation of the 4th Precinct for 18 days galvanized the local movement (Henry 2023; Wortham 2020).

Several organizers of Black Lives Matter Minneapolis would go on to found Black Visions, including Kandace Montgomery and Miski Noor. Black Visions is an “unapologetically Black organization with a Black queer feminist lens” tackling intersectional anti-Black policies and police abolition while prioritizing community care (Wortham 2020). Examples of Black Visions actions include protesting against police presence at the city’s pride parade, increases to the police budget, and light-rail policies that discriminate against poorer residents. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, Black Visions played a crucial role in the ensuing protests and pushing for commitments from Mayor Jacob Frey and the City Council to defund the police (Black Visions 2024; Wortham 2020).

George Floyd Protests

As many as 26 million Americans nationwide participated in the protests that followed Floyd's murder, reinvigorating the Black Lives Matter movement and pushing people to confront white supremacy and anti-Black racism around the country and the globe. The protests initiated a national dialogue about the role of the police, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the aftermath of the killing and protests, the US Justice Department investigated the police practices in Minneapolis that led to the killing of George Floyd. The report was released in 2023 and alleged systemic abuses and discrimination by MPD. It found that a significant portion of the police shootings from 2016 to 2022 were unconstitutional uses of deadly force. The investigation resulted in a court-enforced consent decree to attempt to ensure that MPD operates lawfully and without discrimination (Department of Justice 2023; Fourth Judicial District Court 2023; Smith et al. 2023).

George Floyd Square

Following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police in 2020 in the intersection of 38th Street East and Chicago Avenue, the site became the organizing hub of the Minneapolis protests. The site became known as George Floyd Square and was declared by some as an autonomous zone. Barricades were placed on the streets at 37th Street East, 39th Street East, Elliot Avenue South, and Columbus Avenue South. The Square quickly became a gathering spot and site for mutual aid and organizing amidst the protests and the ongoing pandemic. Visitors to the Square brought offerings – art, flowers, tokens, etc. – which caretakers from the Square maintained and archived. Organizers issued a set of 24 "demands for justice" focused on racial justice and police accountability before they would be willing to reopen George Floyd Square. In 2021, the City reopened the intersection to traffic and began efforts to re-envision George Floyd Square. In 2023, the City purchased The People's Way (3744 Chicago Avenue), a former Speedway gas station located at the intersection, which they hope to provide to a non-profit to redevelop the space. The area is home to several community-maintained public art installations, including a Black Power fist at the center of the Square designed by Jordan Powell-Karis, the Say Their Names Cemetery by Connor Wright and Anna Barber located at the corner of 37th Street East and Park Avenue South, and "Mourning Passage" by Mari Mansfield, which is a list of names of people killed by the police that is annually repainted onto Chicago Avenue north of 38th Street East. Smaller fists were made by Powell-Karis in collaboration with community and are located at the four intersections within one block of 38th and Chicago (Meet on the Streets 2020; Rise and Remember 2024; Winter 2024).

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 Preservation Overview

Historic preservation is a means of engaging with the past. It is a process through which to consider what is important to a community's history, negotiate the community's collective understanding of the past, and communicate that understanding to future generations. Historic preservation does not simply celebrate positive stories but also acknowledges difficult aspects of the past in service of informing the public.

Historic Designation

Designation is the keystone for future preservation efforts and requires a property to meet the criteria set forth through systematic preservation. To receive a formal designation, a property must fit into one or more federal, state, or local preservation frameworks. In addition, the property must be one of a recognized number of property types that are eligible for designation (building, structure, object, site, or district). This section provides an overview of the three different levels of designation for a historic property—national, state, and local—and discusses the relevant laws and regulations for a property's designation at each level. It then describes property types eligible for designation.

Federal Designation

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) is legislation for the protection of cultural resources in the US. The NHPA establishes the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), "the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation," as well as a SHPO for each state, and a Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for some federally recognized tribes (National Park Service 2024a). To qualify for listing in the NRHP, a property must possess significance under one or more of the following criteria:

A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Certain kinds of properties are not typically eligible for listing in the NRHP. Under the criteria considerations, properties such as cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures moved from their original

locations, reconstructed historic buildings, commemorative properties, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not considered eligible unless they are integral parts of historic districts that do meet the criteria, or if they fall under one of the categories below:

A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historic importance; or
B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
D. A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
E. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
F. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
G. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

If a property is determined to possess historic significance under one of these criteria, its integrity is evaluated using the seven aspects of integrity. The National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service 1997) identifies the aspects of integrity, summarized as follows:

- Location—The place where the property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Setting—The physical environment/character of the place where the property played its historical role.
- Design—How well the property retains combinations of elements creating its form, plan, space, structure, and style.
- Materials—How physical elements were combined at specific time periods and in particular patterns to create the property.
- Workmanship—How well a property retains physical evidence of the crafts of a particular time period in history.
- Feeling—The combination of the property's physical features that express the historic sense of a particular time period.
- Association—The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

If a property is determined to possess historical significance under one or more criteria, retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance, and meets the criteria considerations, the property is determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Other Federal Designations

A property eligible for listing in the NRHP can also be designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) if it possesses national significance. NHL criteria are similar to NRHP criteria, but more stringent, since NHLs are meant to "illustrate and commemorate our collective past and help us to understand our national identity" (National Park Service 1999). For example, Historic Fort Snelling—"once the farthest outpost of the US in the homeland of the Dakota Indians," in addition to being an NRHP-listed historic district, is also an NHL (Minnesota Historical Society 2024e).

In addition to the NRHP, NPS manages other designations for preserving the nation's cultural resources—in fact, over half of NPS areas preserve places or commemorate persons, events, and activities. National monuments are intended to preserve nationally significant resources but are typically smaller than national parks. National historic sites (often related to military history) and national historical parks (often larger or more complex sites) also exist. National memorials are most often primarily commemorative (National Park Service 2003). Grand Portage National Monument, for example, aims to "explore the partnership of the Grand Portage Ojibwe and the North West Company during the North American fur trade" (National Park Service 2024b).

State Designation

Chapter 138 of the Minnesota Statutes (MS) includes legislation for the protection of historic properties, including the Minnesota Historic Sites Act (MS 138.661-138.6691) and the Minnesota Historic Districts Act (MS 138.71-138.75). Other state laws relating to preservation and cultural resources include the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (MS 138.31-138.42), Municipal Heritage Preservation (MS 471.193), the Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act (MS 307), and the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) (MS 116B).

The Minnesota Historic Sites Act establishes the State Historic Sites Network (Network) and the State Register of Historic Places (State Register) and requires that state agencies consult with SHPO before undertaking or licensing projects that may affect properties on the Network, the State Register, or the NRHP. The Network and State Register are lists of historic sites and places, respectively, that have been determined significant to the state's history. The Minnesota Historic Districts Act designates certain historic districts throughout the state and allows local governing bodies to create commissions to maintain architectural design review control over these areas.

Local Designation

In 1972, the City of Minneapolis adopted a local Historic Preservation ordinance to encourage and allow for the study, designation, and protection of properties significant to the City's built and cultural heritage. The Heritage Preservation Commission was established at this time. Title 23, Chapter 599, of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, adopted in 2001, comprises the City's existing Heritage Preservation Ordinance and codifies the City's Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), authorizes the City to designate local landmarks and local historic districts, presents criteria for eligibility for designation as a landmark or historic district, and authorizes the HPC to review applications for work proposed at locally designated properties. This includes review of repairs, alterations, new construction, and demolition to locally designated properties and establishment of design guidelines. Wrecking permits and proposed demolition of potential historic resources are also subject to HPC review (City of Minneapolis 2001).

Properties must be nominated to be considered for local landmark or local historic district designation. The HPC considers the following criteria in determining whether a property is worthy of designation as a local landmark or local historic district because of its historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance (City of Minneapolis 2001):

1. The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.
2. The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.
3. The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.
4. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
5. The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.
6. The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.
7. The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. Its location is the site of a significant historic event.

Property Types

The information presented in this section is focused on the potential for properties to be eligible for the NRHP. As described above, the African American community in Minneapolis has lacked equal access to the resources possessed by white communities, leading to fewer opportunities for Black people to design, build, own, or occupy architecturally significant buildings and structures. With relatively few historic resource studies conducted to identify places associated with African American heritage, historically significant properties have also been overlooked. In addition, many of the properties associated with the African American community were destroyed by urban renewal efforts and freeway

construction in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the lack of equal access has created scenarios across the city wherein Black Minneapolitans have had fewer opportunities for property ownership and, therefore, have not always been able to control how a property has been physically maintained and/or preserved.

Based on the research conducted in the development of this Context Study, it appears that few of the extant properties associated with the African American community's history are over 50 years of age, but the planned architectural history reconnaissance survey will verify this fact. Unless a property is proven to convey exceptional significance within the last 50 years, it is not considered eligible for the NRHP. In the future, information may come to light that identifies more extant properties associated with African American heritage.

Due to the City's restrictive covenants, African Americans had few options of places to live in Minneapolis, and so, often resided in industrial or economically depressed areas. Historic properties in under-resourced areas have often been the first buildings slated for demolition when urban renewal or civic infrastructure projects are planned. Examples of historic buildings associated with Minneapolis' African American community demolished over the past half-century include many of the residences, businesses, and institutions in the downtown Minneapolis, Seven Corners, North Minneapolis, and Old Southside neighborhoods, the primary concentrations of Black Minneapolitan life. Nonetheless, a variety of historically significant properties remains.

NRHP-eligible and listed properties generally fall into one of five broad categories:

- Building—Created principally to shelter any form of human activity. Examples: house, barn, church, hotel.
- Structure—Functional constructions made for purposes other than creating human shelter. Examples: bridge, highway, fence.
- Object—Constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed; may be movable but is associated with a specific setting or environment. Examples: monument, sculpture, fountain. (Note that objects relocated to a museum are not eligible for listing in the NRHP.)
- Site—The location of a significant event, occupation, or activity; or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archaeological value. It does not need to be marked by physical remains, but documentation should be provided to confirm its location. Examples: natural features having cultural significance, ruins of a building or structure, community site, ceremonial site.
- District—A significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development (National Park Service 1997:4–5).

In particular, properties may be eligible as traditional cultural properties (TCPs) if they possess traditional cultural significance. According to NPS *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, a traditional cultural property is one that is "associated with the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are (a) rooted in the community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. They can also include locations "where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity" (National Park Service 1998).

Buildings are the most common type of property associated with the African American community in Minneapolis and are discussed further below. TCPs are described in more detail as well. A reconnaissance survey and additional historical research are necessary to identify which properties and property types are extant, and to identify other property types that may be eligible for listing in the NRHP for their significance related to Minneapolis' African American community.

Buildings

Residences

A residential property is any building that has housing as its primary purpose. Common residential properties associated with the African American community in Minneapolis consist primarily of single and multi-family dwellings, including houses, apartments, boarding houses, and residential hotels. Residences significant for their association with individuals, events, or themes important to Minneapolis' African American history must be extant and may include the residences of individuals who have played an important role in history at the local, state, or national level, such as Nellie Stone Johnson (labor activist and political leader), A. B. Cassius (labor activist and prominent entrepreneur), Archie Givens, Sr. (entrepreneur, community leader, and philanthropist) or Lorenzo D. "Pete" Williams (architect and activist). Residences may also be significant for their association with a particular theme, such as the residence where Arthur and Edith Lee experienced harassment for moving into a predominantly white neighborhood in which residents resisted the arrival of Black neighbors, or the Findley Place Apartments, an urban renewal housing complex designed by Lorenzo Williams, acclaimed for its design at the time of its construction.

Religious Institutions

Religious properties such as churches are eligible for listing in the NRHP if they derive their primary significance from their historical importance, or architectural or artistic distinction. Church properties related to Minneapolis' African American community, such as Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, St. Peter's AME Church, and Zion Baptist Church, whether or not they are currently used for religious purposes, may be eligible for listing as well.

Institutional and Commercial Properties

Institutional properties include civic, political, and government institutions (e.g., community centers) and private assembly buildings (e.g., social and fraternal halls and clubs). Commercial properties include buildings such as stores, offices, restaurants, and depots. These buildings may be significant for their role in the community as Black-owned or operated institutions and businesses, or because they employed significant portions of the African American community.

Community organizations like the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center and the Sabathani Community Center/Bryant Junior High School, political organizations, and social clubs were all important community resources. These places provided respite from a racist society, promoting cultural values and providing access to services, learning opportunities, and recreation. Likewise, educational institutions such as Central High School and North High School played critical roles in the development of African American youth in Minneapolis.

Commercial and institutional buildings may also be significant for their social and economic impact, and/or events important to African American history that occurred at those locations. For example, the commercial buildings at the intersection of 38th Street East and 4th Avenue South formed the heart of a vibrant and successful commercial corridor and residential neighborhood. The Young Bros Barber Shop/Satin Doll Salon at 1918 Plymouth Avenue North served as both a commercial space, but also a community gathering spot. Likewise, demonstrations and occupations of administrative buildings on the University of Minnesota campus led to changes in the university's policies and programs with regard to Black students, faculty, and staff.

Architecturally Significant Properties

A building may be significant for its architectural style or construction or if it represents the work of a master. Examples include the Luther T. Prince House, the Holland Hi-Rise, and the Chateau, all prominent works by Black architect Lorenzo Williams.

Non-Extant Properties

Due to lack of available financial resources, prevalence of urban renewal projects, and historically racist centering of white history in formal historic property designations, many properties significant to Black history in Minneapolis have been demolished. While non-extant properties can technically be eligible for the NRHP if the sites on which they were located possess historical significance, making the case for eligibility within the NRHP framework requires a significant amount of documentary evidence and can be difficult to achieve. Other forms of historical documentation and commemoration of such properties may be easier to achieve and still preserve the memory of significant and important people and events. Documentation and commemoration can include Minnesota Property Inventory forms, StoryMaps, house histories, journal articles, museum exhibits, walking tours, public art, and more.

Traditional Cultural Properties

Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) are properties eligible for the NRHP for their traditional cultural significance. This significance is derived from "beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice" (National Park Service 1998). NPS provides the following examples of TCPs:

- An urban neighborhood that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group, and that reflects its beliefs and practices.
- A location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.

For Minneapolis' African American community, TCPs might include traditional outdoor gathering places, places of cultural importance, and places of protest or organizing.

Social, Economic, and Environmental Benefits of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation connects the past to the present, providing perspective on where we came from and where we are today. When approached with a people-centered focus, preservation can achieve multiple social, economic, and environmental benefits that improve overall quality of life.

Successful preservation:

- Creates a strong sense of place
- Knits together communities around shared values
- Improves quality of life for residents while attracting visitors
- Support environmental sustainability through adaptive use of existing buildings, while leverages existing materials, conserves sustainable methods of construction, and maintains materials with lower potential emissions than building with new materials
- Is a strong tool for economic development, creating jobs (in some cases more than new development), stimulating investment, and contributing to the tax base
- Promotes incremental, property-by-property reinvestment as a stable, economically viable strategy over the long term

Common funding and partnership strategies to support the socioeconomic benefits of preserving Minneapolis' African American culture and history are described in this section. Specific ideas identified during community meetings are included in Section 3.2.

Funding Sources and Incentives for Historic Preservation

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program supports the rehabilitation of historic and older buildings and structures "of every period, size, style, and type" (National Park Service 2024c). The program is administered by the NPS with the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with SHPOs. The program's tax incentives attract private investment, generate jobs, enhance property values, and increase state and local government revenues, as well as assist in the development of moderate and low-income housing in historic buildings (National Park Service 2024c). The tax incentives offered are:

- A 20% tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of certified historic structures; and
- A 10% tax credit for the rehabilitation of non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936.

NPS provides the following definitions for terminology used above:

- A certified historic structure is a building that is listed individually in the NRHP or a building that is located in a registered historic district and certified by the NPS as contributing to the historic significance of that district. A registered historic district is any district listed in the NRHP. A state or local historic district may also qualify as a registered historic district if the district and the enabling statute are certified by the Secretary of the Interior.
- A certified rehabilitation is a rehabilitation of a certified historic structure that is approved by the NPS as being consistent with the historic character of the property and, where applicable, the district in which it is located (National Park Service 2024c).

For buildings that have not yet been listed in the NRHP, the NPS provides building owners the opportunity to submit Part 1 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application to request a preliminary determination of significance, which allows NPS to review Part 2 of the application describing the proposed rehabilitation. If a preliminary determination of significance is made, the owner is then responsible for having the property listed in a timely manner (National Park Service 2024c).
The Minneapolis 2040 plan identified the use of federal and state Historic Preservation Tax credits as preservation strategies for rehabilitating NRHP-eligible or listed income-producing properties and increasing affordable housing by encouraging the conversion of historic buildings such as warehouses and commercial buildings into housing. These credits can be used in combination with Federal New Market Tax Credits (NMTC) and/or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). The NMTC Program provides incentives for private investors to invest in business and real estate in low-income communities in the US. The LIHTC Program provides states and tax-credit providing agencies the equivalent of $10 billion in annual budget authority for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households (City of Minneapolis 2020; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2024; U.S. Department of the Treasury 2024).

National Park Service Grants and Loans

The National Park Service oversees a robust variety of grant and loan programs for preservation, which are funded by the Federal Historic Preservation Fund. Grant programs include African American Civil Rights, Save America's Treasures, Underrepresented Communities, Paul Bruhn Revitalization Grants, History of Equal Rights, HBCU Grants, Semiquincentennial Grants, Tribal Heritage, and Disaster Recovery. Each program offers funds for different project types, often including bricks and mortar and/or property documentation (National Park Service 2024d).

African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund (Action Fund), housed within the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), offers grants designed to steward cultural assets, document and identify Black heritage places, and invite new voices and perspectives to the preservation movement. The Action Fund has raised approximately $150 million and supported 304 preservation projects nationally, with national grants that have made a total investment of $27 million since 2018. Grants made from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund will range from $50,000 to $150,000 (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2024). The Action Fund also offers funding on preservation work within several specific themes, including the Descendant and Family Stewardship Initiative, Conserving Black Modernism, HBCU Cultural Heritage Stewardship, and Preserving Black Churches. NTHP offers a broad variety of smaller, specifically targeted preservation grants through 17 different programs (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2024).

AARP Community Challenge Grants

While not a fund specifically for historic preservation, the AARP Community Challenge Grant Programs funds initiatives and projects that can help preserve community, whether through the built environment, storytelling, and/or placemaking. The AARP Community Challenge grant programs are part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative, that helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. Grants offered are intended to help communities make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress, with a wide range of grants available from $500 to $50,000 (AARP 2023).

Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credits

The Minnesota Historic Structure Rehabilitation Tax Credit offers a 20 percent tax credit for qualified historic rehabilitations. This program parallels the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program. It also offers project investors an option of a grant in lieu of a credit, whichever option best suits a developer's tax situation. The program requires an application with the State Historic Preservation Office before project work begins (Minnesota Department of Administration 2023).

Legacy Grants

The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund portion of the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment allocates 19.75 percent of sales tax revenue to support arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage. One of the ways in which funding is disbursed is through Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants (Legacy Grants). Legacy Grants fund a variety of culture and history projects throughout the state, and offer history and culture organizations, as well as municipalities, the opportunity to further their goals in areas such as historical preservation, access, and programming. Eligible project categories include heritage tourism projects, such as heritage tourism plans, wayfinding for historic resources, and walking and mobile tour development; interpretation and public education projects, such as exhibits, historical markers, tour brochures, and the development of educational curricula; and historic preservation projects, such as historic preservation survey, inventory, and evaluation, and the preparation of NRHP nominations (Minnesota Historical Society 2024f). Development of this report was funded by a Legacy Grant.

Partnership Assessment and Priorities

Community and Cultural Organizations

Various community and cultural organizations such as the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery (MAAHMG), NAACP, Urban League, and the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center possess in-depth knowledge and understanding of the community's history as well as its current strengths and resources. These organizations can leverage extensive networks, both within and beyond the community itself, and, by partnering with one another, are able to utilize each organization's resources and efforts to achieve wider successes.

Individuals

Individuals working to promote community culture, history, health, and values, including local artists, musicians, writers, activists, and historians, are key resources and potential partners as well. Public outreach geared to individuals and the organizations with which they are associated is a powerful tool to support preservation education and advocacy.

Educational Institutions

Partnering with local schools, colleges, and universities offers the opportunity to share expertise, networks, and resources, as well as provide students with valuable opportunities to learn and acquire skills while increasing their knowledge of community history and fostering community pride.

Rethos

The mission of Rethos, the statewide historic preservation nonprofit in Minnesota is "to lead and inspire people to connect with historic places, promoting community vitality." Rethos leads preservation advocacy at the state level; runs the state's Main Street program; offers free lectures, classes, and

events; provides historic rehabilitation loans; and offers fee-for-service assistance to support the use, reuse, and preservation of historic buildings and sites, including educational and training opportunities, planning and advocacy, and real estate services. Rethos also works with community organizations to help educate property owners about the importance of preserving the historic fabric of the city, and about the economic benefits of having a property designated at the local, state, or national level (Rethos 2024).

Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery

The Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery (MAAHMG) "preserves, documents and highlights the achievements, contributions and experiences of African Americans in Minnesota." In addition to running the museum and gallery, the MAAHMG publishes articles, maintains an archive, and provides reading circles and art classes (Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery 2024).

Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) is a multifaceted resource, providing state and local history services, overseeing funding opportunities such as Legacy Grants, offering programming and educational resources for a variety of historical themes and topics, and serving as a repository for the state's history. MNHS has sponsored the Minnesota Black History Project (1970-1975), Our Gathering Places Oral History Project (1997-1998), and Black Minnesotans Project (1989-1991). It maintains extensive collections on African American history statewide, including a variety of materials on Minneapolis' African American community. These include books, articles, and academic works on the Black community, organizational records of Black social clubs and churches, and the digitized oral history transcripts and audio files of the oral history projects mentioned above.

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was established by state statue in 1969 to spearhead preservation initiatives across Minnesota. SHPO has a range of professional staff that can provide guidance with regard to some of the state and federal preservation programs mentioned above and maintains the Minnesota Statewide Historic Inventory Portal (MnSHIP), which serves as a public repository for historic properties. The Minnesota Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2022-2032, prioritizes work with traditionally underrepresented communities.

Hennepin History Museum

Located in Minneapolis, the Hennepin History Museum runs a history museum, historical archive, technology conversion lab, and a thrice-a-year magazine. They also publish digital articles related to Hennepin County history and curate an online art collection (Hennepin History Museum 2024).

Preserve Minneapolis

Formed by professionals and community members in 2003, Preserve Minneapolis "promotes and celebrates the city's historic architectural and cultural resources through advocacy, education, and public engagement." Preserve Minneapolis works in partnership with private owners, community organizations, and public agencies to preserve and share Minneapolis' cultural and heritage resources. Preserve Minneapolis offers tours and lectures, hosts an annual Preservation Awards events, and advocates for preservation at the local level (Preserve Minneapolis 2024).

Professional Design and Planning Organizations

Prominent national design and planning organizations focused on the built environment have a local presence in Minneapolis and may be useful partners in advancing preservation goals. These include, but are not limited to, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, the American Institute of Architects, and the American Planning Association.

Threats to Historic Resources

There is a finite number of resources in Minneapolis associated with its African American history and culture, and many are irreplaceable. Underlying these threats is the fact that, despite an African American presence in Minneapolis for over 150 years, insufficient resources have been committed to preservation. These resources face a variety of common threats, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Lack of direct and deep engagement by City departments and commissions with its African American community.
- Systemic underrepresentation across the field of preservation, including among students, consultants, government and agency staff, and non-profit staff.
- Lack of awareness and understanding about the significance of a property, primarily because of lack of official documentation and/or lack of recognition of different methods of historical documentation.
- Development pressures.
- Historical tendency to prioritize high architectural styles, which are often associated with well-resourced communities.
- Lack of reuse opportunities or lack of resources to implement reuse.
- Neglect or intentional destruction, sometimes leading to demolition.
- Lack of community awareness of government and legal processes and resources to enable preservation.
- Inequitable access to capital and other resources to enable preservation.

3.2 Community Recommendations

In addition to the above overview of the historic preservation process as it applies to this Context Study, this section summarizes recommendations that emerged through conversations had with members of the African American Heritage Work Group (AAHWG) over the course of this project. A number of issues identified by the AAHWG as being most urgent, reflecting community input, are presented below:

- Record oral histories from community elders
- Prioritize the preservation of properties that have been identified as historically significant, or are potentially historically significant, and are under threat
- Prioritize the needs/input of community within the planning process to avoid repeating the harms of the past
- Consider ways in which preservation can provide direct and indirect material benefits to the community (such as through heritage tourism), in recognition of the fact that token gestures are insufficient and continued investment is essential
- Consider ways to recognize African American heritage beyond formal preservation documentation; conduct sustained community engagement to determine appropriate methods to connect historically significant sites across the city
- Do not limit recognition of the community's history to simple signage
- Enable community members to exercise power/agency within planning and preservations processes; work to improve regulations to enable better community participation; ensure that there are representatives of the Black community involved in every stage of the planning process
- Collaborate with allies across all groups on future efforts
- The City should continue and expand community engagement as a result of this study so that the information contained herein can be utilized in a variety of ways
- Conduct further research on and consider the intersectionality of identities that converge with African American heritage, including, but not limited to, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation

3.3 Priorities for Future Work

Priorities for future preservation-specific work should reflect the community recommendations above. Some community members may prefer to lead future work related to the preservation of their community's heritage. In instances when such work is not led by community members, their input and directives should be primary priorities for the City, preservation practitioners, historians, and other organizations and individuals engaged in work elevating African American history and culture in Minneapolis. Given the community recommendations established above, a list of potential priorities is included below. This list simply provides recommended starting points and is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Record oral histories of community leaders and elders still living.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** MNHS; Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery; University of Minnesota; historians; historically Black churches
- Continue to build a comprehensive list of properties associated with Black Minneapolis history.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** The City of Minneapolis has already been leading it, with significant contributions from community members, historians, and preservation practitioners.
- Identify endangered properties or properties in need of maintenance, restoration, or rehabilitation.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** The City of Minneapolis has already done some of this work but relies on public notification. The City may be aware of the condition of some properties, but the information is not comprehensive. Based on the current system, community input is essential.
- Formally document property histories through designation studies, inventory forms, National Register applications, etc.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** Anyone! While preservation and cultural resource consultants most often develop the formal documentation for historic properties, the State Historic Preservation Office does not require that the documentation be completed by a professional consultant.
- Document and demonstrate property histories for both extant and non-extant properties through research, articles, MNopedia entries, exhibits, grant-funded commemoration projects.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** Anyone! While academics, historians, and preservation practitioners most often document history through these channels, anyone with an interest can research, write, or develop programs or strategies for property documentation and commemoration.
- Engage youth and other burgeoning historians in preservation practice and job training related to the professionalization of history and preservation.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** City of Minneapolis; MNHS; Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery; University of Minnesota; Hennepin History Museum; cultural resources management consultant companies
- Continue to build upon/expand this Context Study with additional research and content.
    - **Who could partner in this effort?** Anyone! While academics, historians, and preservation practitioners may be needed to assist with archival research, writing, and technical application, community knowledge and input is essential.
- Explore how the information included in this context study can be incorporated into K-12 curriculums.

- **Who could partner in this effort?** Minneapolis Public Schools; professional educators; historians

3.4 Avenues for Further Research

In addition to the organizations, archives, and repositories outlined above, there are several additional avenues for further research on Black history in Minneapolis:

- Research Institutions and Collections:
  - Hennepin County Library's John F. Glanton Collection, the Reverend Henry Botts, Sr. Collection, and the B. Robert 'Bob' Lewis Collection
  - University of Minnesota Libraries' Department of Archives and Special Collections (ASC)
    - Givens Collection of African American Literature and Life
  - University of Minnesota Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center (UROC)
  - Minnesota Digital Library
  - Umbra Search African American History (online repository)
  - Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery
- Explore partnerships with historically Black churches, as they hold significant amounts of community knowledge that may not be documented elsewhere
- Conduct additional oral history documentation
- Engage with community elders and descendants/family members of individuals identified in the context study to expand research
- Further document the African American community connections between Minneapolis and other locations in Minnesota, such as Duluth, Hastings, St. Paul, St. Cloud, Fargo-Moorhead, and Fergus Falls
- Further research into the use of religious, public, and commercial spaces (e.g. Foster's Sweet Shoppe) for the purposes of political and community organizing
- Further research into the accessibility of higher education institutions, aside from the University of Minnesota, for Black students during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Further explore the legacy of Black students who attended the University of Minnesota's Law School and subsequently rose to prominence as influential activists
  - Similarly, explore whether or not the University of Minnesota's Law School was a particular draw for Black arrivals during the late nineteenth century as a means of upward mobility
- Conduct further research related to recent immigrant populations to recognize the diversity of experience in Minneapolis and identify significant properties related to those communities

    - Further research and engagement with knowledge keepers in East African immigrant communities, such as the Somali Museum of Minnesota
- Work with community members on the possible identification of TCPs and cultural landscapes
- The following individuals were identified as part of the 2020 community engagement study but, due to time constraints, could not be explored further in this Context Study. The authors hope that their stories can be added in the future:
    - Hallie Hendrieth Smith; Leslie Redmond; Angela Rose Myers; Rose Brewer; Dr. August Nims; Benjamin Mchie; James and Myrtle Thomas; Lillian D. Anthony; Harry "Spike" Moss; Vivian Jenkins Nelson; Clarissa Rogers Walker; Harry Davis, Jr.; Mel Reeves; Thornton Jones (aka Pharaoh Black); Daniel Bergin; Jerry Holt; Tony Hughes; T. Mychael Rambo; August Wilson; Doris Hines; Davu Seru; Pete Rhodes; Shirley Witherspoon; Michael Bland; Jellybean Johnson; Jon Jon Scott; Derrick Stevens; Todd Wright; Morris Eugene Day; Alexander O'Neal; Percy Hughes; Rockie Robbins; Irv Williams; Morris Wilson; PaviElle French; Bruce Henry; Tonia Hughes; Maurice Jacox; Willie Walker; Gwen Matthews; Roberta Davis; Jeralyn Steele; Maurice McKinnies; Mojo Buford; Sonny Knight; Jimmy Lawrence; Lothario Day; Darnell Davis; Stacey Jones; Debbie Duncan; Anthony Cox; Sanford Moore; Bobby Lyle; Oliver Lyle; Robert Robinson; I Self Devine (Chaka Mkali); P.O.S. (Stefon Leron Alexander); Chastity Brown; Lizzo; Mankwe Ndosi; Coventry Royster Cowens; Tina Burnside; Leesa Kelly; Roger and DeAnna Cummings; Clint Hewitt; James Garrett, Jr.; Demaris Hollingsworth; Mohammed Lawal
- Additional individuals suggested by the AAHWG:
    - Donald "Bill" McMoore; Greg McMoore; James Curry; Minister Dr. Ora Hokes; Brian Kelley; Beverly Propes; Mahmoud El-Kati; Verlena Matey-Keke; Russell Curry; Willie Dominguez; Anita Urvina-Davis; Susan Bellecourt; Craig Rice; Louis Alemayehu; Theartrice "T" Williams; John S. Wright; Debra Stone; George Roberts (Homewood Studios); Vusi & Makeda Zulu; Gwen Fraction; Azaniah Little; Earl Bowman, Jr.
- Additional individuals and topics suggested by members of the public:
    - Pastor Curtis Herron; Gleason Glover; Doroty Woolfork; Randy Staten; Garry Sudduth; Richard Green; William D. Green; and Camp Parsons (affiliated with Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House).

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