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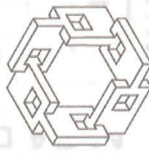
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# The Southside's African-American Heritage Tour

## Walking Tour

Ithaca, New York



Aunt Elsie Brooks, born a slave in Maryland, came to Dryden in 1812. After New York abolished slavery in 1827, she lived with her husband at 24 Wheat Street, and worked as a washerwoman. When she died in 1875, over 800 people attended her funeral at St. James A.M.E. Zion church.

# The Southside's African-American Heritage Tour

## Walking Tour

Ithaca, New York

The Southside neighborhood has an African-American heritage that dates back 180 years. From the founding of the St. James A.M.E. Zion Church in 1833, to the Underground Railroad, to the construction of the Southside Community Center in 1938, the Southside was "the place to be."

This walking tour provides an introduction to the Southside's history for native Ithacans and visitors alike. Some sites have been well documented, while relatively little is known about others; some have been torn down or replaced, while others have been restored. All of them tell stories of a past that neighborhood residents from diverse backgrounds are rediscovering.



### HISTORIC SITES

#### 1. St. James A.M.E. Zion Church 116 Wheat St. (116 Cleveland Ave.)

The St. James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was chartered in 1833 by a group of 18 African-Americans who withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church in protest. Harriett Tubman and Frederick Douglass are known to have visited St. James, which was an Underground Railroad station. Designated a national historic landmark in 1982, St. James is Ithaca's oldest remaining church structure.

#### 2. Home of Thomas Jackson 11 Wheat St. (111 Cleveland Ave.)

Born a slave in 1820, Thomas Jackson escaped from Virginia in 1842, and finally reached Ithaca in 1850. Soon thereafter, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed and he moved to Toronto for a brief time. Upon returning to Ithaca, Jackson worked as a gardener, farm hand, saw-miller, and general laborer. By 1860 he married Mary Ann, an escaped slave from Maryland who worked as a laundress.

#### 3. Home of Zachariah Tyler 1 Wheat St. (109 Cleveland Ave.)

Zachariah Tyler served the 26th U.S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War. After the war he worked as a whitewasher and was pastor at the Wesleyan Methodist (Colored) Baptist Church, which was later renamed Calvary Baptist Church.

1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940

**SOUTHSIDE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE  
WALKING TOUR MAP**

**4. Southside Community Center  
305 South Plain St.**

From the 1920s through the Depression, members of the Frances Harper Women's Club ran the South Side House which was destroyed in the flood of 1935. Community members, local business leaders, and the Federal Work Progress Administration (WPA) collaborated to build the new Southside Community Center in 1938, which was dedicated by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The center offered after-school programs, sports and employment services, making Southside "the place to be." Today, the Center continues to serve Southside residents.

**5. Home of Levi and Ora Spaulding  
501 West Green St.**

Levi Spaulding was Ithaca's first African-American policeman. He served from 1919 until 1930, when he died in the line of duty after apprehending a murder suspect. Levi also operated a barbershop and Ora had a hair salon at the Cayuga House located at 501 West State St.

**6. Cooke Family Home  
515 West Green St.**

The Cooke family came to Ithaca from Virginia in the 1890s. The home has passed from mother to daughter ever since. The house was a stop on the Underground Railroad. African-American men who helped build the Ithaca to Owego railroad in the 1860s also boarded here.

**9. Forest City Lodge 180 (Black Elks Club)  
536 W. Green St.**

First located at 119 Tioga St., the Black Elks Club relocated to 536 West Green St. at the corner of South Corn St. in the 1950s.

**10. Ten Commandments Houses (demolished)  
200 block of Meadow St.**

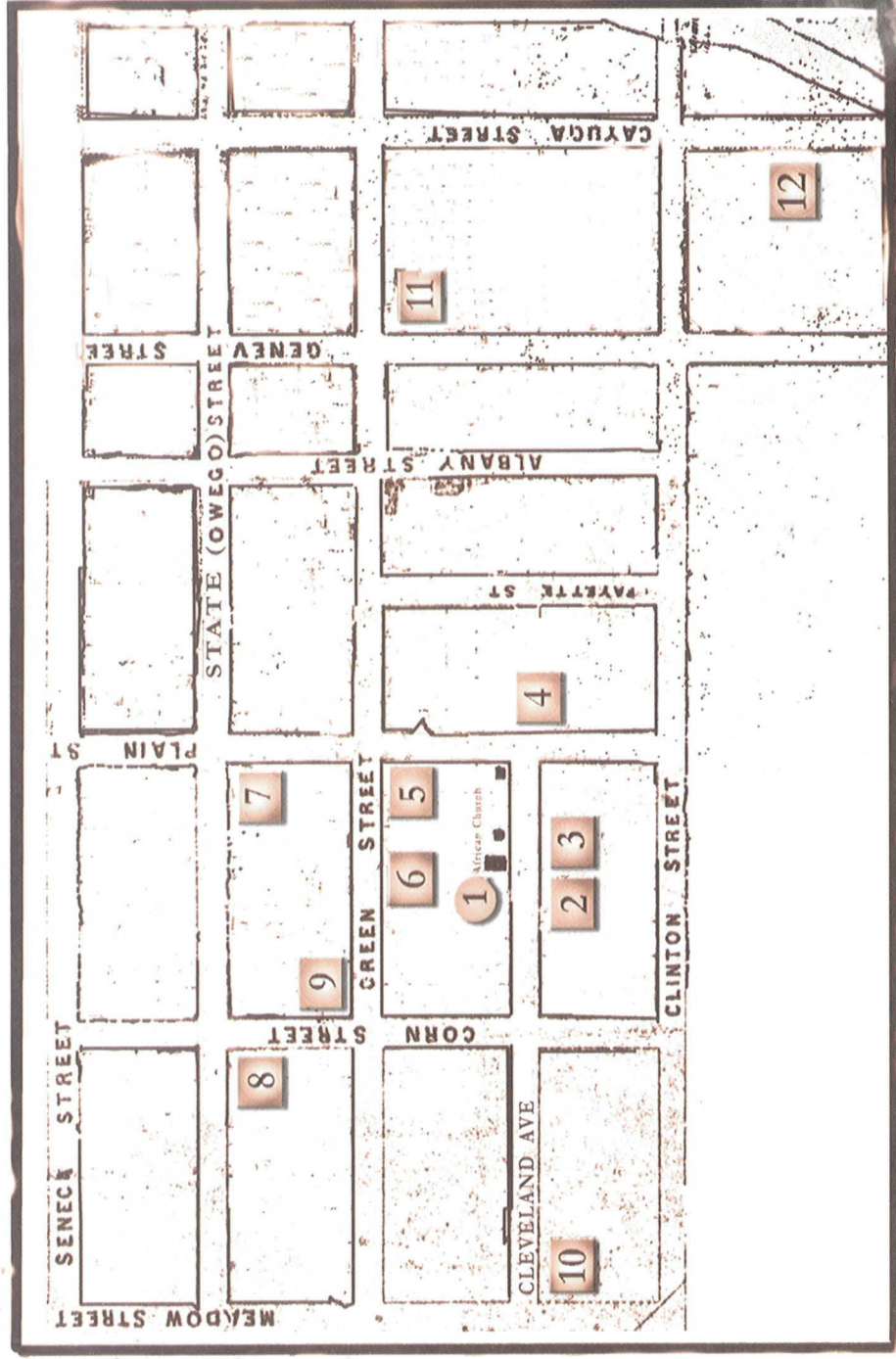
Nine identical houses, known by neighborhood residents as the "Ten Commandments," housed Irish, Italian and Black immigrants. These small houses contained no more than a few rooms and an attic. They were torn down in the early 1990s.

**11. Macera Family Home  
125 West Green St.**

The Macera family purchased this home in the 1930s at the height of the Great Depression. The original owner was noted abolitionist and Quaker, Benjamin Halsey, who never turned away a runaway slave. As a result, today the home is said to provide a sense of security and safety to those who enter it.

**12. Site of Brum/Johnson Home (demolished)  
326 South Cayuga St.**

This site was home to a long line of Underground Railroad agents, starting with Titus Brum, who lived here in 1824. George A. Johnson, who married Brum's daughter, was a barber, a community leader, and was said to have helped 114 slaves escape to freedom. The Johnsons had two children: Bert, also a barber, and Jessie, the first Black graduate of Ithaca High School, who gave piano lessons. A number of secret rooms where slaves are said to have taken refuge were discovered when the house was demolished in 1927.



Adapted from Map of Ithaca, 1851

**7. Home and office of the Drs. Galvin  
401 West State St.**

Mr. and Mrs. Galvin came to Ithaca in the 1940s. They were both doctors. He was a general practitioner. She was one of the first African-American women to earn a Ph.D. at Cornell in 1943 in English.

**8. Cayuga House  
501 West State St.**

The "Leading Colored Hotel in the City" was first owned by Thomas Russell, and later by Jim Miller. It was also home to Harry B. Parker's Equal Rights Barber Shop and Ora Spaulding's hair salon in the 1920s.

1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940