

HYNWATERLOO CIVIL RIGHTS STUDY

PREPARED BY THOMAS R. ZAHN & ASSOCIATES

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas R. Zahn and Associates was contracted for a Civil Rights History project in Waterloo, Iowa, in late 2018. The project team of Tom Zahn, Bethany Gladhill, and Patrick Rhone (Survey and Forms) and Gar Patterson and Mica Anders (Historic Markers) began work on the project in November of 2018. A number of site visits were held through late 2019, when information was presented at a public meeting. The project was due to be wrapped up in 2020, but the pandemic (including closures and stay at home orders) brought this work to almost a complete halt. When restarted in 2022, much of the work began from scratch, and also had to be incorporated with simultaneous similar work conducted by other firms, such as the Statewide Iowa Civil Rights Survey. The result is a study that reflects the complex history of Black history in Waterloo; as Nikole Hannah-Jones discusses in *The 1619 Project* (premiering in 2021 and starting in Waterloo), it is a history that has often been erased and in which the stories of ordinary Black people have not been told.

SURVEY & FORMWORK

Since other consulting projects were conducting more detailed surveys of the Triangle (including an intensive level survey of the Northeast Triangle Neighborhood released in July, 2019), the charge for this project was to investigate lesser-known representations of Black history in Waterloo, research them, and develop that narrative. The Consultants began by touring the city, taking photographs, conducting interviews, and investigating archives.

As part of the process, the Consultants soon realized that many of the immediately apparent resources were already incorporated into other studies that had commenced just prior to our contract. These included a number of Iowa State Inventory Forms (ISIFs) completed by Amanda Loughlin for the statewide survey conducted in 2018-19. By 2019 Loughlin had already completed surveys for: East High School, the Waterloo AME Church, the Furgerson home at 600 Cottage Street, the later Local 46 Union Hall at 1651 Sycamore Street, and the Cosby Center, as well as investigating Grant Elementary School (d. 1970).

Zahn and Associates, thus, spent considerable research time evaluating more nuanced sites. Several sites were considered for survey, but they all proved too difficult to research for more substantive histories or displayed integrity issues. These include: Anna Mae Weems' homes (135-½ N. Barclay, 631 Independence Avenue, and 637 Independence Avenue), the "Boxing Church" at 130 Shilliam, and "Eddie B's Cabins" at 218 Salisbury.

The Consultants were able to prepare ISIF forms for the following of civil rights-related sites:

- the original site of KBBG Radio/Jimmie Porter house at 527 Cottage Street
 - the original UPWA Union Hall at 210 Division Street
 - the Knights of Pythias lodge at 244 Ash Street

- the Milton Fields' house at 726 Sumner Street
- the Fullilove School of Music/ Lizzie and Harvey Fullilove house at 720 Sumner Street
- the Dr. Lee and Lillian Furgerson house at 705 Beech Street
- the A.W. Haffa Building upper story offices at 220-222-224 East 4th Street
- the B.F. Tredwell Tourist Home/Effie and Benjamin Tredwell house at 928 Beech Street

The Consultants were also charged with preparing a National Register submission or amendment related to the civil-rights context. One of the most prominent National Register listings in the city is the Rath Administration building, which is doubly important for its role in telling the story of UPWA Local 46's role in building an integrated union and for furthering civil rights in Waterloo. The amendment the Consultants have prepared has been thoroughly reviewed by the Iowa SHPO and is ready to submit. Deliverables for this study will also include the transfer of photographic files and date-labeled Courier newspaper clippings digital folders on many of the major local champions for civil rights researched in the completion of this study.

At the Heritage Preservation Commission public hearing presentation on August 15, 2023 the Consultants pointed out the various Black history studies that have been completed in the past few years and outlined the apparent need to order the vast collection of information gathered by the various effort. These include, but are not necessarily limited to: the *Iowa Statewide Twentieth Century Civil Rights-related Resources in Iowa* historic context development and resulting ISIF forms; the *Northeast Survey Report* with its focus on the Northeast Triangle neighborhood; the tangential, Walnut Street Historic District designation; and lastly this Waterloo Civil Right and Historic Marker program. The African-American Historical and Cultural Museum and Charles Pearson's African American Heritage Trail program should also be added in.



At the HPC public meeting the Commission voted to form a Task Force that would focus on the information collected and coordinate and prioritize the recommendations made by various studies. This effort might also work on helping to define the best way to acknowledge the cultural role that Civil Rights and Black leaders and workers have played in enriching not only the Black community but also a much broader cultural base. Our study research and findings certainly supports the weaving of these collections into a more cohesive and consequently stronger fabric.

The survey team would like to offer their deepest thanks to the many in Waterloo who have assisted in our research, from archive access to interviews. The Marker team below has called out many of these people by name, but we would especially like to recognize Pat Kinney and Bob Neymeyer, whose work with oral interviews and at the Grout in general was extraordinarily helpful. We would also like to thank John Dornoff and Lexi Schneider for City of Waterloo assistance, and of course the Waterloo HPC for their vision and tenacity.

SURVEY TEAM RESEARCH TRIPS:

Waterloo, November 2018
Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, January 2019
Waterloo, April 2019 (x2)
Waterloo, November 2019
Waterloo, January/February 2020
Waterloo, March 2020
Waterloo, December 2021
Waterloo, September 2022
Waterloo, November 2022 (x2)
Waterloo, August 2023

IN-PERSON AND PHONE INTERVIEWS:

In-person tour of the Russell-Lamson Building, November 2018
In-person interview on 1540 KXEL with Tim Harwood, April 2019
In-person meeting with Kate Umlauf, April 2019
Telephone interview with Rebecca Lawin McCarley, April 2019
Telephone interviews with Charles Pearson, April 2019
In-person interview with Terrence Hollingsworth, April 2019
Telephone interview with Francesca Soans, April 2019
Telephone interview with Billie Bailey, April 2019
Phone interview with Dave Morgan, Singlespeed Brewing, May 2019
Public meeting November 4, 2019
In-person and phone discussions with Bob Neymeyer, 2018-2022
In-person and phone discussions with Pat Kinney, 2019-2023
Telephone discussions with Amanda Loughlin, May-August 2022
In-person visit to the Rath archives, September 2022

Ongoing phone conversations with Iowa SHPO

Periodic meetings with Waterloo HPC and city staff

SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION:

The Consultants have prepared a National Register Amendment for the Rath Plant, focusing on the Administration Building in relationship to union activities with the plant. We felt strongly that the union story, particularly in relationship to Waterloo's Civil Rights history, needs to be told. However, the Administration Building may be an endangered resource due to the building's current compromised integrity. An alternative might be a National Register nomination for the original Union Hall at 210 Division Street (currently Babe's Tap), should the owner be amenable. Amanda Loughlin has also done an excellent ISIF survey form for 1651 Sycamore Street (the later Union Hall), but as that is outside the period of influence for the major strikes it might not be as compelling. Toward the beginning of our study the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) suggested a district or multiple property nomination for the Rath Plant area, but in the Consultants' opinion, the area lacks sufficient integrity to garner this kind of nomination.

The Consultants believe that other strong contenders for National Register nominations are:

1. The Lee and Lily Furgerson House at 705 Beech Street. This was the home the Furgesons occupied for much of their lives in Waterloo, especially when they were at their most prominent. In addition, given their importance, the Consultants recommend consistent interpretation of their later home at 600 Cottage Street, Dr. Furgerson's first offices in the Haffa Building (1927-1943), and their historic associations with the Furgerson-Fields Park.
2. Hopewell Baptist (also known as St. Luke's Church, formerly known as the Waterloo AME Church, Bess's Chapel and the Railroad Church) at 101 Albany Street. This church, perhaps more than any other, tells the story of immigration and then Black settlement in Waterloo. Unfortunately, it was damaged by fire in March of 2022, and its current status is unclear to the Consultants.
3. The Milton F. and Vaeletta Fields House at 720 Sumner Street. Coming to Waterloo in 1920, Milton Fields appears to have been one of the first Black professionals to settle and stay the rest of his life in Waterloo. He was aggressive in this recruiting of other Black professionals to serve the growing African American community in the city and instrumental in forming the local chapter of the NAACP. His successes in a wide variety of racial justice efforts brought greater fairness in hiring and employment, in teaching and academic achievement, in housing and transportation, in policing, and in financial services including lending.

According to the city directories, by 1927 the Fields family lived at 810 Dawson Street until 1931 when they moved to 720 Sumner where they lived for 14 years (1931-1945). Their final move was a few doors east to 816 Sumner where Milton lived for 5 years until his death in 1950. The Dawson Street address is now a vacant lot, and although the later residence at 720 Sumner is still standing, Milton Fields' time there was very limited. The A.W Haffa Block where Fields practiced law for 16 years has since converted the original second floor offices into modern efficiency apartments. Consequently, the 720 Sumner house likely would merit National Register consideration for the significant role Milton had in the local and later state civil rights movement.

4. The Jimmie Porter House/KGGB-FM Radio at 527 Cottage Street should be considered for designation when its period of significance reached the 50-year mark. Porter had a strong influence in UWPA Local 46 politics and leadership from the late 1950s into the 1970s, and in 1973 took the position of Community Enabler with Urban Ministries. Porter and his first wife bought the Craftsman style house at 527 Cottage Street by 1975. The house not only served as the office and meeting place for community enablement efforts, but also served as the incubator for the development and home of KGGB, a Black-owned and operated member-supported public radio station focused on community public affairs programming.

Amanda Loughlin's completion of a ISIF form for Bess's Chapel AME Church, combined with the above four properties gives the HPC a fine collection of very significant resources that have initial IFIS forms prepared for them — a major step towards historic designation.

In addition, the Consultants have completed ISIF forms for a number of properties (listed above), and consultant Amanda Loughlin has completed several more in her work on the Statewide Civil Rights project. All of these should be further evaluated for National Register possibilities. The Haffa Building is of particular interest to the Consultants for housing Black professional offices, but it likely does not retain sufficient interior integrity to pursue an amendment to the Waterloo East Commercial Historic District.

The City of Waterloo should investigate a multiple property listing or similar interpretation for the city's Black churches, which have held an important community development role. Though some of these continue to thrive, others have dwindling congregations.

Although the Russell-Lamson Building (formerly a hotel and now housing) was not an influential site for civil rights in Waterloo, it was the place that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stayed on his Waterloo visit, and some interpretation thereof would be valuable.

Multiple attempts have been made for ongoing interpretation of Black history in Waterloo and related collections. These include a railroad car museum that appears inactive, the Dunsmore house (an important building in its own right but which seems to have no connection to Waterloo's Black community other than sitting just outside the Triangle), an "online museum," and multiple collections at the Grout, including an ongoing interpretive exhibit. The Consultants suggest that the City consolidate these efforts and work with the Grout to more tangibly interpret this history.

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HISTORIC MARKERS

The study process for the civil rights markers involved significant research on the history of Waterloo's Black community and the decades-long efforts to move their lives closer to the promise that drew them into town. The marker component of the project began in late 2018, when Thomas R. Zahn and Associates toured the city, met with the planning department, and attended a meeting of the HPC. The Marker Team returned for more visits in the winter, spring and fall of 2019 and the winter of 2020, including additional tours of the area, in-person interviews and conversations with area residents and community stakeholders, photographing built-environment resources, examining other area markers, and conducting research at area museums and libraries.

The Marker Team collected and reviewed information and history on the city and civil rights topics, ranging from primary sources such as newspaper clippings, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, library and museum archives, genealogy files and databases, census data, historical photo databases, oral-history tapes, videos, and transcripts housed at the University of Northern Iowa and at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, maps, and city directories. Secondary sources included previous studies and reports, early histories of the area, unpublished graduate-level studies of the area, and national surveys of civil rights topics.

Particularly informative to the process were the many unique resources contained in the Grout Museum, the Waterloo Public Library's reference collection, the African American Museum of Iowa, and we appreciate the helpful staff of these institutions. Special thanks goes to Catreva Manning, whose deep knowledge of the Grout Museum holdings and whose lived experience in the City of Waterloo opened new avenues of research and understanding.

The Marker Team, coordinating with information also collected by the Survey Team, prepare Historic Markers for the following of civil rights-related sites:

- Bess' Chapel AME Church at 101 Albany Street
- East High School at 214 High Street
- KBBG-FM Radio/Jimmie Porter house at 527 Cottage Street
- Fullilove School of Music/ Lizzie and Harvey Fullilove house at 720 Sumner Street
- A.W. Haffa Building upper story offices at 220-222-224 East 4th Street
- B.F. Tredwell Tourist Home/Effie and Benjamin Tredwell house at 928 Beech Street
- Furgerson Fields Park at 936 Oneida Street

Several Waterloo residents were generous in sharing their time and their accounts of the civil rights efforts that mattered most in their lives. The staff of Waterloo's Neighborhood Services was also important in our work, providing a trusted conduit in securing meetings with various stakeholders. They showed welcome generosity with their time and resources. Special thanks goes to Felicia Smith-Nalls.

Waterloo's Department of Public Works has been a valued partner in consulting on the design and maintenance of the markers. Special thanks goes to Mohammad Elahi for his time and his knowledge.

MARKER TEAM RESEARCH TRIPS:

Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, January 2019
Waterloo, May 2019
Waterloo, November 2019
Waterloo, January/February 2020
Waterloo, March 2020
Waterloo, August 2023

IN-PERSON AND PHONE INTERVIEWS:

In-person interview with Robert Neymeyer, May 2019
Phone Interview with Mellissa Manning, June 2019
In-person conversations with Waterloo residents November 2019
In-person meeting with Waterloo Neighborhood Services staff, January 2020
In-person interview with Felicia Smith-Nalls, January 2020
In-person interview with Beverly Smith, February 2020
In-person interview with Beverly Smith, March 2020
In-person interview with Elizabeth Merriweather, March 2020

MARKER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION:

If the Waterloo Heritage Preservation Commission and the City offices at some future date want to expand the Historic Marker program to include additional sites we would recommend that they consider these:

- the original UPWA Union Hall CIO Local 46 at 210 Division Street
- possibly the remaining early Anna Mae Weems' house at 637 Independence Avenue

The Marker Team took note that the Tredwell Tourist Home and the two others in the city were run by women. These businesses signaled the opportunity and the drive for entrepreneurship and independence at time when Blacks—and Black women especially—were excluded from many sectors of the economy.

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