

# Green Book: Indiana Edition

By Madeline Hellmich

DNR-DHPA Intern and Graduate Student at IUPUI's Department of History

A mail carrier named Victor Green lived in Harlem, New York in the early 1930s with his family. When Green traveled around the United States, he became frustrated that it was difficult to find places to eat, rest, or stay as a Black person. Green's family and friends experienced the same frustration, never knowing when they would have to face the racial prejudices or threats of anti-Black violence from business owners and patrons. So, Green decided to do something about it. Green used a guide for Jewish travelers as a model for *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*, first published in 1936.

Green's first publication was such a success that he decided to expand the listings and make the book available nationally. "The Green Book was a travel guide that helped African Americans navigate a segregated America, not just the South but the whole United States" emphasized Yoruba Richen, writer and director of *The Green Book: Guide to Freedom* documentary. People could purchase the book at Black churches and gas stations, and Green kept the price low to make it accessible.

Over the years, the guides named more than 9,500 places. Mail carriers and Black motorists sent in recommendations to help Green expand the listings. The Green Book supported the growth of the Black middle class, especially Black women entrepreneurs. Green and his wife Alma published new editions of the book until 1962, selling up to 20,000 copies a year. Other publishers took up the Green's work and continued the publication until 1967. In the years the Green Book was in circulation, nearly 200 businesses landed in the listing for Black people traveling to or through Indiana. The businesses represented included tourist homes, motels, hotels, resorts, taverns, restaurants, night clubs, liquor stores, gas stations, autobody shops, dry

cleaners, drug stores, tailors, beauty parlors, and barbers. Green Book businesses existed in 20 Indiana cities. The majority of them could be found in big cities like Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Evansville, but a few smaller towns like French Lick, Marion, and Angola were too home to Green Book businesses. Black travelers carried the Green Book like a sacred text. They did not have the same privilege as whites who could hit the road and stop wherever it was convenient. But the Green Book helped them plan where they could sleep, eat, buy gas, and spend leisure time safely.

In the first half of the twentieth century, anti-Black sentiment was still widespread in Indiana. Few rural towns were included in the Green Book listing because the guide was designed to protect Black motorists from potential discrimination or violence. For example, citizens in sundown towns purposely excluded Black people from living in their community or stopping there for a night. White residents used flyers, signs, verbal threats, and violence to make sure Black people would not settle in many of these towns. People with anti-Black sentiments lived in cities too, but more Black people and non-Black people with anti-discriminatory views lived and ran businesses in cities. Business owners often chose to open their businesses in thriving African American and immigrant neighborhoods, areas where Black travelers were less likely to face discrimination. Using the Green Book to minimize the risk of experiencing discrimination or violence made traveling more enjoyable.

Next, we will take a look at some of the different types of Green Book sites operated by Hoosiers. Their stories reflect the ways in which black citizens established financial and social stability in the face of racial discrimination. The Green Book hosts welcomed black travelers to Indiana and exhibited Hoosier hospitality.

**Type: Resort**  
**Fox Lake Resort in Angola (Steuben County)**



Photo from the Fox Lake Resort National Register Nomination.

The Fox Lake Resort outside of Angola, Indiana (Steuben County) appeared in the Green Book first in 1939. African American families from Indianapolis, Detroit, Chicago, Columbus and Toledo, Ohio, Fort Wayne, and Marion started buying homes or building their own lakeside cottages at Fox Lake in the 1920s. Homeowners spread the news by word of mouth about the emerging summertime sanctuary for African Americans, and the area quickly turned into a sprawling African American lake resort community and tourist destination. Families enjoyed all the activities they could not enjoy at the surrounding resort lakes. Adults visited with friends and danced the night away at the clubhouse where regional bands and big-name musicians performed. Fox Lake rivaled the likes of the famous Idlewild Resort in Michigan, the only other African American lake resort still standing in the nation. Many of the homes around Fox Lake

remain in the ownership of second and third generation families. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Fox Lake Preservation Foundation works to protect the historic character of the African American lake resort and educate newcomers about its historical significance.

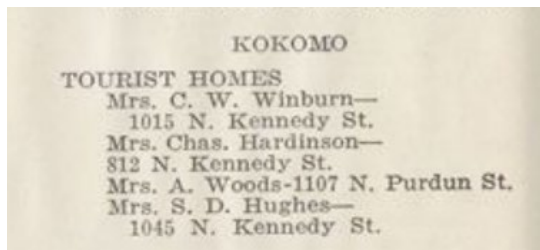
**Type: Restaurant**

**Site: Hambric's Café/Lasley's Restaurant, Indianapolis (Marion County)**



Indiana Avenue in downtown Indianapolis (Marion County) was a mecca for Black culture and entertainment in the twentieth century. Black families and businesses occupied the spaces on and around Indiana Avenue to form a self-sufficient community at a time that segregation and white citizens' anti-Black sentiments barred Black people from many businesses and neighborhoods. Indiana Avenue offered a welcoming space for Black travelers to eat, sleep, and enjoy night life. Hambric's Café, later known as Lasley's Restaurant, located at 510 Indiana Avenue stood among the jazz clubs, taverns, and restaurants owned by African Americans and

European immigrants on Indiana Avenue. The Green Book showcased the restaurant for nearly two decades, beginning in 1939. Elizabeth Lasley and her sister Jennie Crabtree managed the restaurant known for their home-cooking since 1927. Later, Lasley married George Hambric, and they owned and operated the restaurant from 1931 until they died in 1950. Elizabeth's daughter Thelma took over the business until her passing in 1957. People of all classes made their way to Lasley's for home-cooked meals for nearly 40 years. Famous jazz performers such as Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, and Cab Calloway dined at Lasley's, as well as notable politicians like Oscar DePriest and William L. Dawson.

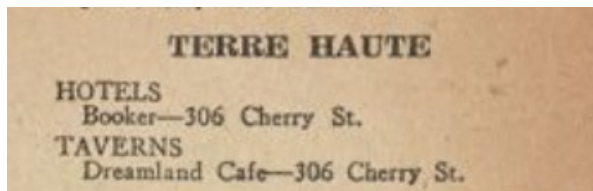


**Type: Tourist Home**

**Site: Mrs. C.W. Winburn, Kokomo (Howard County)**

Think about tourist homes in the Green Book as today's Airbnbs. People opened their homes to travelers passing through, perhaps to earn extra cash here and there, or maybe they found excitement in hosting visitors. The Green Book recorded Ora Byrd Winburn's home at 1015 N. Kennedy Street in Kokomo starting in 1939. The details of Ora and her husband Charles Walter Winburn's life indicate that they were the definition of a hospitable host. The two involved themselves heavily in the Kokomo African American community. They held leadership roles in the Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church down the street and invited church

members visiting Kokomo for conferences to stay with them. Located in a predominately African American neighborhood, the N. Kennedy Street house was a hot spot for the meetings and events of the organizations the couple belonged to, including African American women's and political clubs. Both Ora and Walker could carry a tune and were known to dazzle guests with vocal solos or quartet performances from time to time. Outside of their community involvement, Walter owned and operated a grocery store on N. Kennedy Street and Ora kept long-term and occasional lodgers in their home. The lively couple most likely got a thrill out of accommodating Green Book travelers and enjoyed the opportunity to show guests their thriving community. Likewise, it is easy to imagine their Airbnb profile would be full of five-star reviews.



**Type: Hotel/Tavern**

**Site: The Redd Hotel and Redd's Hollywood Barn Tavern, Terre Haute (Vigo County)**

At 306 Cherry Street in Terre Haute, Indiana, Phil Redd owned and operated a Green Book stop that doubled as a hotel and tavern. Newspapers advertised the hotel as the Redd Hotel and the tavern as Redd's Hollywood Barn Tavern. Redd's place joined the Indiana Green Book listing in 1939 and remained in the book for nearly two decades. Some white Terre Hautians did discriminate against Black residents, but Terre Haute was a less segregated city with more educational and career opportunities for Black Hoosiers in comparison to other Indiana cities in the twentieth century. This factor may have contributed to Phil and his wife Josephine's decision

to move from the South and open a business in Terre Haute. The Black couple's children lived at 306 Cherry with them for several years and helped operate and maintain the building. The hotel housed longer-term guests and folks just passing through. Visitors could belly up to the bar, shoot a game of pool, dance to a jukebox tune, or bowl a round or two. During the 1952 general election, Redd's even served as a polling place in the busy downtown district. Later, the family spread out to homes they owned on South Fourteenth Street and Elm Street. One of Redd's neighbors on Fourteenth street was Vendetta Mills, a Black woman who started waitressing at the tavern then became Redd's long-time business partner.

**Type: Beauty Salon**

**Site: Noonie's Beauty Shop, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Noonie Brown made a career out of owning and operating beauty salons in Indianapolis for two decades. Brown's business was one of the nearly 30 Indiana beauty parlors listed in the Green Book. The beautician opened a shop in her one-story house at 139 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street before moving the salon to the brick storefront attached to Avondale Apartments at 547 North Senate by 1947. Brown opened a second location at 2117 North Illinois Street in the 1960s, which was just around the corner from her house on 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Elizabeth Rowley, a Black woman, managed the second location. Newspaper ads and sponsorships in church directories read, "Look your best. For the woman who cares—call." The Green Book highlighted Noonie's Beauty Parlor from 1951 to 1955. Outside of her business, Brown involved herself in the Bethel AME Church and supported church activities and outreach programs with her business earnings. Brown proved to be a leader in her community in the 1950s and 60s. She served as treasurer and then president of

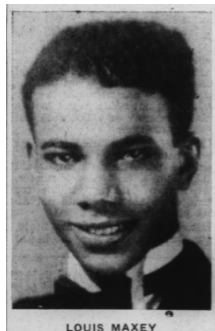


the Ladies Usher Board, and she organized Red Cross first aid training as an officer for a local Masonic organization. Rowley went on to be a beautician for 50 years. Photo courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society.



W1240\_P\_BOX1\_FOLDER1\_003

**Type: Drug Store**  
**Site: Maxey's Drug Store**



Young entrepreneur and pharmacist Louis Maxey announced the grand opening of Maxey's Drug Store in the *Indianapolis Recorder* in September 1936. Before Maxey opened the store at 2106 Boulevard Place, he managed Walker Drug, owned by the Madame C.J. Walker Company. Maxey's promised "delivery of quality merchandise" "from a complete stock of finest goods for



his city-wide legion of friends.” Maxey’s brother Paul helped operate the store. Crispus Attucks high school teacher Helen Rhodes and Maxey married in 1940. Helen, who had a bachelor and master’s degrees from Butler University took over as general manager of the store for a decade. Customers picked up medicine and household items at Maxey’s or stopped in to get a soda or candy. Maxey sold the business to Richard James in 1951 to go to medical school in Switzerland. The Green Book spotlighted the store known for their impeccable customer service from 1950 to 1953. Maxey went on to earn his doctorate degree and became an oral surgeon.