

# Researching Demolished Green Book Sites



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In 2023, the DNR Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology (DHPA) was awarded an Underrepresented Communities (URC) grant from the National Park Service in order to conduct research on *Green Book* sites in Indiana. *The Negro Travelers' Motorist Green Book* (*Green Book*) was published from 1936 through 1967 as an annual guide for African American travelers during a time marked by open discrimination of them. Entries in the book included tourist homes, hotels, taverns, restaurants, service stations, beauty parlors, and more. In Indiana, out of the nearly 200 businesses listed during its publication, only 35 (17%) of these remain extant.



**Title Photos:** 1953, 1954, and 1956 *Green Book* covers, from New York Public Library Digital Collections

**Above:** The *Green Book* featured Mrs. Violet Rhinehardt's Tourist Home at 425 W. 10<sup>th</sup> St. from 1950-1959. Shown here is all of the listings in Marion in the 1956 Edition. From *The Negro Travelers' Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Co., 1956), 21.

Funding supported efforts to research and document these sites through the creation of a survey of remaining *Green Book* resources, creation of a Multiple Property Documentation Form for *The Negro Motorist Green-Book in Indiana*, creation of two National Register of Historic Places nominations for *Green Book* sites, and a publicly accessible StoryMap highlighting *Green Book* sites in Indiana.

A consulting firm was hired to conduct the survey of the identified extant sites, while DHPA staff and interns (like myself) have been doing research on the locations that are no longer extant.

Researching demolished sites raises a unique set of challenges. There are a great deal of unknown details that researchers need to be prepared to not know. Sites of African American history are oftentimes particularly challenging because of the silences evident in the archives. One of the best sources is newspaper archives. In this project, valuable information is largely restricted to the "Colored Reports,"



receiving far less coverage than white individuals, businesses, and organizations. Instead of relying on newspapers, turning to census records and city directories can reveal information about not just businesses and the lives of individuals, but also can be used to verify locations listed in the *Green Book*. This is another stumbling block in the research process: the *Green Book* publications are not perfect. Names of businesses or streets may be misspelled, and in some cases a business may have moved locations without updating their entry in the *Green Book*.

**Above:** This October 1938 newspaper clipping from *The Chronicle Tribune* tells us more about Mrs. Violet Rhinehardt's personal life, such as her involvement in the Ladies of the Dorcus Society. "Colored Reports," From the *Chronicle Tribune* (Marion, Indiana), October 3, 1938, 6.

Even if a building's address has changed, searching using modern mapping services will provide a rough location for the demolished site. Sometimes, it will be extremely obvious where a building used to be, as straight lines in the ground do not exist in nature. Taking in the surrounding streets and landscape, as well as taking note of businesses that may have existed in the area, allows a researcher to know their subject in a more tangible way as opposed to treating the site as an address on a page.

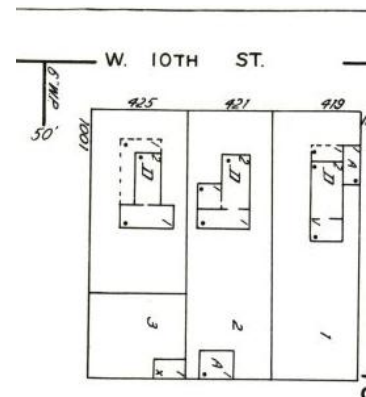
**Right:** Navigating online to 425 W. 10<sup>th</sup> Street gives a better idea of the area Mrs. Rhinehardt lived in, and the empty lot currently there allows one to imagine the house that once stood there,  
Photo from *Google Maps*



Property cards or GIS maps from county assessor offices may provide details of construction if there is a more recent building on what was a *Green Book* site. Oftentimes, a former building would have been demolished at a date not far from the time of the new build. One may come across historic aerial images on these GIS maps, which when dissected, can be vital information concerning the demolition of buildings. (They are also very cool to look at!) Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps can also provide a lot of information on how the area has changed over time. Sometimes these maps are not accessible online, especially for small

communities. These three resources are not always helpful in finding information about the building in question but can help in forming a timeline of the given *Green Book* site's history.

**Right : The 1952 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the floorplan and property boundaries of the Rhinehardt's home.** Photo from Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Sanborn Maps Collection



Oral histories of community members and relatives have been a useful resource to get personalized information and corroboration with the research already conducted. While writing narratives for each site, the goal is to provide readers with accurate and interesting accounts. Ideally, these would include information about those running the business, and sometimes the information from oral histories may be the only way to make the pieces fit together, especially when basing personalized information to a few sentences found in a newspaper. Census records and city directories serve a similar purpose for research, as they corroborate locations and inform on home life outside of the *Green Book*.

Rhinehart, Luther	Head	2	m	col	55
- Violet	Wife	1	f	col	54
Schelten Iris -	Roomer	6	f	col	26
Logan Thelma	Roomer	6	f	col	17

**Above: The 1940 U.S. Federal Census lists Luther and Violet Rhinehardt as having two roomers at the time of the survey, confirming their status as a Tourist Home.** Photo from 1940 U.S. Census, Marion, Grant County, Indiana, United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940. T627, 4,643 rolls.

(See Yellow Pages 2 and 38)  
Rhineberg Arth E electn Moorehead Elec r Sweetser Ind  
**Rhinehardt Violet B** (wid **Luther J**) h414½ 13th  
Rhoades Clifton M (Ruth M) carrier PO h808 S Water (J)  
Rhoades Francis E (Ira) plmb Mechanical Bldg

**Above: Mrs. Violet Rhinehardt moved to 414 13<sup>th</sup> Street in 1960, which was also advertised in the *Green Book* in 1960-1961. The 1960 Marion City Directory confirms that.** Photo from Polk's Marion City Directory 1960. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co, 1960.

Researching demolished *Green Book* sites in Indiana contributes to one of the state's preservation goals. This project expands the knowledge and inventory of underrepresented communities in Indiana and will create awareness of cultural heritage in local communities.

**To see digitized editions of the *Green Book*, see [New York Public Library Digital Collections](#).**