



## **Travels in Time** **African American Sites**

### **Levi Coffin House, Fountain City (Wayne County)**

Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965, the Levi Coffin House in Fountain City is a significant property in the Underground Railroad. Built in 1827, the two-story brick Federal style house was the home of Levi and Catharine Coffin and their five children. Levi was a Wayne County merchant and businessman. He referred to his house as the Grand Central Station of the Underground Railroad. It is estimated that Levi and Catharine Coffin helped over 2000 enslaved African Americans escape to freedom during the twenty-one years he resided in Fountain City (1826-1847).



The Levi Coffin House is currently owned by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and is operated by the Levi Coffin House Association. The house functions as a house museum and is open:

June 1-August 1: Tuesday-Saturday 1:00-4:00pm Closed Sundays, Mondays, and July 4  
September 1-October 31: Saturdays only 1:00-4:00pm

Groups can be scheduled in April and May by calling in advance.

Levi Coffin State Historic Site  
P. O. Box 77  
113 US 27 N  
Fountain City, IN 47341  
Phone: 765.847.2432  
Fax: 765.847.2498  
E-mail: [coffinhs@infocom.com](mailto:coffinhs@infocom.com)  
Contact: Saundra Jackson, Site Manager  
<http://www.state.in.us/ism/HistoricSites/LeviCoffin/Historic.asp>

### **Fox Lake Resort, Angola (Steuben County)**

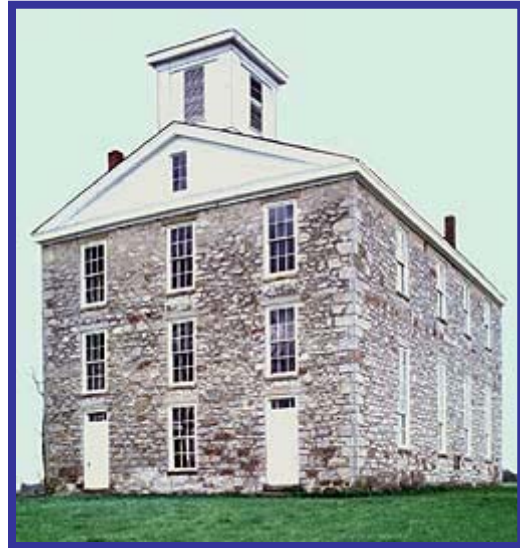
This African American resort community in northeastern Indiana was developed in 1924 when a group of Indiana businessmen decided to market the area exclusively to black families. Segregation abounded and African American families were not permitted in other lake resorts. It was the only such resort in Indiana at the time. Most of the buildings were single family cottages but there was also a small hotel, a restaurant, a clubhouse/dance hall, a beach with bathhouse and pier, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, and basketball hoops. Famous entertainers and athletes like Duke Ellington and Joe Lewis stayed there.

Fox Lake is located east of I-69, about one mile southwest of Angola. It lies south of US 20 between West Fox Lake Road and County Road 150 West.

### **Eleutherian College, Lancaster (Jefferson County)**

This three-story building constructed of Indiana limestone between 1854 and 1856 is the only surviving building of Eleutherian College, one of the first desegregated and coeducational facilities in the nation. Initially known as Eleutherian Institute, the school only taught secondary classes but in 1854, with the construction of this chapel and classroom building, the name changed to Eleutherian College and, thus, the school began offering college-level courses. This was the first institution in the state of Indiana to offer advanced educational opportunities to African American as well as offering an education equal to those of whites.

The College was founded by started by the Rev. Thomas Craven, an abolitionist preacher from Ohio, and members of the Neil's Creek Abolitionist Baptist Church and many of these same families, given their beliefs, were active participants in the Underground Railroad. With the College's close proximity to the Ohio River (10 miles northwest of Madison) and Indiana's status as a free state (while Kentucky was a slave state), the presence of a integrated school was fortuitous. Enrollment at the College ranged from 70-150 students between 1855-1861. Eleutherian College continued to function as a private, coeducational secondary school until the mid-1880s. From 1888-1938 this building was used by Lancaster Township as a public school building.



Eleutherian College is open mid-April through October. Please call for an appointment.

Historic Eleutherian College, Inc.  
6927 W. State Road 250  
Madison, Indiana 47250  
812/ 273-9434  
<http://www.eleutherian.us>

### **Lyman & Asenath Hoyt House, Lancaster (Jefferson County)**

The home of Lyman and Asenath Hoyt was constructed circa 1850 of Indiana limestone in the Greek Revival style. The Hoyts lived in the house with their seven children until 1857 and were active in the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad. Lyman Hoyt was a member of the Neil's Creek Abolitionist Baptist Church and may have been involved with Eleutherian College, located within half a mile away.



Unlike some others, Lyman Hoyt's activity with the Underground Railroad has been well documented. In 1930 his daughter, Lois, wrote about her father's involvement and specifically mentions a cave that was near their pasture in which fleeing enslaved African Americans were hidden.

The Hoyt House is owned by Historic Eleutherian College and is open mid-April through October. Please call for an appointment.

Historic Eleutherian College, Inc.  
6927 W. State Road 250  
Madison, Indiana 47250  
812/ 273-9434  
<http://www.eleutherian.us>

### **Saint Stephen's AME Church, Hanover (Jefferson County)**

Saint Stephen's AME Church is a late Victorian vernacular style church with simple Classical detailing. The modest place of worship was constructed by local African American farmers circa 1904 from lumber salvaged from the Graysville Church (1834). It is a one-story, wood frame church with a central projecting tower, art glass windows, and a tin ceiling.

Saint Stephen's is the most intact example of a rural African American church in Jefferson County.

Saint Stephen's AME Church  
220 West Main Street,  
Hanover, IN 47243

### **Carnegie Center for Art and Culture, New Albany (Floyd County)**

The Carnegie Center is housed in the former Carnegie Free Public Library, constructed in 1902, and is a division of the New Albany-Floyd County Public Library. Staff at the Center has begun development on a permanent interactive exhibit about the Underground Railroad in the area. The National Parks Service has designated the program as a site in its National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Carnegie Center for Art and Culture  
201 East Spring Street  
New Albany, IN 47150  
Ph: 812/ 944-7336  
<http://www.carnegiecenter.org>

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10:00am-5:30pm

### **Leora Brown School, Corydon (Harrison County)**

Originally known as the Corydon Colored School, the building was constructed in 1891 as an elementary and secondary school for African Americans. It may be the oldest African American school remaining in the state of Indiana. The grade school met in one room of the school, while the high school met in the other. It continued in this capacity until the 1930s when the high school students were integrated into the white school. The elementary students were integrated in the 1950s. The school was renamed the Leora Brown School in 1987 in honor of Leora Brown Farrow who taught at the school from 1924-1950. It currently functions as a community center.

Leora Brown School, Inc  
400 East Summit Street  
Corydon, IN 47112  
812/ 738-8497

## **Lyles Consolidated School, Lyles Station (Gibson County)**

Lyles Station was founded in prior to the Civil War by Joshua and Sanford Lyles, former slaves from Tennessee. Joshua Lyles returned to Tennessee and encouraged other former slaves to come join him in Indiana. Many decided to do just that and at its peak in 1912, there were 600 residents of Lyles Station. The community boasted fifty-five residences, a train station, post office, two general stores, two churches, an elementary school, a lumber mill, a blacksmith shop, and a cemetery. When a flood hit in 1912, the decline of Lyles Station began as residents left this farming community for more stable living in Evansville, Terre Haute, and Indianapolis.

The Lyles Consolidated School was not constructed until circa 1919 and it was viewed as a symbol of more prosperous future for both the community as a whole and for individual students. The school was integrated until 1922 when a disciple issue between a white student and a black teacher resulted in the transfer of the white students to Baldwin Heights School in Princeton, Indiana. The school remained open to African American students until



its closure in 1958. Unfortunately the community of Lyles Station continues to disappear as residents move to more populated areas and buildings begin to decay. The Lyles Consolidated School is one of the few buildings that remains of the once thriving community and currently functions as a community museum.

Lyles Consolidated School  
County Road 100 North  
Lyles Station, 47670  
812/ 386-8491

Email Stanley Madison at [madison@sigecom.net](mailto:madison@sigecom.net) or [smadison@lylesstation.org](mailto:smadison@lylesstation.org) for more information.

## **Allen Chapel AME Church, Terre Haute (Vigo County)**

Allen Chapel AME is the oldest black church in western Indiana. Named for Richard Allen, one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Allen Chapel was founded in 1837 by Reverend William Paul Quinn. Housed in a simple wood building two blocks away from the current site, that building served as a stop along the Underground Railroad and as the first school for black pupils in Vigo County.

In 1913 a tornado and fire caused severe damage to the original building resulting in the construction of the yellow brick and stone church that stands today. The belltower houses the original Vigo County courthouse bell, which is said to have been loaned to the Chapel by Judge William D. Mack. The Allen Chapel has a series of recently restored stained glass windows, tin ceiling, and a 1905 Herney pipe organ, the only tracker action organ left in Terre Haute.

Allen Chapel AME Church  
218 Crawford Street  
Terre Haute, IN 47807  
812/ 234-5780

### **Site of the Speed Cabin, Crawfordsville (Montgomery County)**

John Allen Speed, a native of Scotland, immigrated to the United States in 1821. Speed and his family moved to Crawfordsville in 1834 and bought land at the southeast corner of North and Grant Streets to build their log cabin. An ardent abolitionist, Speed sheltered runaway slaves while aiding the African American population of Crawfordsville. He urged the early members of the congregation of the Bethel AME church to purchase the adjacent property so they could construct their church.



In 1990 the Speed Cabin was reconstructed on the grounds of Lane Place, a few blocks southeast of its original location and is maintained by the Montgomery County Historical Society.

Montgomery County Historical Society  
212 S. Water Street  
Crawfordsville, IN 47933  
765/ 362-3416  
<http://www.lane-mchs.org/speedcabin/speedcabin.html>

Call for hours.

### **Bethel AME Church, Crawfordsville (Montgomery County)**

The Bethel AME Church, a simple rectangular structure with a two-story tower, was constructed in 1892 (although portions of it may date from 1847). According to church historians, the cellar was used to shelter runaway slaves as part of the Underground Railroad. The church is the most prominent, as well as the oldest structure, associated with African American settlement in the area.

Given the abolitionist views of clergy and professors affiliated with the precursor to Wabash College, the atmosphere of Crawfordsville was more hospitable to African American settlement than other areas of Indiana. Several members of the community were active in the Underground Railroad. By the late 1830s, enough African Americans were living in Crawfordsville that there were plans to form a congregation. The parsonage just east of the church was built in 1900 but there is the possibility that the parsonage was actually built before 1900 and moved to this site.

In addition to the church services, the Bethel AME Church also taught school to African American children at least until the 1880s. A town school trustee observed that in 1881 there were 126 students in a building meant to hold forty-nine. In 1882, the town of Crawfordsville constructed a school (Lincoln School-demolished) in part for African American children in town. The church did continue to offer religious education.

Bethel AME Church  
213 West North Street  
Crawfordsville, IN 47933  
765-364-1496

## **Roberts Chapel and Cemetery, Atlanta (Hamilton County)**

Roberts Chapel and Cemetery are the only remnants of the Roberts Settlement, an 1835 African American settlement in Hamilton County. The main portion of the Chapel was constructed in 1858 and used as a church and school for the area residents. The three-story belfry was added in 1916. The cemetery to the north was laid out in 1831 but the first burial did not occur until 1843.

Until the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Midwestern African Americans lived primarily in rural settings. More than two dozen well-defined black farm communities were established in western Ohio, central Indiana, southwestern Michigan, and southern Wisconsin. Most larger settlements were founded by small free black landowners of mixed racial heritage from the Old South and were located near Quakers or other racially tolerant whites. This was the case with Roberts Settlement. The founders were mostly "free people of color" who moved from North Carolina to Rush County, Indiana, and then, later to Hamilton County, Indiana, in the mid-1830s, establishing homes near to Quakers and other abolitionists. The community started with a dozen or so families and by the 1880s there were about 40 families (250 residents) calling Roberts Settlement home. By the turn of the century the population had dwindled due to agricultural difficulties and the migration of residents to more urban areas. The population dropped to less than fifty members during the 1920s and 1930s.

Since the 1920s Roberts Chapel has been the site of an annual homecoming reunion hosted during the first week of July. Descendants come from across the country for this opportunity to revisit their shared heritage and reacquaint themselves with family and friends. About 200 relatives attended the reunion in 2003.

Roberts Chapel  
3102 E. 276<sup>th</sup> St. (approximately 1 mile east of US 31)  
Atlanta, IN 46030

## **Farmers Institute, Lafayette (Tippecanoe County)**

The Farmers Institute is the main building of a small campus of Quaker buildings located in a seven acre grove near Lafayette. It is a wood frame building constructed in 1851 enhanced by Greek Revival elements. The building housed the first rural high school in Tippecanoe County, the first public high school in the township, and the first public library in the township. It is also one of the few Quaker academy buildings that exist in the state. The school continued until 1874 but Quaker meetings were held in the building until 1882. From 1882-1889 the building was used as a public high school and library. The Quakers took ownership again in 1889 and continue to have meetings there.



Open by appointment.

Mark & Suzie Naylor  
765/ 538-2525

## **Porter-Rea Cemetery, North Liberty (Saint Joseph)**

Located within Potato Creek State Park, the Porter-Rea Cemetery was formed on September 6, 1854 when Samuel Gard deeded land to the township trustees for a cemetery. This cemetery is unique because both white settlers and African American settlers were buried there. The Huggart Settlement, a free black community, was nearby. The Porter Cemetery Association was created May 9, 1884 by members of the Huggart Settlement and their white neighbors. Although located within Potato Creek State Park, the Porter Rea Cemetery is owned by the Porter Cemetery Association.



For information about the Cemetery contact:

Jan Shupert-Arick  
260/ 471-5670

If you plan to visit the Cemetery:

Potato Creek State Park  
25601 St. Rd. 4, P.O. Box 908  
North Liberty, IN 46554  
574-656-8186  
<http://www.state.in.us/dnr/parklake/parks/potatocreek.html>

## **Rankin House, Fort Wayne (Allen County)**

This is the home of Alexander Rankin, a known abolitionist, who built the house in 1841. He lived in the house for two years while he was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. His brother was John Rankin, the most well-known conductor along the Underground Railroad in Ripley, Ohio. The house at 818 South Lafayette Street, is scheduled to house an interpretive center devoted to the history of the Underground Railroad.

For more information about the Rankin House contact:

Arch  
437 E. Berry Street, Suite 204  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
260/ 426-5117



## **African/ African-American Historical Museum, Fort Wayne (Allen County)**

The Museum focuses on the African American experience in Allen County and northeast Indiana. The Museum opened in 2000 and has ten exhibits covering a range of subjects including the Underground Railroad.

African/ African-American Historical Museum  
436 East Douglas Avenue  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
Ph 260/ 420-0765  
Fax 260/ 426-9773

Hours: Tuesday-Friday 9:00am-1:00pm  
Saturday 12:00pm-4:00pm  
Sunday: By Appointment  
Monday: Closed



## **Indiana Avenue, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

One of the four original diagonal streets of the 1821 plan for Indianapolis, Indiana Avenue was the core of African American life in Indianapolis. Businesses along the avenue, particularly the 400 and 500 blocks, provided food, housing, entertainment, consumer services and, most importantly, a sense of identity for African American residents. Some businesses were run by European immigrants but interspersed among those were African American owned businesses. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, more and more African American business owners, residents, and consumers frequented Indiana Avenue. The Indiana Avenue of the 1920s provided



goods and services for African Americans not admitted to downtown stores. The cultural identity created by segregation led to the Harlem Renaissance atmosphere of the area. At that time, jazz clubs and theaters abounded.

The office of the Indianapolis Recorder was also located along the 500 block of Indiana Avenue from 1920-1975. Established in 1895, the Recorder is the third oldest black newspaper in the United States. Residential areas like Ransom Place were nearby and helped foster a neighborhood atmosphere. People could walk to their destinations and such foot traffic helped to add to the liveliness of the area.

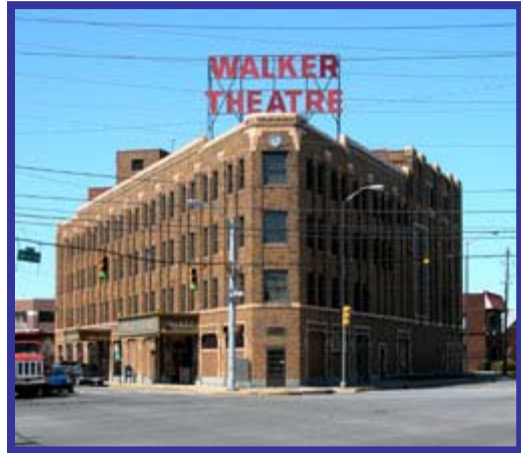




### **Madame CJ Walker Building, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1991, the Madame CJ Walker Building serves as an anchor for Indiana Avenue. A triangular shaped building, the Walker Building is now known as the Walker Theater. Constructed in 1927 for Madame CJ Walker, the building originally housed Walker's beauty products company including Walker Beauty College, manufacturing facilities, a pharmacy, restaurant, and ballroom.

Madame Walker was the first African American woman to open the field of cosmetology as a new and lucrative industry for blacks. Her experimentation with hair preparations for African American women eventually led to the establishment of a thriving business that included not only the manufacturing of 75 beauty products, but also clubs, training programs, beauty schools, and shops throughout the United States. She became the first female to become a millionaire in the business world, and was known for her generous philanthropy to African American charities.



For more information:

Madame Walker Theatre Center  
617 Indiana Ave.  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317/ 236-2099  
<http://www.walkertheatre.org>

### **Crispus Attucks School, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Crispus Attucks High School was built in 1927 as the city of Indianapolis' first and only African American high school. Despite protests from the Better Indianapolis League (a civic organization of progressive black citizens), the school board approved the construction of the school on a site on West Street (currently Dr Martin Luther King Jr Street) near Indiana Avenue. Original plans called for the school to be named Thomas Jefferson High School but, after several petitions, the name was changed to honor Crispus Attucks, the first victim of the 1770 Boston Massacre and, in a sense, the first to die for the cause of the American Revolution.



Enrollment at the school started at 1,345 in 1927 and by 1934 had exceeded 2,000. Several additions were completed as the number of students grew. After all, this single school had to serve all of the African American students for the entire city. In 1949, school segregation was outlawed in Indiana but Crispus Attucks remained almost exclusively African American until busing began in the 1970s to achieve racially integrated school. In the 1980s Crispus

Attucks High School was converted into a junior high school and continues to function as such today. In 1986 the local school board created the Crispus Attucks Museum to house

artifacts from the high school and to recognize the accomplishments of African Americans as the local, state, national and international level. The Museum is housed within the school but is a separate institution.

For more information about the museum:

Crispus Attucks Museum  
1140 Dr Martin Luther King, Jr Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317/ 226-2432 or 317/ 226-2435  
<http://www.ips.k12.in.us/multicultural/museumform.html>

The museum is open Mondays-Fridays from 10:00am-2:00pm

### **Ransom Place Historic District, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Located west of downtown Indianapolis, Ransom Place historic district developed from 1880-1900. The district is located just north of Indiana Avenue, the corridor of African American life during the early twentieth century, and consists of modest vernacular style houses sited on narrow city lots. The area was considered a prestigious area to live and was referred to as the "Negro Meridian Street" in reference to the city's premier white residential street, North Meridian. Several leaders of the African American community and leading businessmen of the time called Ransom Place home—Dr. J. Ward (early black physician), John Puryear (City Councilman), Henry Richardson (attorney and Democratic candidate for state representative in 1932), James Lott (attorney and civic leader), Willard Ransom (attorney), Freeman Ransom (attorney and manager of the Madam C. J. Walker Company), Oscar W. Langston (dentist), Rev. William D. Speight (minister), George Hayes (public school principal), and Henry L. Hummons (doctor).

With the arrival of the Depression, many African American neighborhoods suffered. Ransom Place and Indiana Avenue managed to teem with activity. However, this vibrancy did not last. Residents moved out of the area causing businesses to struggle and eventually the area lost its luster. In 1971, MEDIC (Midtown Economic Development and Industrial Corporation) promoted urban renewal of Indiana Avenue and the adjacent neighborhood. Today this neighborhood stands as an example of one of the earlier historic districts rehabilitated in the city.

The Museum is open by appointment only. To make an appointment please call, Daisy Durell at 317/ 951-8344.

Historic Ransom Place Museum  
830 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317/ 632-2340

### **Bethel AME Church, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Located in what was the center of Indianapolis' black community, the Bethel AME church is the oldest African American congregation in the state. The congregation, founded in 1836, met in a small frame house and was also known as Indianapolis Station. In 1862 a fire destroyed their next place of worship. Oral history accounts indicate that the fire was intentionally set because of the Church's role in the Underground Railroad. The

congregation contracted for the construction of a new brick church in 1867-1869. The 4-story tower, east gable and west cross gable were added later as was a Pflugmayer pipe organ. Other additions include electricity, steam heat and stained glass windows. A false façade was added in 1973-1974 but the original brick exists underneath the metal framework and stucco.

One of the main concerns of the church members was the education of African American children. The public school system did not admit black students until the 1870s. Beginning in 1858 an independent school started at Bethel AME. Tuition was charged so only those children whose parents could afford the fees could attend.

Bethel AME Church  
414 W. Vermont St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
317/ 634-7002

<http://www.bethelame-indy.org/>



### **Booker T. Washington School, Rushville (Rush County)**

Constructed in 1905, the Booker T. Washington School served as one of two African American schools in Rush County. This two story, brick building housed grades 1-6 up until 1932, when it was closed by the local school board. The first floor of the school contained classrooms while the second floor had offices and a large open meeting space. Black affiliates of organizations like the NAACP, Odd Fellows, and Masons utilized this space for their meetings. The Washington School served the educational, cultural, political, social and fraternal needs of the African American community in Rushville. Today the school is owned by the city of Rushville and houses the Rush County Head Start program.

### **Flanner House Homes, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Flanner House Homes is an urban neighborhood of approximately 180 residences developed between 1950-1959 by Flanner House. Flanner House was founded in 1893 to promote the "social, spiritual, moral, and physical welfare of Negroes in Indianapolis, the establishment and maintenance of industrial and other lines of education." Cleo Blackburn became the director of Flanner House in 1936 and focused one aspect of the organization on housing. In his efforts to make homeownership a reality for low-income African Americans, Blackburn worked with American Friends Service Community and created Flanner House Homes, Incorporated. In combination with the Indianapolis Redevelopment Commission, Flanner House relocated residents and cleared the land bounded by 16<sup>th</sup>, Martin Luther King, Jr., Milburn, and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets. Then the land was sold to private developers, one of which was Flanner House Homes, Inc.

Project "A" of the construction lasted from 1950-1953. Flanner House chose twenty-one families (mostly veterans) based on history of steady work, minimum yearly wage, ability to make small down payment, and good credit rating. Workers were expected to put in twenty hours of labor per week toward construction until all homes within the project area were finished. The accumulated work hours were then subtracted from the value of the worker's house. The balance was made up of a series of small monthly payments.

Flanner House had an operating fund to finance the purchase of land and materials. It also organized the work groups by assigning shifts and providing the necessary training. The project was considered a method of "upgrading skills, revitalizing community areas, teaching citizenship, and maintaining a spirit of friendliness, neighborliness, and continued cooperation in an urban community." The skills that the workers learned were utilized to find further employment once the construction was complete.

In 1957 the city of Indianapolis was the recipient of *Look* magazine's award for community home achievement for the development of Flanner House Homes. By the 1960s Flanner House Homes became the largest urban self-help housing developed in America.

For additional information about Flanner House Homes, contact:

Disa Watson-Summers  
317/ 285-4564

### **Lockefield Gardens Apartments, Indianapolis (Marion County)**

Designed by William E Russ and Merritt Harrison and funded by the Public Works Administration, the Lockefield Gardens Apartments were constructed between 1935-1937. The complex originally had 24 separate apartment buildings and these structures comprised one of the nation's first federally initiated, funded, and supervised peacetime housing projects. The design of these low-income apartments was based on a European model of large-scale housing and urban design of the 1920s in the International Style. This complex became an officially recommended model for federally subsidized housing projects and has had influence on the development of public and private housing in the United States.

Built in an area that had contained slums, shared water pumps and a few outhouses during the early 1930s, Lockefield Gardens became a source of pride and of hope for the local community. There had never been such a large-scale undertaking in the city for the sole benefit of African American residents. To live in Lockefield was considered an honor:

In 1981 a major construction project by the Department of Housing and Urban Development took place on the grounds and resulted in the demolition of fourteen of the buildings leaving only seven of the original structures. The remaining buildings now function as market-rate apartments and are located at the southwest corner of Indiana Avenue and Blake Street.