

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory--Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic

~~Eight Black History Resources in Cleveland~~ <sup>Thematic</sup>

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number See Inventory Sheets

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Cleveland \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 21 - Louis Stokes

state Ohio code 039 county Cuyahoga code 035

**3. Classification**

**Category**

\_\_\_ district  
☒ building(s)  
 \_\_\_ structure  
 \_\_\_ site  
 \_\_\_ object  
☒ thematic

**Ownership**

\_\_\_ public  
☒ private  
 \_\_\_ both  
**Public Acquisition**  
 \_\_\_ in process  
 \_\_\_ being considered

N/A

**Status**

☒ occupied  
 \_\_\_ unoccupied  
 \_\_\_ work in progress  
**Accessible**  
☒ yes: restricted  
 \_\_\_ yes: unrestricted  
 \_\_\_ no

**Present Use**

\_\_\_ agriculture  
 \_\_\_ commercial  
 \_\_\_ educational  
 \_\_\_ entertainment  
 \_\_\_ government  
 \_\_\_ industrial  
 \_\_\_ military  
 \_\_\_ museum  
 \_\_\_ park  
 \_\_\_ private residence  
 \_\_\_ religious  
 \_\_\_ scientific  
 \_\_\_ transportation  
 \_\_\_ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name See Inventory Sheets

street & number

city, town \_\_\_ vicinity of state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cuyahoga County Administration Building

street & number 1219 Ontario

city, town Cleveland state Ohio

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Ohio Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes ☒ no

date 1976 \_\_\_ federal ☒ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Ohio Historical Society

city, town Columbus state Ohio

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This is a group of eight structures located in the center of Cleveland within an area approximately 1.8 miles in each direction and bounded by East 40th and East 90th Streets, Superior and Quincy Avenues. They range in date from 1880 to 1949 and include architectural styles from the Eastlake and eclectic Gothic styles to the Neo-Classic revival and the Modern. Several are significant for their architectural design in addition to their primary social significance. The individual buildings are further identified and described on the attached Ohio Historic Inventory sheets. Two of them have been previously listed in the National Register.

Four buildings were erected for the purposes identified with their significance; and four were erected for other purposes and attained their significance in the black community later. The nominated properties were identified in consultation with the Black History Archives Advisory Committee of the Western Reserve Historical Society and represent those resources which are acknowledged to be most significant among the black community.

The Black History Archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society and its Advisory Committee were formed in 1970. In the eleven years between that date and 1981, the archives under the direction of Archivist Olivia Martin gathered a large data base and developed a greatly enhanced appreciation for the history of the black community in Cleveland. The eight nominated properties are those identified by the Committee as the ones of primary significance in the history and evolution of the community for the reasons stated in the nomination.

Equally important, as explained in the statement of significance, the nominated properties are the survivors. All but one are located in the Central Area (a specific Cleveland neighborhood district). This inner city area historically occupied by the black community has suffered massive changes which are probably greater in Cleveland than in most other cities of comparable size, because of urban renewal, economic decay and neglect by landlords, as well as the upward mobility of middle-class blacks who left the central area after 1950.

Therefore, this group of eight properties, seemingly small, consists of the remaining places generally acknowledged by the community as most significant.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

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**Specific dates**      1880–1949      **Builder/Architect**      N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The nominated properties are a group of historic resources which represent the values and the life of the black community in a major urban center, and which have survived the massive alterations that have taken place in all inner cities.

Blacks have been residents of Cleveland since 1809, a dozen years after its founding. Throughout the 19th century the population grew steadily but slowly, but in 1910 it constituted only 1.5% of the city's total population. The great migration of blacks to Cleveland took place during World War I and through the twenties. Between 1910 and 1930 the population increased eightfold from 8,488 to 71,899, and in 1930 it constituted 8% of the population. Because of economic and social factors, including restrictive clauses in deeds in the suburban areas, the black community was concentrated in the central city during this period between East 14th and East 105th Streets, Euclid and Woodland Avenues. In the years since World War II the community expanded north of Euclid Avenue into the area known as Hough.

The black community always developed its own institutions, as well as a number of vigorous and unique personalities in various fields of endeavor. Some of the institutions occupied buildings which they erected, and others took over older existing structures. Frequently the latter provide an index to the shifting of ethnic groups in the city. These shifts generally followed a sequence of the white European population being replaced by immigrant Jewish groups and then by the black community. However, as the forces of economic decay, urban renewal, and real estate exploitation made their impact on the inner city, many of the historic resources of the black community have been destroyed. Among the remaining resources are churches, social and cultural institutions, and a few places relating to outstanding personalities.

Before 1870, the economic status of Cleveland's blacks was higher than that of most other black communities in the country. During the 19th century, class distinctions within the community became fairly well-defined. A small upper class consisted of merchants, skilled craftsmen and a few professionals. Many had accumulated property, and the group had good relations with whites. The churches clearly reflected the trend of class distinction, although at first most blacks attended integrated congregations. The two earliest black churches, ST. John's African Methodist Episcopal (est. 1830) and Shiloh Baptist (est. 1849), were attended by the middle and working classes rather

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

CLEVELAND, OHIO -- CUYAHOGA CO.

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

### Eight Black History Resources in Cleveland

than the "elite." Today St. John's Church occupies the building it erected in 1908; Shiloh a former synagogue acquired in 1922.

The earliest example of an institution sponsored by blacks for non-religious purposes is the Cleveland Home for Aged Colored People, whose idea was conceived in 1893 by Eliza Bryant. The home remained a small and poorly financed institution during the first two decades of its existence. It was renamed for Eliza Bryant in 1960 and acquired its present home in 1967. The principal social service agency for many years was the Phillis Wheatley Association. Founded by Jane Edna Hunter in 1911 as a home for single Negro girls, the association was patterned after the YWCA but not affiliated with it. A nine-story "Chicago-Style" residential and activities building was erected in 1927 (National Register, 8/24/79). It has served as an elderly residence since 1972.

After 1900 a new group of businessmen, who depended more on black patronage in the community, began to challenge the leadership of the "old elite." Because of the small population in Cleveland, the differences between these two groups were less pronounced than in many other cities. Garrett Morgan was one of "the leading success stories of the new elite." Coming to Cleveland from Kentucky, Morgan was a manufacturer and inventor and enjoyed an economic success based partly on products which were not oriented toward the black community. Another of the prominent business leaders of the new elite was J. Walter Wills, who established himself as the city's leading black undertaker by 1920. The Wills business today occupies the same premises that it has owned since 1941.

The idea of Negro unity and nationalism inspired the founding by Marcus Garvey in 1911 of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In 1923 the Cleveland branch acquired the large house built in 1880 by Jacob Goldsmith and used as a Jewish Infants Orphans Home from 1908-1922 (National Register, 3/8/78). After 1915, increasing discrimination against blacks following the great migration, as well as the consolidation of a black ghetto, fostered a new racial consciousness. Interest in black folk culture later became focussed in Karamu House, originally founded as the Playhouse Settlement, a unique social institution which developed a multipurpose social center and an inter-racial community theater. The first theater building burned in 1939, and it

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

**Eight Black History Resources in Cleveland**

was not possible to rebuild until after the war. Karamu House meets the criteria of exceptional significance for a property less than fifty years old because it houses the institution founded in 1915 as an interracial community theater group. The building is not unusual architecturally, but it is associated with events which have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, i.e., racial segregation and integration and the development of community theater. The continuous work of Karamu House for more than sixty-five years is recognized as one of the most important forces in the cultural history of the black community in Cleveland.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

W. G. Rose, Cleveland: The Making of a City (Cleveland, 1950).  
Russell H. Davis, Black Americans in Cleveland (Washington, DC, 1972).  
Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape (Urbana, 1976).  
Eric Johannesen, Cleveland Architecture 1876-1976 (Cleveland, 1979).

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property SEE INVENTORY FORMS

Quadrangle name SEE INVENTORY FORMS

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

SEE INVENTORY FORMS

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE INVENTORY FORMS

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eric Johannesen, preservation officer

organization Western Reserve Historical Society date September 1981

street & number 10825 East Boulevard telephone 216-721-5722

city or town Cleveland state Ohio 44106

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

W. Ray

title SHPO

date 10/22/82

For HGRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>See continuation sheet for listing</u>	date
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Black History Thematic Resources  
State Ohio

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Morgan, Garrett, House Substantive Review

Keeper

Bruce A. Doyle 12/17/82

Attest

2. Karamu House  
MAA

Keeper

Bruce A. Doyle 12/17/82

Attest

3. St. John's AME Church

for Keeper

Deloris Byers 12/17/82

Attest

4. Cleveland Home for Aged  
Colored People

Keeper

Bruce A. Doyle 12/17/82

Attest

5. House of Wills

for Keeper

Deloris Byers 12/17/82

Attest

6. Shiloh Baptist Church

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Deloris Byers 12/17/82

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest