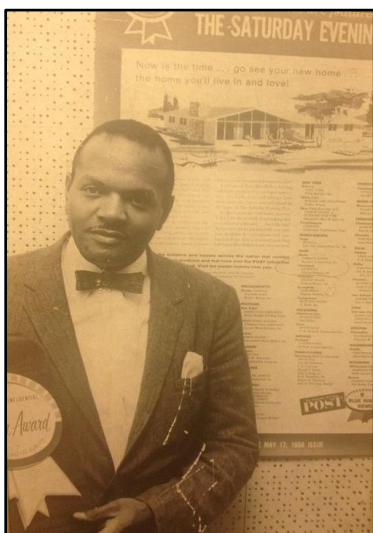




African American Builders in Cleveland's Lee-Seville Neighborhood Survey Report

August, 2019

Prepared by:
The Cleveland Restoration Society
Preservation Services
3751 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115-2705



Abstract

Cleveland's African American population grew tremendously during the first several decades of the 20th Century with the growth of industry and the mass exodus of Southern Blacks to northern industrial cities, like Cleveland. As the African American population grew, prejudice and segregation grew, with an expanding Black population confined to Cleveland's Cedar-Central neighborhood. There existed only a few Black enclaves outside of this one over-crowded neighborhood. One such enclave existed in Lee-Seville, which had been formed when the integrated Village of Miles Heights was annexed into Cleveland in 1932. The African American population of Lee-Seville grew with the development of the Seville Homes, temporary housing for War Workers in 1946. In this area, a unique "surrogate suburb" or "suburb in the city" developed for African Americans. In this particular neighborhood, an integrated population and the availability of inexpensive land created a unique condition where African Americans could achieve the dream of home ownership in a suburban setting. A number of African Americans with experience in engineering or construction, took advantage of this opportunity in order to make home ownership available for African Americans. In this work, they pooled resources to found their companies, experimented with ways of building less expensively through the use of new materials—such as perforated brick-- or methods, such as "Co-operative building," and worked to achieve greater opportunities for themselves and other African Americans. This opportunity existed for a short time—about a decade—before the larger area integrated, making a lot more suburban housing available to the African American homebuyer.

Acknowledgements

This project was conducted to further develop the rich history of the Lee-Harvard and Lee-Seville neighborhoods, which—up to now—have remained largely unrecorded. The efforts of the Cleveland Restoration Society to uncover this history began with the encouragement and support of former Ward 1 Councilman Terrell Pruitt and have been further supported by current Councilman Joe Jones. We have been greatly aided in this endeavor of the support of The Harvard Community Services Center and their Executive Director Elaine Gohlstin. Elders in the community have contributed greatly to the project by sitting for oral history interviews and contributing photographs and stories to our digitization and storytelling events. We have been honored to work with Dr. Todd Michney, Assistant Professor in the School of History and Sociology at the Georgia Institute of Technology and author of *Surrogate Suburbs: Black Upward Mobility and Neighborhood Change in Cleveland, 1900-1980* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017). We had excellent interns to assist in carrying out this survey: Carolyn Gimble, Cornell University, a Keithley Intern; and Katie Kuckleheim, Ohio Wesleyan University, a Cleveland Foundation Intern.

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Introduction

In 2013-2014, the Cleveland Restoration Society hosted an AmeriCorps member from the Ohio History Connection through Serve Ohio. During that year, she completed "Mid-Century Modern: Survey of Greater Cleveland's Historic Buildings, 1940-1970." One neighborhood in Cleveland's Ward 1 included in that survey was Myrtle Avenue and Highview Drive, which was identified through a single image in the Cleveland State University digital archive, *Cleveland Memory*. The caption for the 1959 image read, "View of new Negro homes in \$35,000 class on Myrtle Avenue, off Lee Road. Arthur Bussey, builder." Her research gave us a preliminary view of a southern-born mason who came to Cleveland and became a noted contractor and developer in the African American community.

We soon learned of the work of Dr. Todd Michney, assistant professor in the School of History and Sociology at the Georgia Institute of Technology and author of Surrogate Suburbs: Black Upward Mobility and Neighborhood Change in Cleveland, 1900-1980. With Certified Local Government funding through the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, CRS was able to hold community meetings to educate the Myrtle/Highview residents about the importance of their neighborhood, to sponsor a series of community events and lectures by Dr. Michney on the context of African American suburbanization in the mid-20th century in Cleveland, and to produce an educational brochure about the life of Arthur Bussey. The Myrtle/Highview neighborhood, designated as the Arthur Bussey Historic District, became the first local historic district designated in Cleveland's Ward 1 and the first in the City built both by and for African Americans.

We also surveyed the remaining properties in the neighborhood that had not been built by Arthur Bussey. Two other African American builders came to our attention: Rufus Ranaldson and William Woodridge. These builders had gained experience working for other African American builders, Albert Taborn and Carr & Dillard/Southeast Builders. All of these builders had developed homes in a fairly small area south of Miles Avenue both east and west of Lee Road. It soon became apparent that this was an unusual area in that it was both integrated and undeveloped, providing a rare opportunity for a "surrogate suburb" in Cleveland for African Americans during the 1950s—a time when they were otherwise segregated to Cleveland's inner-city neighborhoods. The purpose of this survey is to

identify the homes built by these African American builders and to develop the story of how both builders and homeowners were able to overcome systemic racial barriers to create strong neighborhoods and better lives for their families and for their community.

II. Research Design

A. Survey Objectives

A survey of African American builders in the Lee-Seville neighborhood is an exciting initiative for the Cleveland Restoration Society in that it continues an effort begun in 2012 as the organization's 40th Anniversary Legacy Project to identify resources associated with Cleveland's rich African American history; it contributes to the Ohio History Connection's Ohio Modern Initiative to identify resources from the mid-20th Century; and it expands our knowledge of Lee-Harvard and Lee-Seville—two predominantly African American neighborhoods that had not been well studied until recently. Resources in both neighborhoods were first surveyed by the CRS AmeriCorps member in 2013-2014.

As we began to learn about these builders in a very distinct place and time in mid-century Cleveland, we began to also develop the historic context: Many of these builders were part of the "Great Migration" of African Americans from the American South to the North in pursuit of greater opportunity. The story of these individuals and of the families that were able to achieve homeownership should build both community pride and a sense of place in the Lee-Seville neighborhood, a neighborhood that is in transition and now experiencing disinvestment as the long-term homeowners pass and are often replaced by renters. This story will build appreciation for the unique design and construction of midcentury resources and help market the neighborhood to a new generation of buyers who may be looking for a smaller footprint and less maintenance. Finally, this survey will help us to identify potential historic districts and opportunities for place-making exercises and tours to share this unique history.

B. Survey Area

We were not certain of the exact survey area until we were into the survey and identified all of the houses built by the identified African American builders. The African American Builders were determined first, and then deeds searched of properties they sold during their years of operation. Building permits and ads in the Call & Post newspaper helped to confirm

these transactions. All of the resources were either in the Lee-Seville neighborhood (off of Lee Road, south of Miles Avenue) or in the small West Park enclave near W.130th. Lee-Seville grew out of the former Miles Heights Village. “The Village” and the West Park Enclave were two of only a few African American settlements outside of Cleveland’s Cedar-Central neighborhood.

C. Field Techniques & Research Methods

Survey level was intensive. Resources were photographed both from a front view and an oblique angle in the field. Surveyors identified condition and distinguishing features in the field. A Summary Report available from the Cuyahoga County Auditor was printed for each property and used in identifying acreage, frontage and building dates for auxiliary structures such as garages. An Excel spreadsheet of each property and necessary information helped to organize survey information and better track the survey.

Since we had builders identified, we were able to identify houses utilizing the Cuyahoga County Property records online documents. These records do not typically identify company names for builders. We searched property transfers in the name of our identified builders—Arthur Taborn, Rufus Ranaldson, William Woodridge, and the various gentlemen involved in the Carr & Dillard firm (Tillman Carr, Leslie Ephraim, etc., as identified in *Call & Post* articles about the firm).

Many deeds in Cuyahoga County have the legal description of the property, but not a specific address. Since these would identify an individual or individuals who made a purchase from one of our builders, we were able to cross-reference the names of buyers in the Cleveland City Directory and identify the address for the specific property.

The *Call & Post*, the historic African American newspaper serving northeast Ohio, has been a valuable resource for learning more about the identified African American builders. Some advertisements for these builders mention specific addresses. The Taborn “Lorenzo” model, for instance, was profiled in a series of articles about new home owners. The *Call & Post*, like the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, has been digitized and is available through the Cleveland Public Library digital collection. The “Lorenzo” also has a unique form that is characteristic—a hipped roof with a small gable in the front, a

central chimney, and a series of high horizontal windows on the side. There are obvious other Lorenzos on Langley, the street where the model home was located. By finding the first owners through the city directory, we also searched transactions with that person in the Cuyahoga County deeds to locate a transaction with Taborn.

The City of Cleveland Building Department has building permits from the time period on microfilm. We have also used the Cuyahoga County tax reappraisal cards from the Cuyahoga County Archives in doing building research. These cards were created between 1955 and 1962 or so, so will often identify the builder as the initial property owner.

We have identified two daughters of Albert Taborn: Annette Taborn lives in Seattle, Washington and has shared photographs and papers with us. Karen Taborn is an ethnomusicologist living in New York City and recently published *Walking Harlem: The Ultimate Guide to the Cultural Capital of Black America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018). We also have become acquainted with Rufus Randalson's widow Imogene, who still lives in the house they built in 1957. We were finally able to reach her through her son, after making several attempts through others in the community.

We requested information from the historian of the Homebuilders Association of Greater Cleveland, but they were not able to provide relevant information. The HBA did not accept African American members until 1954 and our builders each appeared to build in a fairly small footprint that was both integrated and not yet developed.

D. Expected Results

Since we knew our African American builders were operating in a fairly short window after the Second World War and before the larger neighborhood and the eastern suburbs were integrated in the early 1960s, we expected the resources to be typical of styles popular during the period. It was expected that Cape Cods, English Cottage styles and Minimal Traditional, Ranch and Split-Level types would be represented. Since this area is south of Miles Avenue and adjacent to the railroad tracks and light industrial areas, it was expected that the homes might be somewhat smaller and more modest than those found in the neighborhood to the north. It was also expected that some homes by these builders may have been built in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood to the north or the very small African American enclave on Cleveland West Park neighborhood. We expected to identify additional

African Americans builders, but found only one, and it did not appear that he had built more than one house.

III. Setting & Historic Context

A. Survey Project Boundary

The Survey Project Boundary was determined to include five streets off of Lee Road representing the work of Carr & Dillard, Woodridge, Ranaldson, and Taborn. Several additional streets to the east include later houses built by Albert Taborn and Woodridge.

B. Environmental Setting

The Lee-Seville Neighborhood is approximately 15 miles from Downtown Cleveland in the far southeastern corner of the City. The neighborhood lies south of Miles Avenue and the railroad tracks and has a large light industrial park on its west side, west of Lee Road. The 480-Freeway runs south of its southern border. Kerruish Park, 76 acres and one of the largest parks in the City of Cleveland, is east of Lee Road in the southern section of the neighborhood. Several residential streets on the east side of Lee terminate in the park, but typically at a locked fence. The streets immediately off of Lee have scattered houses that predate the Second World War, but the neighborhood was largely developed after the War. Lee Road is lined with midcentury commercial strip enters with small parking lots, mixed in with newer drive-through establishments. Many of these buildings are vacant or are in need of rehabilitation. The residential neighborhoods are much stronger and more attractive than the commercial area o Lee Road would indicate.

C. Transportation Routes

While much of Cleveland is traversed by streetcar routes that followed the way of earlier plank roads, Lee Seville is unusual. The major thoroughfare that defines the neighborhood is Lee Road, which grew out of Center Road traveling south from the North Union Shaker Community that preceded the present day City of Shaker Heights.

“The United Society of Believers in the Second Appearing of Christ,” also known as Shakers, organized in Cleveland in 1822. Founded by “Mother”

Ann Lee, a small band of this persecuted minority had come to America from England in 1774. Shaker Colonies were formed in New York, the New England States, and later the frontier. Jacob Russell, a Revolutionary War veteran, had purchased 475 acres in Connecticut's Western Reserve in 1811. In 1812, Russell moved his family of twenty to the Western Reserve. His son Ralph visited Union Village—a Shaker community near Lebanon Ohio—and became a believer. In 1822, an elder persuaded Ralph Russell to form a Shaker community. "The Valley of God's Pleasure," as it came to be known, increased by 1,366 acres on which the community grew corn, flax, hemp, and dairy products. Eventually, one Center Family occupied a large dwelling west of Center Road; and there was a Gathering Family and a Mill Family. In 1850, North Union was a thriving community of three hundred, but the sect declined after the Civil War. In 1889, with only 27 members left, North Union disbanded. A syndicate purchase the land in 1892 and sold it to Oris and Mantis Van Sweringen, who founded the Village of Shaker Heights.

Although it is not certain when Center Road became known as Lee, it developed slowly as part of Warrensville Township—later the Village of Miles Heights and Shaker Heights developed to the south of the North Union settlement and north into Cleveland Heights. There were attempts by a couple developers in the early 20th Century to develop the lower section of Lee Road in Miles Heights, but this area was fairly isolated and lacked infrastructure, such as sewers and paved roads, until annexed into Cleveland at the beginning of the Great Depression.



Figure 1: Lee Road, 1904 (Cleveland Public Library Photo Collection)



Figure 2: Lee & Seville roads, 1947, showing Seville Homes in the distance (Cleveland Public Library Photographic Collection).

D. Historic Developments/Historic Context

African Americans in Cleveland

African Americans have lived in Cleveland nearly from the time of its founding, ever since the Peake family's arrival as the first Black settlers in 1809. Although at that point the concept of a suburb did not yet apply because Cleveland was still a village, George Peake decided in 1811 to buy land in the nearby township of Rockport, where he established a successful grain-grinding business. Rockport would later be divided to form the suburbs of Lakewood, Rocky River, Fairview Park, and Linndale – so it seems noteworthy that Cleveland's first Black resident family quickly gravitated outward, and to the West Side, at that.¹ Since then, African Americans as much as anyone else

¹ Russell H. Davis, *Black Americans in Cleveland* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1972), 38-41.

have aspired to own property and live in pleasant surroundings, despite the manifold discriminatory barriers historically placed in their way.²

From the 19th into the early 20th centuries, African Americans comprised a relatively small but nonetheless significant presence in Cleveland. With an active abolitionist movement before the Civil War, the city had a fairly well-deserved reputation for peaceable race relations and for offering more opportunities to Black people than comparable northern cities at the time, even while most still worked at laboring and service occupations. Some notable early African American citizens were abolitionists John Malvin and John Brown, respectively a carpenter-preacher, and a barber who became wealthy by investing in real estate. The city's first Black church, St. John's AME, was founded in 1830, and the second, Mount Zion Congregational, in 1864. In 1873, Cleveland's notable record of Black public service began when John P. Greene was elected justice of the peace; the following decade, Greene went on to serve in the Ohio state legislature before becoming, in 1891, the first Black man in the North to hold a state senate office. Another prominent Black Clevelander in this era, author Charles Waddell Chesnutt, was born here in 1858, and after spending his youth in North Carolina, returned to study law in 1883 – the same year that the city's first Black-owned newspaper got its start. Chesnutt's novels, which introduced themes from the African American experience to a broader audience, enabled him to spend his full time writing by 1900 – and as a measure of his acceptance among local Whites, he was admitted as a member to the Rowfant Club, an elite literary society, and was buried in Lakeview Cemetery.³

The Great Migration

Despite this early history, the vast majority of Black Clevelanders trace their family origins not to the 19th century but to the Great Migration out of the South, beginning during World War I and continuing into the 1960s. On the eve of this transformation in 1910, although about 8,500 African Americans lived in the city, they represented less than 2 percent of its population. With the wartime cutoff of immigration from Europe – which had been the primary labor supply for the city's growing heavy industries – employers

² For an overview on the national level, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 18, 25-30, 118-121, 126-130, 238-240.

suddenly became willing to hire Black workers, even engaging in recruitment efforts in the South in some cases. However, while African American men were offered work in Cleveland's steel mills and on railroads, they were almost entirely relegated to the lowest-paid, most dangerous and dirty positions like foundry labor; even so, the wages were far higher than what was available in the South, where the vast majority had worked as sharecroppers. Most black women, on the other hand, remained stuck in domestic service, although some gained access to the lowliest industrial jobs, such as sweeping out railroad cars. Besides higher wages in the North, migrants coming to Cleveland and other cities were additionally motivated by a desire for better schooling, or to escape racial oppression in the Jim Crow South – and as this population shift continued after the war, more relocated to reunite with family and friends who had earlier made the journey. As a result, from 1910-1920, Cleveland's Black population grew by over 400 percent – to more than 34,000, with African Americans now making up over 4 percent of the total. Their population would double yet again by 1930, to some 72,000, nearly 8 percent of the city total.⁴

This rapid and dramatic population increase had some far-reaching effects, as historian Kenneth Kusmer has shown. White antagonism toward African Americans increased dramatically, and was expressed in discriminatory treatment of Black customers in public accommodations like restaurants, theaters, department stores, and amusement parks to mention a few examples. Even more consequential was the emergence of racial segregation in housing. Already before World War I, Black Clevelanders lived mostly on the East Side, but interspersed among Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the "Central Areas" beyond downtown. However, as early as 1917 pockets of all-Black settlement were becoming evident in the blocks off the two main thoroughfares, Cedar and Central Avenues. With their options frequently limited by low wages and the growing opposition of White residents in outlying areas of the city, many migrants crowded into the aging housing of the Cedar-Central district's westernmost portion, with landlords dividing up single- and double-family housing into "kitchenette" apartments that typically lacked cooking and bathroom facilities, for which they nonetheless charged exorbitant rents. Already by 1930, this part of the district had a population density twice the city average.⁵ To avoid such living

⁴ Kusmer, *Ghetto Takes Shape*, 157-161; Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 15-97.

⁵ Kusmer, *Ghetto Takes Shape*, 161-189.

conditions, more affluent families began moving eastward past East 79th to as far as East 105th Street, meaning this emerging Black residential area was becoming segregated not just by race but also by class. Even this proved no escape, however, because the demolitions that accompanied the construction of two public housing complexes in 1935 (Cedar Apartments and Outhwaite Homes) displaced large numbers of less well-off residents into the eastern reaches of Cedar-Central, where similar conditions of overcrowding soon ensued.⁶ Public schools in the area also became increasingly segregated by race.

These developments increased the attractiveness of the urban periphery for some African Americans who sought an alternative to ghettoization, initiating a push toward suburbanization that forms the subject of this nomination. It is important to note, however, that as of 1930, Cedar-Central still housed nearly 90 percent of Cleveland's Black population. On the bright side, this concentration led to the election in 1915 of the first African American city councilman, Thomas W. Fleming, to be joined in 1927 by Eugene J. Gregg and Clayborne George. The membership of Cleveland's NAACP branch also grew during the 1920s, along with organizations like the Negro Welfare Association (the city's Urban League affiliate) and Phillis Wheatley Association which had initially aimed to "resocialize" the migrants to northern norms. Instead, in the words of historian Kimberley Phillips, the newcomers effectively "Southernized" Cleveland's Black culture. They formed new organizations – notably the Future Outlook League, established by Alabama-born John O. Holly in 1935, which utilized boycotts to pry open job opportunities and press for better housing. Perhaps the most visible impact of the Great Migration was a jump in the number of Black churches from just fourteen in 1910 to 132 by 1930.⁷ To serve the growing population, a number of successful Black-owned businesses were also founded during this era, such as the House of Wills, E.F. Boyd Funeral Home, and the Empire Savings & Loan Co. However, the onset of the Great Depression devastated both Black business owners and families. While overall unemployment averaged 45 percent in Cleveland at its peak, the figure ran as high as 85 percent in the poorest sections of Cedar-Central. African Americans were forced out of the industrial workforce and even some service jobs that Whites had previously disdained, like elevator operators

⁶ Christopher G. Wye, "The New Deal and the Negro Community: Toward a Broader Conceptualization," *Journal of American History* 59 (December 1972): 621-639.

⁷ Kusmer, *Ghetto Takes Shape*, 144-146, 271-272; Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 161-225.

and janitors. As their customers' spending power decreased, Black-owned businesses struggled, with six of the city's Black undertakers going bankrupt, for example. As discussed below, of direct relevance to the topic at hand was the collapse of businessman Herbert Chauncey's Empire Savings & Loan, along with his People's Realty Co. which had enabled dozens of Black families to acquire houses at the suburban periphery during the relatively prosperous 1920s.⁸

Even before the Great Migration and White antagonism combined to produce overcrowding in Cedar-Central, some African Americans had looked to the city's outer edges. In the 1890s, a White railroad contractor went bankrupt while building a line in Newburgh, a town to the southeast that Cleveland later annexed, and paid his Black workers in land. These vacant lots north of Kinsman Road, on what became East 126th and East 128th Streets in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, formed a nucleus for the expanding city's largest Black settlement outside of Cedar-Central, especially after real estate agent Welcome T. Blue (Sr.) began promoting lot sales there soon after the turn of the century. "Get Away from the Crowded, Smoky, City. Own Your Own Home. Raise Garden Fruit. Chickens, Hogs, Cows," one of Blue's advertisements read. By 1930, approximately 350 families lived in Mount Pleasant, a considerable proportion of whom were postal workers, skilled building tradesmen, chauffeurs, and factory workers; in fact, many families had built their own houses after gradually accumulating savings following their initial purchases of land. Three churches already served the community by that year, with the oldest, Mount Olive Baptist, founded in 1907. Children attended Lafayette Elementary School, and African Americans seem to have gotten along well enough with their mostly Jewish, Italian, and Hungarian neighbors, except when they tried to swim at the Woodland Hills Park pool, where racial clashes were common for the first decade after its opening in 1927. By 1940, nearly 700 Black families lived in the original Mount Pleasant enclave, with 200 more residing in a secondary cluster farther to the southeast along East 142nd, 143rd, and 144th Streets. And this was not the only place outside Cedar-Central where African Americans were settling. Almost 300 Black families lived in the northeasterly, heavily Jewish Glenville neighborhood by 1940, a disproportionate number of them professionals and clerical workers who had begun arriving as early as 1915. Still others lived in an enclave that emerged in the 1920s on the city's West Side – consisting of

⁸ Christopher G. Wye, "Midwest Ghetto: Patterns of Negro Life and Thought in Cleveland, 1929-1945," Ph.D. diss. (Kent State University, 1973), 118-124, 231-247; Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 193-197.

three streets off Bellaire Avenue – or in even further outlying suburban clusters established around the same time in Maple Heights, Chagrin Falls, Woodmere, and Berea. While much of this outward movement occurred without violent retaliation from angry White neighbors, there were several high-profile cases of harassment and even a bombing when individual African American families moved in the 1920s and 1930s to the University Circle area, Shaker Heights, and Cleveland Heights.⁹

The Village of Miles Heights 1927-1932

Perhaps the most remarkable story of an outlying Black enclave taking shape around this time concerns the one located just to the west of the Lee and Seville Roads intersection. By establishing a foothold here in Cleveland's far southeastern reaches, African Americans laid the successful groundwork for this vicinity to develop as a Black "suburb in the city" over the following decades, which had actually been the idea all along. In November 1920, the People's Realty Co., founded earlier that year by Cleveland's leading Black businessman Herbert S. Chauncey, purchased just over a hundred lots in the already-subdivided "Bella Villa Allotment," located in what at the time was Warrensville Township. Born in Georgia and educated at Talladega College, Chauncey was a former railway postal clerk who had traveled throughout Ohio and decided to settle in Cleveland around 1918. The next year he had founded the Empire Savings & Loan Co. after raising \$100,000 in working capital, with the goal of lending to Black families who aspired to buy homes outside the confines of Cedar-Central. Although he himself chose to purchase on Glenville's Pierpont Avenue in 1923, Chauncey envisioned that on the earlier Mount Pleasant model, families would buy lots in Bella Villa and then save to build their houses. As many as twenty houses may have already stood on the development's streets when the People's Realty Co. acquired the allotment, and the company began selling its lots the following spring, with sales picking up especially after 1925 – the same year that the enclave's first church, Canaan Missionary Baptist, was built. In 1927, the People's Realty Co. was reportedly successful enough to pay a dividend to its shareholders, and was described as "perhaps the largest realty organization managed by colored people in the City of Cleveland." That same year, enclave residents, along with voters in the nearby vicinity, successfully

⁹ Todd M. Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs: Black Upward Mobility and Neighborhood Change in Cleveland, 1900-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 18-58.

petitioned the State of Ohio to be incorporated as the Village of Miles Heights, thereby becoming a bona fide suburb¹⁰ (Figure #3).



Figure 3: Miles Heights, 1932 (Cleveland State University, Michael Schwartz Library).

Some even more unexpected turns lay on the horizon for the Lee-Seville enclave and Miles Heights, however. In February 1929, Miles Heights' mayor died unexpectedly in office, which meant that the president of the village council, Arthur R. Johnston, ascended to the mayoralty to serve out the remainder of the term. Johnston – a Jamaican immigrant, county road foreman, and homeowner in the Lee-Seville enclave – thereby became Cuyahoga County's first African American mayor and one of the first in the state. Since Miles Heights' population was only about one-third Black, Johnston had been elected to the council (and before that the school board) with White support; in fact, when he sat in that year's November election, he was backed by about half the village's Whites and received two-thirds of the vote total, trouncing his White challenger. Cleveland's Black community considered Johnston's election a huge success, throwing him an inaugural ball at Elks Hall on East 55th Street attended by some 3,000 people. But

¹⁰ *Chicago Defender*, May 8, 1920; Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 100-101; *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 30, 1927; *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 26, 1930.

Miles Heights as an independent municipality faced some insurmountable challenges. As a still mostly undeveloped residential area whose residents were overwhelmingly working-class – including the White residents, largely of recent immigrant origin – Miles Heights struggled to raise sufficient tax revenue to fund city services and public education at its only school, Beehive Elementary (built 1917). Like tiny Linndale on the West Side, Miles Heights additionally developed a reputation for bootlegging, a serious offense with the Prohibition Amendment still in effect.¹¹

Then there was much larger and still-growing Cleveland's record of annexing smaller municipalities on its borders. With an eye on Miles Heights, an organization called the Citizens League pressured the county's civil service commissioners to disallow Mayor Johnston from simultaneously holding his road foreman job, and apparently teamed with a group of disgruntled White Miles Heights residents to launch an annexation campaign. Johnston defended his record by pointing out that he had put the village's finances in better shape than he found them, that a \$50,000 addition to Beehive Elementary was recently completed on his watch, and that he was attempting a crackdown on liquor violations and gambling. At a contentious March 1931 meeting at the Cuyahoga County courthouse attended by dozens both for and against the proposed annexation, Johnston aired his suspicions that the campaign was actually motivated by racial prejudice against him, even calling his opponents "Klansmen." Nonetheless, county commissioners authorized the dissolution of Miles Heights that December, and a majority of the village's voters approved a measure to join Cleveland in March 1932. In protest against what they considered an unlawful process, a group of Miles Heights officials made a symbolic last stand, occupying the town hall for one night and posing for a photograph with pistols in hand.¹²

Lee-Seville 1932-1940

Meanwhile, other developments were affecting the Lee-Seville enclave in particular. In June 1930, Herbert Chauncey died suddenly of heart failure at the age of forty-three. In the wake of his premature death – and with the Great Depression deepening – the Empire Savings & Loan was hit by depositor withdrawals and an embezzlement scandal, after which it went into

¹¹ *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 9, 1929; *Baltimore Afro-American*, January 25, 1930; Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 100-101; Andrew Wiese, "The Other Suburbanites: African American Suburbanization in the North before 1950," *Journal of American History* 85 (March 1999): 1495-1524.

¹² *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, December 27, 1930; *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 21, 1931; "Miles Heights Village: An Early Integrated Suburb," *Cleveland Historical* (July 2011), <https://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/297>.

state receivership. With about forty of its original lots still unsold, the People's Realty Co. subsequently folded, unable to pay its mortgage on the Bella Vista landholding. Despite this misfortune for the investors, the community continued to sink roots. With Miles Heights unable to fund the construction of sewers or paved roads, self-sufficient early settlers made due with outhouses and sometimes even without electricity. Many of them being recent southern migrants, they knew how to provision themselves, growing supplementary food, raising chickens, and even hunting or foraging in the surrounding, semi-rural area. According to the 1930 census, 135 Black families lived in the Lee-Seville enclave, making up 95 percent of the total; two interracial families also lived there, as well as five White families, four of them Italian. More than a third of the Black family heads were laborers, mostly working in road or housing construction, or at steel, foundry, or coal companies. Others were employed as cooks, furnace tenders, truckers, auto mechanics, plasterers, or porters; there were also three business owners, two clerks, a musician, a minister, and a policeman. Fully 90 percent of the Black families in the enclave owned their own houses, many of which they had built themselves on the earlier Mount Pleasant pattern. And remarkably, despite the hardships of the Great Depression, approximately forty more families moved to the Lee-Seville enclave between 1930 and 1940. Residents referred to their settlement fondly as "The Village," or else as the "Beehive" after the local elementary school, and sometimes even jokingly as "Mudville" due to the unpaved streets.¹³

While African Americans and Whites had coexisted interracial in early Miles Heights, by the late 1930s some White observers were coming to think disparagingly of the Lee-Seville enclave. One employee in the local real estate industry labeled it "Little Africa" on a plat map, and in 1939 government workers with the Home Owners Loan Corporation designated the settlement a "shantytown," redlining it as a supposedly bad investment while claiming, "this community has had a very detrimental effect on surrounding area property values." An overdramatic 1945 newspaper article referred to the area as "Cleveland's Tobacco Road." The thinly-disguised racism and unfairness of such assessments is borne out by the fact that many working-class Whites in the vicinity had also built their own homes, and initially lacked adequate sewerage; 1940 census statistics show that less

¹³ Wilbur H. Watson, *The Village: An Oral Historical and Ethnographic Study of a Black Community* (Atlanta: Village Vanguard, 1989); Sylvia Hood Washington, "Packing Them In: A Twentieth Century Working Class History," Ph.D. diss. (Case Western Reserve University, 2003), 158-192; 1930 and 1940 Census returns available through www.ancestry.com.

than a fifth of the enclave's homes needed repairs, and only a third were mortgaged (meaning most were paid off). This uptick in racial intolerance would continue into the World War II era, with the resumption of the Great Migration as Cleveland became a major center for war industry production. With a severe housing shortage in already-overcrowded Cedar-Central, officials at the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority in late 1943 filed for the right to lease forty-nine acres of vacant land at the intersection of Seville Road and East 153rd Street, in order to build a so-called "temporary war housing" project for Black foundry workers arriving from the South. Called the Seville Homes, it would ultimately house more than 2,000 people in over a hundred low-rise buildings with a total of 440 units. Although the Lee-Seville enclave was an already established fact, White residents of Southeast Cleveland and the adjacent suburbs of Garfield Heights and Maple Heights fought to stop the Seville Homes project, filing a taxpayers' lawsuit that delayed construction until March 1944.¹⁴ These sorts of tactics deployed in an attempt to impede African American access to Southeast Cleveland were part of the history that makes the work of African American builders like Arthur Bussey and the successful establishment of Lee-Harvard and Lee-Seville as a Black "suburb in the city" an even more incredible story.

Cleveland was on the verge of momentous change at the end of World War II, with major implications for its African American residents and especially those striving to acquire better housing at the urban periphery. In 1950 with suburbanization just picking up, the city reached its peak population of over 900,000 people. That year, nearly 148,000 African Americans lived in Cleveland, over 16 percent of the total population and a substantial increase over 1940 when they numbered around 85,000 at just under 10 percent.

IV. Results of Filed Investigation—Survey Area Historic Context

The Cleveland Restoration Society received Certified Local Government funding from The Ohio History Connection to research and document the life of Arthur Bussey, who developed the Myrtle-Highview Neighborhood in Lee-Seville and to survey the houses in the district not built by Bussey. In this endeavor, the work of other African American builders were discovered—namely William Woodridge and Rufus Ranaldson. In researching these builders, we learned that Woodridge came to Cleveland to work as an engineer for Albert Taborn, the most prolific and politically active of the African American builders in Lee-Seville. Moreover, Ranaldson was a

¹⁴ Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 101-102; Todd M. Michney, "Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland's Experience with World War II Public Housing," *Journal of Social History* 40 (Summer 2007): 933-956.

Realtor for another short-lived firm Carr & Dillard, later known as Southeast Builders. The research into these builders and their developments is the basis of this survey.

A. Carr & Dillard (Southeast Builders Inc.)

In 1949, the same year Arthur Bussey built his home on Myrtle Avenue, brick homes began going up a few blocks away. Three men with no formal training in the building trades, all of them recent transplants from the South, made a pact to help build each other's houses in the Lee-Miles area, on the lots they owned just east of the Seville Homes housing project. Requests to build homes for others led these gentlemen to form the firm Carr & Dillard, although they would later operate under other names as well. One of the most ambitious plans to provide housing for Cleveland's upwardly mobile African American families ultimately succumbed to the numerous setbacks facing Black-owned construction companies at the time, although it did succeed in erecting at least eighty homes during its brief existence. The story of the firm that after several name changes finished as Southeast Builders was a heartfelt one that received considerable attention in the *Call & Post* in the early 1950s, due to the circumstances in which its founders met, and because its early activities seemed to embody a "can do" attitude of relying on the community's own resources to find creative solutions to the problems African Americans faced in acquiring high-quality new homes at the time.

John T. Thomas had previously lived in Birmingham, Alabama, where he actually operated a small coal mine. John B. Harmon hailed from Atlanta, Georgia, where according to the *Call & Post* "he had been a house-man-chauffeur-butler, but was known far and wide in North Georgia for his unique ability at cooking." Finally, Leslie Ephraim was a former schoolteacher from Camden, Alabama. Of the three men, only Ephraim is readily traceable in the public record. He was born on August 29, 1914, into a large family, the second-oldest of seven siblings. Ephraim's parents worked as sharecroppers, and in 1940 he was still living with them but already had a job with the Wilcox County Board of Education, as did one of his younger sisters. He married Magnolia Griffith in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1940, before they migrated to Cleveland around 1942. The three men together first built Ephraim's house at 4666 East 162nd Street, completing it in just three months. Carrying through on their agreement, they then turned to work on Thomas's house at 16221 Bryce Avenue, and Harmon's at 4656 East 162nd

Street.¹⁵ The efforts of Thomas, Harmon, and Ephraim attracted the notice of two of their neighbors, Leroy Ballard and his younger brother Brunston, who offered to help them complete the remaining two houses. Leroy, who had some carpentry experience, had just completed building his own home at 16215 Elberta Avenue. The Ballard brothers were from Columbia County, Arkansas, where their father had owned his own farm. For two years Leroy attended the historically-Black Philander Smith College in Little Rock, then taught mathematics before relocating to Cleveland in 1932. He married Willie Belle Brown the following year and held various jobs during the Depression, including working at a barrel factory and a bakery; in the 1940 census, he was listed as living with Willie Belle on East 142nd Street in Mount Pleasant, working as a junior clerk in Cleveland City Hall. In 1942 he got a job as a conductor with the Cleveland Transit System.¹⁶

Also building houses for upwardly-mobile Black families in the Lee-Miles area were two professional bricklayers, James Dillard and Tillman Carr. The *Call & Post* stated they both hailed from Chattanooga, Tennessee, but Carr was actually born in Lafayette, Alabama, on October 2, 1913. Like the Ballards, Carr came from a large family and his father owned his own farm. Tillman married Meeta Bush in Shelby County, Alabama, in 1932; by 1935 the couple had moved to Chattanooga where Carr held a series of jobs over the next several years – from janitor, to butler, to a truck loader at Sears, Roebuck & Co. In 1942, he was working there as a laborer at the U.S. Pipe and Foundry Co., so the couple may have decided to relocate to Cleveland with the increased demand for Black foundry workers during World War II, and possibly even lived in the Seville Homes. The *Call & Post* states that both Carr and Dillard arrived in Cleveland in 1944, and that the two bricklayers “worked together for a construction company for two years before ‘hitting it for themselves.’” Where they learned their trade (unless on the job) is unclear; most likely they had some training before their arrival, because such skills were much more difficult to acquire in the North, where White-dominated building trade unions tightly restricted Black access. In any

¹⁵ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; U.S. World War II Draft Cards, Young Men, 1940-1947, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2011); 1940 U.S. Census, Camden, Wilcox County (Alabama), Enumeration district 66-2B, p. 9B, available through www.ancestry.com; Alabama, County Marriage Records, 1805-1967, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2016).

¹⁶ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; Ohio Death Records, 1908-1932, 1938-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); 1910 U.S. Census, Moss, Columbia County (Arkansas), Enumeration District 0071, p. 3A, www.ancestry.com; Leroy Ballard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, April 27, 1994; 1940 U.S. Census, Cleveland, Ohio, Enumeration District 92-783, p. 10B, www.ancestry.com.

case, the paper in 1952 described Carr as “a master bricklayer,” mentioning he had “won a Union card ‘the hard way’ after years of contracting for masonry work himself with his partner”¹⁷.

On April 5, 1952, the Carr & Dillard Construction Company incorporated with its board consisting of nine members. Lending the company their names were the two professional bricklayers, James Dillard and Tillman Carr who served as foreman and president; the three original friends who had built each other’s houses, Leslie Ephraim and John Harmon who served respectively as secretary-treasurer and general manager, as well as board chairman John Thomas who by now was a fulltime carpenter; Leroy Ballard, the neighbor with carpentry skills who had initially helped, as well as Eugene Burns, another carpenter from Birmingham, Alabama, who served as vice president; and finally plasterers Robert Narlie of Miami, Ohio, and Eugene Bush of Chattanooga who was probably Tillman Carr’s brother-in-law. The company was said to have eighteen employees, yet still had to subcontract its plumbing and electrical work because these trades almost totally excluded African Americans. It also was constructing its new headquarters at 4461 Lee Road and had contracted with Ranaldson and Smith Realty as the sole agent to sell their new homes. However, that partnership was short-lived, as Rufus Ranaldson started his own construction company in 1953. By that August, the company had changed its name from Carr & Dillard to “Lee Road Builders” and announced a \$50,000 stock issue to raise the capital for “dozens of homes for ‘modest income’ families” in Mount Pleasant and the Lee-Seville area. By then it reportedly had eighteen homes under construction, for a grand total of fifty undertaken since the firm’s inception.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 1915); 1920 U.S. Census, Faulks, Barbour County (Alabama), Enumeration District 24, p. 15B, available through www.ancestry.com; Alabama, County Marriage Records, 1805-1967, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2016); *Chattanooga City Directory* (1935), p. 707, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1936), p. 563, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1937), p. 587, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1942), p. 723, all available through www.ancestry.com. On the recruitment of African American foundry workers during the war, see Todd M. Michney, “Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland’s Experience with World War II Public Housing,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (Summer 2007): 933-956.

¹⁸ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; *Call & Post*, August 22, 1953; *Call & Post*, August 15, 1953.

Busy Building Concern Tackles Shortage Of Negro Housing

Bold Program of Building Will Open New Areas

A United States Housing Office survey revealed a shocking fact about the Cleveland area: that in the year 1950 when the study was made there were just 28 available houses to rent in all Cleveland, and that most of these were not available for Negro occupancy.

This is the grave problem that the Carr and Dillard Construction Company is attempting to meet with its bold building program, that already has over 20 houses to its credit and plans to move in the immediate future.

Most of the houses will be in the area that the concern will use for its headquarters: the Lee Road section.

The company is pointing out through a broad educational program in newspapers and elsewhere a fact that many people overlook: that it is just as cheap to build a new house—and far more healthful and satisfactory.

—is it is to buy an old one. The Lee Road area—often described as the "ghetto" section for colored home-owners—is a well-chosen one for the company's concentration. It is almost limitless: hundreds of acres of rich, rolling, high land are available in an area that once housed many Negro families, then for years had almost none, and now has over a thousand again.

Readily reached by city transportation or automobile, the section is far enough out to be healthful and uncrowded, and convenient enough to work and shopping districts to be highly desirable for home sites.



Houses now being put up by the Carr and Dillard Company will fall into the middle-income range of cost. They are modern in every respect and are largely built to the owner's specifications.

The company operates on a dual principal: it will build a home to suit the tastes and desires of a purchaser, or it will build a new house and sell it to him.

If the purchaser has a lot of his own, the company will build there for him. If not, the agents for Carr and Dillard, an enterprising young firm of real estate operators, 15000 N. Franklin and South, will secure a desirable home site, and the house will be erected there.

The company, in short, pledges that whatever the wish of a would-be home owner, it will help him realize his ambition.



BRICK, STONE AND WOOD were used by the Carr and Dillard Construction Company in this lovely and modern home on Elberta Avenue, occupied by the family of LeRoy Ballard, a member of the firm. In the lower photo is shown a view of the last word in modern kitchen, Mrs. Ballard's constant source of pride.



NEARING COMPLETION are four houses now under construction in the Lee-Road area, being built by the Carr and Dillard Construction Co. The top two are on Clearview Ave., and the two on the bottom (three roofers are shown at work on the one on the left) are on Meadowdale, East of Lee Road.

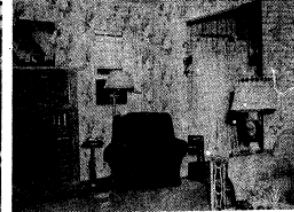


Figure 4: Call & Post, 9-27-1952.

But like many Black-owned businesses, the company experienced difficulty with financing, hence the stock offering. Construction companies had to front much of the expense for building materials and labor on the houses they were building before they were able to sell the finished homes at a profit, which advantaged larger firms that could absorb these costs. Despite securing credit with one of the area's largest lumber suppliers at unprecedentedly fair rates "in keeping with what the white competition has been using indefinitely," Ephraim complained in early 1954 that banks directed much of the available loan money toward "preferred builders" – larger firms that could more precisely estimate their budgets for the entire year. These financial difficulties seem to have shaken the unity of the original business partners; by that point only Ephraim, Harmon, and Burns were still working together under the name "Union Home Builders Inc." and had picked up two new building tradesmen as partners, Theron Thomas and David Elmore. In August, the partners signed an agreement with two White attorneys who agreed to supply them with capital, in exchange for bonus payments from the profits. As part of the agreement, the company agreed to reorganize as Southeast Builders, Inc. At first this financing arrangement seemed to be working nicely. That winter, the firm announced plans for "Tarkington Heights," a project of one hundred colonial and ranch-style homes in the \$15,000–\$16,000 range, described by Southeast's sales manager Wilbert H. Smith as "the largest, most modern development of

Negro Housing in the city.” Having built eighty homes to date, the firm was said by the *Call & Post* to be making a new departure in developing this entire neighborhood of new housing on vacant land adjacent to Kerruish Park. By January 1955, Southeast had purchased 130 lots for the development off Lee Road and claimed it had an “unusually large” backlog of house orders; in April, it bought a second bulldozer and was reportedly acquiring milling equipment to produce doors and cabinets more affordably.¹⁹



Figure 5: The most elaborate homes built by Carr & Dillard are the ones the members built for one another, such as 162160 Elberta, built for Leroy Ballard (Cuyahoga County Archives).

But some danger signals were already apparent as eight Southeast customers with a combined total of nearly \$5,000 in down payments, dissatisfied with lengthy building delays, lodged a complaint with Cleveland’s Better Business Bureau. In the resulting hearing before the city’s police

¹⁹ “53 Housing,” June 3, 1953, National Urban League Papers, Box I:C52, “Affiliates File, Cleveland, Ohio, 1952-1953” folder, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division (Washington, DC); *Call & Post*, February 13, 1954; *Call & Post*, March 10, 1956; *Plain Dealer*, November 16, 1954; *Call & Post*, December 4, 1954; *Call & Post*, January 29, 1955; *Call & Post*, April 2, 1955.

prosecutor, Southeast got a “clean bill of health” and was assumed merely to have “bit off more than they could chew.” Southeast Builders’ primary customer base was Black World War II veterans whose financing was guaranteed through the VA, but after the delays pushed beyond the contract-specified ninety days, these buyers were no longer able to demand refunds. Unfortunately, the prosecutor’s positive assessment proved premature. Southeast Builders ceased all construction in May 1955, and by that fall was under investigation for a rash of new complaints. When it officially went under in March 1956, the firm owed some ninety-six customers a combined total of nearly \$50,000—and to make matters worse, five home purchasers were facing foreclosure suits filed by subcontractors seeking to collect liens on the bankrupt company’s unpaid debts.²⁰

Little else is known about the directions that the various partners took after their time during the firm’s brief and complicated history. Of the two professional bricklayers who lent their names to the initial iteration of the company, Tillman Carr continued to live in his house in the historic West Park enclave on St. John Avenue; he died on January 15, 2000. James M. Dillard actually died young, in February 1968, and at the time of his death was still living in a house on Elberta Avenue that he almost certainly built for himself. Leroy Ballard, who was also involved in the company before it became Southeast Builders, taught carpentry in the federally-funded AIM Jobs program during the 1960s. His obituary states that he built twenty-eight homes in the Lee-Miles area in total, including one for each of his three children. He died on April 22, 1994.²¹

The houses built by Carr & Dillard are mostly variations of the same simple Cape-Cod design, with a few larger brick ranches that members of the firm built for themselves. Several on E. 162nd Street are currently vacant and endangered.

²⁰ *Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1955; *Plain Dealer*, April 15, 1955; *Call & Post*, March 10, 1956; *Plain Dealer*, November 23, 1955; *Plain Dealer*, March 3, 1956; *Plain Dealer*, March 6, 1956.

²¹ *Call & Post*, November 9, 1957; U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2015); James Dillard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, February 16, 1968; Leroy Ballard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, April 27, 1994.



16202 and 16318 Elberta are typical of the average Carr & Dillard home.



16709 Meadowvale

CARR & DILLARD					
Present Name	OHI No.	Address	Style/Type	Date	Themes
Dorothy Lynch and Odod Ruel House	CUY1180510	4666 E 162 ST	Ranch	1950	African American, City and Regional planning
Jermiah Jermiah House	CUY1180610	4656 E 162 ST	Ranch	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Frederick Kenneth Thomas House	CUY1180710	16221 Bryce Ave.	Cape Cod	1951	African American, City and Regional planning
Elvin Vauss House	CUY1180810	16216 Elberta AVE	Ranch	1950	African American, City and Regional planning
Richard Barber House	CUY1180910	16202 Bryce AVE	Cape Cod	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Derrick Spivey House	CUY1181010	4648 E 162 ST	Cape Cod	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Ike Drummer House	CUY1181110	16318 Elberta AVE	Cape Cod	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Marguerite Ford House	CUY1181210	16322 Elberta AVE	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Brenda Dixon House	CUY1181310	4562 E 162 ST	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Claudia Brown House	CUY1181410	16302 Bryce AVE	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Cramer Gold Jr. House	CUY1181510	16310 Bryce AVE	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Oak & Ivy Holdings LLC	CUY1181610	16206 Bryce AVE	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Ruth Williams House	CUY1181710	4680 E 162 ST	Ranch	1949	African American, City and Regional planning
Marie Wright House	CUY1181810	16206 Elberta AVE	Cape Cod	1955	African American, City and Regional planning
James and Rosetta Hill	CUY1180210	16726 South Miles Rd.	Ranch	1955	African American, City and Regional planning
Premier Homes, CLE LLC	CUY1180310	16401 Clearview Ave.	Cape Cod	1957	African American, City and Regional planning
Tyler Towing, LLC	CUY1180410	16409 Clearview Ave.	Cape Cod	1959	African American, City and Regional planning
Flaatr, LLC	CUY1184410	16213 Bryce Ave.	Ranch	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
New Jaw LLC	CUY1186310	16202 Elberta Ave.	Cape Cod	1957	African American, City and Regional planning
Steven D. Payten	CUY1186910	16202 Clearview Ave	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
G&M Investments LLC	CUY1187010	16306 Clearview Ave	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Andre Stubbs	CUY1187110	16609 Meadowvale Ave	Cape Cod	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Robyn Lomax	CUY1187210	16302 Clearview Ave	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Donzella Hurt	CUY1187310	16605 Meadowvale Ave	Cape Cod	1952	African American, City and Regional planning
Elizabeth Parker	CUY1187410	4594 E 162 St	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Aden Kato	CUY1187510	16209 Clearview Ave	Cape Cod	1953	African American, City and Regional planning
Lee Heights Community Church	CUY1187610	4604 Lee Road	Cape Cod	1954	African American, City and Regional planning

B. Albert L. Taborn

Albert Taborn also began to build houses in 1949, although he primarily worked as a Realtor until 1954, when he began home-building full time. Albert Taborn was a formidable presence in real estate and construction in Cleveland from 1946 into the early 1960s. Significantly, he devised and developed an alternative means of building construction that used interlocking, hollowed bricks to allow for easy installation of wiring and plumbing, a technique he also used in a Taborn family home he built during the 1950s in Twinsburg, Ohio. Taborn was also politically active, perhaps more so than the average real estate broker or builder, especially concerning himself with planning and policy decisions that directly affected Cleveland's majority-Black or racially integrating neighborhoods. Taborn was additionally a frequent author of articles in the *Call and Post* as they related to real estate or building concerns.

Albert Lorenzo Taborn was born on June 10, 1920, to Vera Mae White and Raymond Dow Taborn. He had an older brother, Raymond, and an older sister, Virginia. His parents divorced in 1921, after which his father relocated to Cleveland around 1925. The 1930 census indicates that Vera Mae White remarried Fred Hughes, an office building janitor, by the time Albert was nine. He and his siblings lived with their mother and stepfather in two different houses they owned in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Virginia passed away from bronchopneumonia in May 1932.²² As of 1940, nineteen year-old Albert still lived at home with Fred and Vera Hughes, along with Vera's mother, Fannie White, and three younger wards of the State of Michigan – Geraldine Coleman, Lois Coleman, and Katie May Coleman. Jazz singer Abbey Lincoln (born Anna Marie Wooldrige) also lived as a ward at Vera's home for a time during Albert's youth. Albert worked as a janitor while enrolled in his first year at Western Michigan College, where he majored in Business Administration; he later attended Wilberforce College, a historically-Black institution founded before the Civil War in southern Ohio, and joined the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. Before moving to Cleveland in 1946, Albert was employed as a social worker in a large community house in Michigan.²³

²² Michigan Department of Vital and Health Records, Michigan Death Index, 1971-1996, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 1998); Michigan Deaths and Burials Index, 1867-1995, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2011); 1930 U.S. Census, Kalamazoo, MI, Enumeration District 0017, p. 7B, available through www.ancestry.com; Lansing, MI, Divorce records; *Call & Post*, September 25, 1965.

²³ 1940 U.S. Census, Kalamazoo, MI, Enumeration District 39-27, p. 5B, available through www.ancestry.com; *Plain Dealer*, July 3, 1955; *Call & Post*, November 3, 1951. Al Taborn was elected Keeper of the Records of Cleveland's

Taborn first worked for the city's leading Black real estate salesman, John W. Carmack, and around the same time married Jeannette Tyler, who was highly active in African American women's social groups (Figure #10). By 1947, Al established the Taborn Realty Co., first headquartered at 7807 Cedar Avenue.²⁴ During its more than a decade of activity in Cleveland, he ran Taborn Realty largely as a family enterprise, with Jeannette's brother Ralph Tyler serving as a building engineer and Jeannette occasionally modeling in advertisements for homes. At this time the Taborn family lived on Lipton Avenue in Southeast Cleveland, in the vicinity of several Taborn Realty properties.

In February 1948, the first meeting of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) was organized in Detroit, Michigan. It was the first national-scale organizing effort taken up by African American real estate brokers to establish a professional organization, because at the time Whites barred them from joining the National Association of Realtors and even trademarked the term "realtor," forcing African Americans to coin the somewhat awkward term "realist." The Cleveland Real Estate Board would not allow African-American members until 1963.²⁵ Therefore, the Cleveland Association of Real Estate Brokers (CAREB) organized as an affiliate organization of NAREB shortly after its inaugural meeting in Detroit. Taborn was a charter member of CAREB and in 1949 served as its president.

That same year, Taborn began to experiment with building houses, releasing an advertisement in the *Call & Post* for a one- or 1.5-story colonial revival house to be constructed on the buyer's property with a \$500 down payment (approximately \$5,300 in 2018 dollars considering inflation). The ad claims that "an exciting new mode of home construction enabled the building of a \$10,000 home for \$7,000" (or \$74,000 in 2018 dollars) and mentioned the home met minimum FHA requirements. Taborn Realty also offered financing, with the only qualification being that the household must earn \$250 or more per month²⁶.

Kappa Alpha Psi alumni chapter in 1947 and his wife Jeanette remained involved in the Kappa Wives group through the 1960s.

²⁴ *Call & Post*, December 28, 1946; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, August 23, 1947. On Carmack, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 153, 186.

²⁵ *Call & Post*, October 9, 1948; Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 186-187. On racial exclusion in the real estate profession, see Jeffrey M. Hornstein, *A Nation of Realtors®: A Cultural History of the Twentieth Century American Middle Class* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), esp. 75-79.

²⁶ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, July 16, 1949.



Figure 6: The original Lorenzo Model Home, 1954 (Cleveland Public Library Photographic Collection).

Two years later, the company was growing. Taborn expanded his realty business into Akron, Ohio, though he continued to live and work in Cleveland. In March 1951, Selmer G. Prewitt purchased interest in the Taborn Real Estate Co., changing its name to the Taborn-Prewitt Co. Prewitt was an Arkansas native who moved to Cleveland in 1932 to attend Fenn College (later Cleveland State). The following year, Taborn-Prewitt moved to a new office on East 105th Street in Glenville and Taborn was appointed to Mayor Thomas A. Burke's Council on Housing, indicating the growing significance of African American access to good-quality housing as an important issue.²⁷

In February 1952, Taborn was elected president of the newly-formed Cuyahoga County Real Estate Brokers Association, a separate organization

²⁷ *Call & Post*, March 24, 1951; *Call & Post*, April 19, 1952; *Call & Post*, November 3, 1951. Taborn's Akron operations were managed by W.U. Colvin.

from CAREB whose name signaled a look beyond the city to the suburbs as well as expressed more concern with the larger patterns of urban development affecting African Americans. In September of that year, the Cuyahoga County Association organized a luncheon attended by thirty Black brokers at the Hotel Allerton with Richard Hopkins, the special assistant to Mayor Burke in charge of the Cleveland redevelopment program. The purpose of the meeting was for White city officials “to listen to the views of the [Black] real estate men and to help map out a program of Negro participation in the plan.” The fear of most members present was that Cedar-Central – and majority-Black East Side neighborhoods more generally – would be first to be redeveloped, a suspicion fed by Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority director Ernest H. Bohn’s naming of an appraisal team consisting entirely of members from the Whites-only Cleveland Real Estate Board. Besides getting owners in redevelopment areas fair compensation for their hard-earned homes, the Black organizations present sought to place at least one African American real estate broker in a top executive position as well as multiple appraisers on the ground in these familiar neighborhoods where they did most of their business. Taborn distinguished himself by expressing enthusiasm for redevelopment, so long as Cleveland officials upheld their promise of fair representation throughout the process. Although Hopkins and other members of Burke’s administration agreed that the Cuyahoga County Association’s demands were reasonable, an official statement announcing the inclusion of African American real estate experts in the so-called “urban rehabilitation” of Cedar-Central and the East Side was not made until February 1953.²⁸

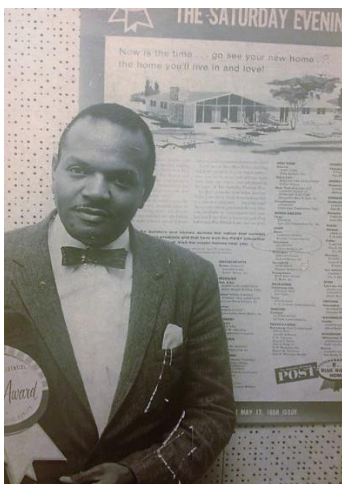


Figure 7: Albert Taborn, 1959 (Courtesy Karen Taborn).

²⁸ *Call & Post*, February 16, 1952; *Call & Post*, September 6, 1952; *Call & Post*, February 14, 1953.

While the Cuyahoga County Real Estate Brokers Association took the lead in getting African-Americans involved in city-wide planning and development decisions, its establishment resulted in the creation of two competing associations for Black brokers, potentially weakening the power of an already marginalized group. When the National Urban League held their 1952 annual conference in Cleveland, NAREB president and the country's largest Black builder Walter H. "Chief" Aiken suggested that CAREB join forces with the Cuyahoga Real Estate Brokers Association before his organization's annual conference, which was also scheduled to take place in Cleveland in October of that year.²⁹

CAREB president L. Roy Terry stated he was "in favor of anything that will place the Negro real estate brokers of the city in a stronger position for their vital work" and expressed his desire to make the 1952 NAREB conference the "biggest thing in Cleveland history." Taborn, looking beyond the conference, stated that his Cuyahoga organization believed "the whole local picture we face would be bettered materially by a strong unity of our forces" in the face of the pending "tremendous advantages or stern hardships of a vast redevelopment program." However, attempts to unite the two organizations before the NAREB meeting were unsuccessful, after the memberships of both organizations surprisingly rejected a compromise merger agreement brokered by Aiken. Not until December 1953 did the Cleveland Board of Real Estate Brokers reorganize as a unified body, under the new leadership of Wendell E. Catlin and with a new committee leadership structure. Taborn became one of the six members of the new organization's finance and research committee in that inaugural year.³⁰

In 1954, the Cleveland Home Builder's Association accepted Taborn's application, thus making him the first Black member of that organization. He attended the National Association of Home Builders' convention in Chicago, a gathering of over 2,000 delegates of which he was apparently the only African American member present, although other Black builders from around the country participated on a special panel concerning issues around homebuilding for African Americans. A write-up on the panel went on to explain how stereotypes about African American homeowners and neighborhoods were proving false around the country – that new homes were being beautifully maintained by Black homeowners and there was no

²⁹ *Call & Post*, September 20, 1952. On Walter Aiken, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 177-182.

³⁰ *Call & Post*, September 20, 1952; *Call & Post*, October 4, 1952; *Call & Post*, December 12, 1953.

statistically significant difference in the likelihood of loan delinquency between African American and White borrowers. African American “income has tripled since the pre-war era,” the article went on to say, accurately predicting the homebuilding boom soon to be experienced by upwardly mobile African American families in Cleveland, exactly the clientele served by Taborn.³¹

In order to “expand their services,” the Taborn-Prewitt Co. split into two real estate companies in December 1953. The Prewitt Realty Co. stayed in the 7807 Cedar Avenue office while the Taborn Realty Co. retained the 821 East 105th Street office. The split appeared to be amicable, with both men wanting to focus on different aspects of real estate development. While Prewitt was more interested in handling sales of residential and commercial lots, Taborn announced that his main concern would be “developing new sources of housing for Negroes in Cleveland” and that he already had plans and ideas for how to make that happen. In fact, in early 1954 Taborn released a statement that he was quitting real estate to exclusively focus on home building, and would leave the management and sales of his remaining inventory to two business associates, Warren Blount and Frank Campbell, who remained at the East 105th Street address. Taborn would move to an office on Carnegie Avenue, and specialize in the building of moderate-cost homes “with down payments as low as \$600,” to be built in the Lee Road and Mount Pleasant areas.³²

Taborn dubbed his new home design the “Lorenzo,” using his own middle name. The first Lorenzo built was at 16606 Langly Avenue, south of Miles Avenue and just east of Lee Road in the vicinity of the still-standing Seville Homes (Figure #12). The open house for this model home was on July 4, 1954, and received extensive publicity in the *Call & Post*. True to Taborn’s word, Lorenzos offered a three-bedroom brick house for \$11,900 (about \$111,500 in 2018 dollars). Taborn Home Builders partnered with twelve other Black-owned organizations to construct and finance Lorenzos. Architects and engineers for the Lorenzo homes were from Dubin Housing Corporation, a White-owned company that would later go on to build nearly 600 homes for African American families further to the south off Lee Road and Tarkington Avenue. Lorenzos were constructed of “SCR brick,” a new masonry product that was larger and wider than a standard brick, at the same time being hollow so that “pipes, wiring, etc. can be run right through

³¹ *Call & Post*, June 20, 1953; *Call & Post*, January 30, 1954.

³² *Call & Post*, December 12, 1953; *Call & Post*, April 3, 1954.

it, making tremendous savings in the costs of electrical and plumbing work.”³³

From the beginning, Lorenzos were designed for moderate income families. Taborn sought to create a home that was both beautiful and modern, while affordable for individual families. The large scale production of the Lorenzo, which would further offset the cost of production, hinged on a positive public image. Enthusiasm at the prospect of “mass home building for Negroes in the Lee Road area” was said to be high, with construction financing initially provided by the Black-owned Quincy Savings & Loan; even White-owned banks were relatively cooperative with lending because as a largely undeveloped area, there was less risk of racial controversy. The following winter, a month-long series of articles in the *Call & Post* featured many satisfied Lorenzo homeowners (Figure #13). A Lorenzo could be built in a matter of days, and on January 15, 1955, there were thirty-three homes under construction. Amid the massive success of the Lorenzo homebuilding project, Taborn returned to selling real estate but continued as a builder, advertising his firm as offering a “full home service” able to accommodate any sort of buyer. In 1954 and 1955, Taborn built and sold over 250 new homes. Then in 1956, The Taborn Co. moved to a large new office at 10526 St. Clair Avenue, more fitting for the company’s comprehensive services targeted at anyone looking to buy or sell an existing home, build a new or improve an existing home, or even find a rental property. By 1959, the Taborn Company had another model open for viewing on East 176th Street, south of Miles and east of Lee Road in an area promoted as “Lee Heights.” As the company’s newest residential development, the homes here were designed to be in the \$15,000 to \$30,000 price range – although these houses did not receive the same amount of publicity as the Lorenzo homes did years before, perhaps because Taborn was now a well-established and recognized name in Black real estate.³⁴

Al Taborn took on new roles and gained further recognition into the later years of the decade. He was a project manager for the Longwood Project, the first Urban Redevelopment and Renewal plan to be completed in Cleveland, into which the first two families moved in December 1956. Longwood consisted of six buildings with eleven apartment suites in each, with “ample off-street parking, play areas for children and adults, automatic

³³ *Call & Post*, July 3, 1954. On Dubin, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 123-124.

³⁴ *Call & Post*, July 3, 1954; *Call & Post*, January 15, 1955; *Call & Post*, December 8, 1956; *Call & Post*, March 3, 1956; *Call & Post*, May 9, 1959.

laundry facilities, and incinerator garbage disposal service.” The buildings were constructed by the Private Enterprise Redevelopment Corp., in which Taborn was a shareholder. Taborn received national recognition as one of fifty-four recipients of the Blue Ribbon Award for home-building excellence from the *Saturday Evening Post*, which recognized builders that use “the finest building materials and equipment available today.” Taborn was the only builder from Cleveland to be recognized in this way (Figure #14). Specifically, Taborn and Associates were awarded for their recent construction of housing on East 178th Street, in “Lee Heights.” Then on Memorial Day of 1958, Taborn presented at the inaugural meeting of the Lee Heights Non-Partisan Voters League. The purpose of the league was to address problems of voter registration in the Black community, with a goal to have 3,000 new voters by that November’s elections. Two years later, Taborn would run as a Republican in his district to represent them in the Ohio House of Representatives, although he lost the election.³⁵

In 1961, Al was once again elected president of CAREB, which during his term would go on to open a school of real estate in their East 88th Street headquarters, with Taborn as its first head administrator. CAREB offered courses for students looking to enter real estate as a profession and for people more casually interested in “making more lucrative real estate investments.” Also in 1961, Taborn was a featured speaker on radio and television programs that focused on Cleveland planning and real estate issues. He was frequently approached to speak on the impact of Urban Renewal on Black neighborhoods and the practice of “blockbusting” – an aggressive sales tactic in which real estate agents played on White homeowners’ racial fears to generate high-volume turnover at discount prices, so that the homes could be sold to Black buyers at a markup. During these engagements Taborn appeared alongside the Urban League’s fair housing specialist K.C. Jones and Glenville Councilman Leo Jackson who was fighting deteriorating living conditions in that neighborhood.³⁶

The last advertisement for Taborn’s real estate services ran in the *Call & Post* in 1962, with his office now located at 10547 Euclid Avenue. Albert and Jeanette Taborn subsequently left Cleveland for Los Angeles in an attempt to duplicate his success at building housing for Black families there, but unfortunately he was unable to break into that market. By 1971, Al and

³⁵ *Call & Post*, December 29, 1956; *Call & Post*, May 17, 1958; *Call & Post*, June 7, 1958; *Call & Post*, April 30, 1960.

³⁶ *Call & Post*, April 15, 1961; *Call & Post*, November 11, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, May 25, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, August 29, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, September 17, 1961.

Jeanette had relocated to Paw-Paw, Michigan, where his uncle's widow lived, and for the remainder of his life, Al bought, sold, and rented properties in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He retained ownership of Taborn Realty, always working for himself until his death on February 5, 1994.³⁷ In Cleveland and Kalamazoo, Albert Taborn left a legacy of providing quality new homes for Black homeowners that warrants recognition in America both today and into the future.

Taborn developed the greatest diversity of houses. The early "Lorenzos" on Langley Avenue are very small, but continue to be well-maintained. By the later 1950s, Taborn was building larger and more elaborate ranches on the numbered streets of E. 173rd, 174th and E. 175th. These ranches are mostly aluminum sided, rather than brick, but by this time, the southern section of the neighborhood was less desirable as the northern Lee-Harvard section was being integrated. Taborn was also competing with better financed white developers, such as George Dubin and Federal Homes, who were both building homes for African Americans.



16801 and 16802 Langley are both "Lorenzo" models, characterized by a hip roof with small front gable.

³⁷ *Call & Post*, December 29, 1962; *Call & Post*, August 28, 1971; Michigan Deaths and Burials Index, 1867-1995, www.ancestry.com.



16315 Harvard. Many of Taborn's earlier houses were traditional Cape cods.



4625 E. 178th Street is characteristic of the larger ranches for which Taborn received the commendation from the Saturday Evening Post.

ALBERT TABORN						
Present Name	OHI No.	Address	Style/Type	Date	Themes	
Sherla D. Beck House	CUY1178110	16010 Bryce Ave.	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Celeste R. Malloy House	CUY1182310	16102 Bryce Ave.	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Imitra, LLC House	CUY1182410	16315 Harvard Ave.	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial		1949 African American, City and Regional planning	
Samuel A. and Regina E. McDonald House	CUY1182510	16718 Langley Ave.	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial		1950 African American, City and Regional planning	
Maggie Conley House	CUY1182610	16802 Langley Ave.	Ranch		1954 African American, City and Regional planning	
Nadine Latricia Sands House	CUY1182710	17006 Lipton Ave.	Ranch		1956 African American, City and Regional planning	
Ann A. Hudson House	CUY1182810	17424 South Miles Rd.	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial		1955 African American, City and Regional planning	
Edgar L. and Gloria Phillips House	CUY1182910	4593 E 173 ST	Ranch		1956 African American, City and Regional planning	
Lisa A. Steel House	CUY1183010	4597 E 173 ST	Ranch		1957 African American, City and Regional planning	
Davanae L. Maddox House	CUY1183110	4625 E 173 ST	Ranch		1954 African American, City and Regional planning	
Cas-Clev-Neda, LLC	CUY1183210	4629 E 173 ST	Ranch		1954 African American, City and Regional planning	
Laverne Williams	CUY1183310	4795 E 173 ST	Ranch		1957 African American, City and Regional planning	
Sherri L. Means House	CUY1183510	4837 E 173 ST	Ranch		1952 African American, City and Regional planning	
Cuyahoga County Land Reutilization Corporation	CUY1183610	4577 E 174 ST	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Denise R. Vickers House	CUY1183710	4596 E 174 ST	Ranch		1955 African American, City and Regional planning	
Radio.com, LLC	CUY1183810	4604 E 174 ST	Ranch		1957 African American, City and Regional planning	
Walter Morris Jr. House	CUY1183910	4688 E 174 ST	Ranch		1953 African American, City and Regional planning	
Vonja Robinson House	CUY1184010	4763 E 175 ST	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Harold J. Martin House	CUY1184110	4764 E 176 ST	Ranch		1959 African American, City and Regional planning	
Margie Dixon House	CUY1184210	4625 E 178 ST	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Anita Harrell House	CUY1181908	12509 Guardian BLVD	Ranch		1958 African American, City and Regional planning	
Corey and Deneen Smith House	CUY1184308	12506 Emery AVE	Ranch		1951 African American, City and Regional planning	
Anthony Horn Sr. House	CUY1186410	16606 Langley Ave.	Ranch		1954 African American, City and Regional planning	
Dwight and Brenda Henry House	CUY1186510	16801 Langley Ave.	Ranch		1954 African American, City and Regional planning	
Lyda Wyly House	CUY1186610	17002 Langley Ave.	Ranch		1955 African American, City and Regional planning	

C. William Errol “Woody” Woodridge

William E. Woodridge was active as a builder, contractor, and real estate agent in the Lee-Harvard area beginning in 1955, first with Taborn & Company Builders and then with his own firm, Engineering Enterprises and Realty, from 1958 to 1963. He built several houses in the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood, all relatively large, yellow brick ranches. Woodridge was born on August 2, 1925, in Risco, Missouri. He earned a Bachelor’s degree in engineering from the historically-Black Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, and then went on to work as an engineering aide at the U.S. Finance Center in Saint Louis for two years, and with the Universal Match Company as an engineer for two years. As a side pursuit, Woodridge also sold real estate during his time in Missouri. In 1952, he married Geraldine Juanita Sanders in Kansas City, though they separated before having children and before Woodridge made his move to Cleveland.³⁸

Woodridge was hired as an engineer for the Cleveland-based Taborn & Co. Builders in 1955 (Figure #15). His tasks included “designing, supervising, and expediting the construction of homes in the rapidly-expanding Taborn operations in Mt. Pleasant.” In 1955, Woodridge married Clara A. White in Cook County, Illinois. They lived on East 174th Street in a growing area of new homes that Taborn & Co. was building for Black middle class families south of Miles Avenue and east of Lee Road. The couple belonged to St. Andrews Episcopal Church, a prestigious congregation founded in 1890 and located in Cedar-Central, home to many of Cleveland’s historic Black institutions. William and Clara had one son, Harold, who became the first African-American child to attend kindergarten at the Hawkins School and who later attended Washington University in Saint Louis, in his father’s home state.³⁹

Engineering Enterprises and Realty (EE&R) was Woodridge’s first and only known home-building company, initially having headquarters at 13205 Union Avenue in Mount Pleasant. EE&R’s earliest models were ranches (often in blond brick), though later they introduced some minimal additional options for their customer base. The company advertised their services to African-Americans through the *Call & Post*. One of the earliest advertisements for

³⁸ Woodridge obituary, *Plain Dealer*, November 11, 2007; *Call & Post*, March 5, 1955; Missouri Marriage Records 1805-2002, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2007).

³⁹ *Call & Post*, March 5, 1955; Illinois Marriage Index, 1930-1960, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2008); *Call & Post*, January 7, 1978.

EE&R building and real estate services, appearing in 1958, was for a property at 16401 Highview Avenue near the city's far southeastern border (Figure #16). Incorporating an illustration of the front façade and a first floor plan, the asking price for this three-bedroom ranch with large picture window and garage was \$15,000 (around \$130,000 today). The ad stated further that the company was offering for sale "several choice lots in the Mt. Pleasant-Miles Avenue-Lee Road Vicinity," though EE&R was also willing to build "your ranch home to your specifications on your own lot." Another 1958 ad additionally praised the skills of Woodridge's firm, stating it handled "the entire cycle of home building to home-ownership." The company specialized in custom-built single-family homes, erecting them not just on Cleveland's East Side, but also in the city's sole Black West Side enclave, as well as in a few suburbs to which African Americans were just beginning to gain access. Features in EE&R-designed homes included built-in fireplaces, acoustical ceilings, exposed beams, full basements, multi-colored walls, and kitchens with gas and electrical appliance hookups. By August of that same year, EE&R had completed ten new homes, had five more under construction, and had "plans to start about 15 more new homes before the years' end." Additional model homes – which were also available for purchase – were located at 11921 Guardian Avenue, 3764 East 153rd Street, 4808 East 173rd Street, and 16315 Myrtle Avenue.⁴⁰

An advertisement in an August 1958 issue of the *Call & Post* advertised three more properties being sold by EE&R. The first property on East 137th Street in Mount Pleasant was a "six room single, [with] aluminum siding, storms, screens, full basement, new hot water tank, beautiful fireplace, wall-to-wall carpeting, garage, [and] tiled recreation room." The second house on East 173rd Street in Lee-Miles was a one-year-old, three-bedroom ranch with a tile kitchen and bath and an asking price of \$16,500. The third property was a six-year-old three bedroom, two bath house also on East 173rd Street. This last one came with a "basement, 1½ car garage, GE refrigerator, Tappan gas range, Washer, Dryer, acoustical tile ceiling in the living and dining area."⁴¹ Because the six-year-old property was built before Woodridge relocated to the Cleveland area, this offering indicates that his firm did not deal

⁴⁰ *Call & Post*, August 9, 1958; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, February 15, 1958. Homes built by Engineering Enterprises & Realty in the proposed Myrtle-Highview National Register Historic district are 16315 Myrtle Avenue, 16309 Myrtle Avenue, 16301 Myrtle Avenue, 16401 Highview Drive, 16319 Highview Drive, and 16308 Highview Drive.

⁴¹ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, August 30, 1958.

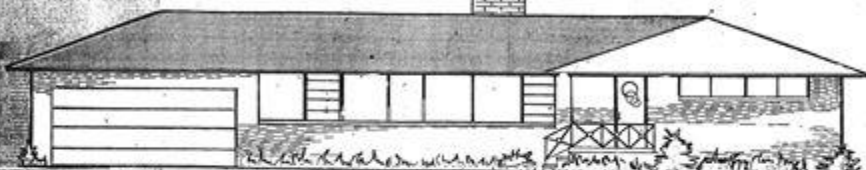
exclusively in new construction, but also acquired relatively new houses built by other firms, in this case likely the Taborn Co.

PAGE FOUR—A CLEVELAND CALL AND POST SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1958

Designed For Gracious Family Living . . .

3 BEDROOM RANCH HOMES

Priced From **\$15,000** USE YOUR OLD HOME AS DOWN PAYMENT
FHA & BANK FINANCING



SEE THIS MODEL HOME TODAY!
16401 HIGHVIEW AVENUE

Shown By Appointment **LU. 1-9673**



Bring your dream home down to earth

If you've got the dream, we've got the home to match it! Come see how completely we've anticipated all YOUR ideas to what a real home should be like. Everything has been included . . . nothing overlooked . . . that will add to your home-owning pride and pleasure through all the years ahead . . .

FEATURES:

3 BEDROOMS
Large and roomy with hardwood floors throughout . . . huge closets with sliding doors.

MODERN KITCHEN
A Variety of kitchen plans featuring built-in base and wall cabinets, gas disposal tile floor, breakfast nook.

LARGE LIVING ROOM
Room-size picture windows, hardwood floors, dining area, built-in slide bench.

FULL BASEMENT
Gas furnace, plenty of storage space, recreation area.
Attached garage • paved drive • large lot.



WE HAVE SEVERAL CHOICE LOTS
IN THE MT. PLEASANT-MILES
AVENUE-LEE ROAD VICINITY

Also
We Will Design And Build
Your Ranch Home To Your Specifications
On Your Own Lot

CALL NOW LU. 1-9673 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Model Home Shown By Appointment Only

ENGINEERING ENTERPRISES Complete Building & Real Estate Service
13205 UNION AVE. LU. 1-9673

Figure 8: Ad for 16401 Highview Drive, one of several large blonde brick ranches Woodridge built in the neighborhood (*Call & Post* 2-15-1958).

In 1960, EE&R moved to an office at 10616 Euclid Avenue. This office was located in the University Circle Building, on which Woodridge served as the architect on a \$250,000 modernization completed that same year. In addition to Woodridge's firm, the building housed McGhee & Co., founded by

Norman L. McGhee in 1952 and one of just two Black-owned stock brokerage firms in the country at the time.⁴² After relocating offices, EE&R advertised “2 New Colonial Houses” in the “Shaker School District,” most likely off Milverton Road within the Cleveland City limits, in the Ludlow neighborhood which still had some vacant lots available.⁴³ Woodridge did not continue advertising in the *Call & Post* after May 1960, and sometime around 1962 or 1963 stopped all building and real estate activity, although he remained in Cleveland.

In his later life, Woodridge took up additional pursuits. The 1965 City Directory indicates that by then he was living with his family at 2993 Ludlow Road in Shaker Heights, and working as a contractor for an unspecified company. In 1974, Woodridge became the owner of Pat’s Lounge, a bar located in the Jud-Lee Shopping Plaza (4145 Lee Road). He also found a new way to share his skills as a teacher in the Cleveland Public Schools, as a faculty member responsible for teaching drafting at Max S. Hayes Vocational High School on the West Side.⁴⁴ In 1975, William and his wife Clara divorced. He married Janice E. Rawls in 1977, and they remained married until his death in Cleveland on November 3, 2007.⁴⁵

Woodridge built the largest and highest quality homes, mostly blonde brick ranch houses, but also built the fewest houses of all of the African-American builders in Lee-Seville. Perhaps his high standards kept him from making an adequate profit, and he instead pursued other ventures.

⁴² Advertisement, *Call & Post*, May 7, 1960; *Plain Dealer*, July 18, 1960; “McGhee, Norman L. Sr.,” Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/m/mcghee-norman-l-sr>. McGhee had earlier served as general counsel for Herbert Chauncey’s People’s Realty Co. and Empire Savings & Loan, which acquired the Bella Vista allotment in 1920.

⁴³ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, May 7, 1960.

⁴⁴ *Cleveland City Directory* (1965, 1974), available through www.ancestry.com; *Max S. Hayes Vocational School Yearbook* (1974), pp. 24-25, and *Max S. Hayes Vocational School Yearbook* (1975), p. 56, in Cleveland School Memories, Cleveland Public Library Digital Collections, <https://cdm16014.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15034coll1>.

⁴⁵ Ohio Divorce Index, 1962-1963, 1967-1971 and 1973-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); *Call & Post*, March 8, 1975; Ohio Marriage Index, 1970 and 1972-2007 www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); Woodridge obituary, *Plain Dealer*, November 11, 2007.



4808 & 4812 E. 173rd. Woodridge put more creative design into his houses, even the “ranchettes”.



11912 Guardian in the West Park Enclave is much more similar to Woodridges larger, more elaborate ranches in the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood.

WILLIAM WOODRIDGE						
Present Name	OHI No.	Address	Style/Type	Date	Themes	
Earl and Gladys Williams House	CUY1182008	11921 Guardian	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Marcia Malcomb House	CUY1182110	3764 E 153 ST	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Cleveland-OH R-0009, LLC	CUY1182210	4808 E 173 ST	Cape Cod	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Robert and Yvonne D. Means House	CUY1186710	4812 E 173 ST	Cape Cod	1960	African American, City and Regional planning	
Annie Lee Vann	CUY1186808	11912 Guardian BLVD	Cape Cod	1964	African American, City and Regional planning	

D. Rufus Ranaldson

16404 Highview Drive was constructed by Rufus Ranaldson, who was known locally for promoting the idea of “cooperative building” demonstrated by the “Inland Homes” along Glen Park Road and Kollin Avenue just across Lee Road from Myrtle-Highview.⁴⁶ He was born into a large family on October 22, 1922, in Tunnel Spring, Alabama, and later moved to Pensacola, Florida, where he attended three years at Booker T. Washington High School. Ranaldson was working as a bellman at the San Carlos Hotel in Pensacola when, in November 1942, he enlisted as a Private in the U.S. Army, serving for the duration of World War II plus six months. After the war, Ranaldson moved North like many other African Americans in the Great Migration. In 1950, he married Imogene Arnold in Cleveland, and their first son was born later that year. During his initial years in town, Ranaldson worked for the U.S. Post Office and attended the Cleveland School of Meat Cutting – a skill that would serve him well when he opened a grocery store at 868 East 105th Street in early 1950. For a time, the young Ranaldson family lived in the Harvard Apartments at 866 East 105th Street, right next door.⁴⁷

The *Call & Post* described Ranaldson’s new venture as “one of the best known food shops in the Glenville section.” He soon joined with ten other Black Cleveland grocers to form Atomic Foods, a chain of grocery stores “conceived as the best means of pooling the buying power and selling efficiency of the Negro food merchant.” The strategy here, called the “ATOMIC Plan,” involved the eleven stores pooling their money to purchase products for all the partner stores at bulk rates, thereby enabling them to offer better-quality products for lower prices. This method of pooling capital to buy bulk goods at wholesale prices would seem to have inspired the collaborative approach to homebuilding that Ranaldson later deployed, when his career in real estate took off. And even while managing his grocery store, he was already thinking of his next career move, as he enrolled in real estate and property management courses at the city’s Griswald Institute. Ranaldson and two other Black Griswald graduates passed the Ohio State

⁴⁶ In the proposed Myrtle-Highview district, Ranaldson is known to be responsible for the construction of 16404 Highview Drive.

⁴⁷ 1920 U.S. Census, Tunnel Spring, Monroe County, AL, Enumeration District 142, pp. 17A-17B, available through www.ancestry.com; U.S. World War II Draft Cards, 1940-1947, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2011); *Call & Post*, April 21, 1951; U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2005); Ohio County Marriage Records, 1774-1993, www.ancestry.com, (Lehi, UT, 2016); *Cleveland City Directory* (1951); *Cleveland City Directory* (1955), available through www.ancestry.com.

Real Estate Board Exam in November 1951.⁴⁸ He would soon go on to partner with one of them, James Smith, in forming a real estate brokerage.



Figure 9: The merchants in the Atomic Foods Co-op. Ranaldson is back row, second from right, n.d. (Courtesy Imogene Ranaldson).

In 1952, Ranaldson and Smith joined with nine other African American investors to purchase the Quincy Savings & Loan Company, initially founded by Czech immigrants in 1919. Located at 8309 Quincy Avenue, this “thrift” focused on making loans to prospective homeowners, and represented a revival of the tradition of Black-owned banks not seen since the collapse of Herbert Chauncey’s Empire Savings & Loan during the 1930s Great Depression. The effort to purchase the previously White-owned bank was led by local insurance broker M. C. Clarke, and among the other investors in the

⁴⁸ *Call & Post*, April 21, 1951; *Call & Post*, November 24, 1951.

venture were prominent Lee-Harvard real estate developers and contractors Albert Taborn, James M. Dillard, and Tillman Carr. Within the first year under its new ownership, Quincy was approved for insurance by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation and admitted to the Federal Home Loan Banking System, meaning that individual savings accounts opened there were insured against loss up to \$10,000. Though not an advertisement, one article in the *Call & Post* urged its readership to save at Quincy, stating “the amount of future capital to thus be made available to Cleveland Negroes is directly dependent on the amount of new savings deposits” and “the more we save . . . the more money becomes available to ourselves, our friends, and neighbors, for the unrestricted purchase of homes so badly needed in a community which cannot boast a proud record in the matter of encouraging Negro ownership.” Within five years, Quincy’s assets exceeded \$3 million, as it focused on underwriting purchases that mainstream, White-owned banks refused to consider. Such alternative sources of financing were especially important considering that the typical loan arrangement available to many African Americans at the time was the installment land contract – in which the buyer built no equity until the contract was paid in full, and creditors could seize the property if so much as one single payment was missed.⁴⁹

Smith and Ranaldson worked together as realists under the name Ranaldson and Smith Realty starting in 1952, with offices initially located at 923 Parkwood Drive in Glenville. While starting out by selling existing properties to Black customers, they soon switched to selling new homes through their exclusive partnership with the Carr & Dillard Construction Company. In seeking buyers for these houses, one *Call & Post* article described their “broad vision” of African American homeowners being able to reduce the amount of time they commuted to work, since many worked in the Chevrolet, Ford, and General Motors plants on Cleveland’s East Side. The partners set their sights on the “vast, untouched areas” that still characterized the southern end of Lee Road during the 1950s, one of the few places in the city where African Americans could build new housing with relative ease. In addition to Carr & Dillard’s finished houses, Ranaldson and Smith also sold lots upon which middle-income families could later build homes. Advertisements claimed “you can build today for prices no higher than those being asked for older homes in greater Cleveland.” In sum,

⁴⁹ *Call & Post*, December 13, 1952; *Call & Post*, November 22, 1952; *Call & Post*, October 24, 1953. For more on Quincy Savings & Loan and land contracts, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 181-185.

Ranaldson and Smith handled the real estate transactions, while Carr & Dillard provided the construction expertise⁵⁰ (Figure #17).

In October 1952, Ranaldson and Smith moved their operations into the new headquarters of Carr & Dillard, just south of the major intersection at Miles Road and highly visible to the public because many upwardly-mobile Black families were beginning to build houses in the surrounding area. According to the *Call & Post*, the modern office building set a precedent on Lee Road as “the first Negro company to occupy its own building.” Ranaldson and Smith were described as “sole agents” for the many new Carr & Dillard homes going up in the vicinity. Despite this seemingly promising partnership, however, advertisements for Ranaldson and Smith ceased by the end of 1952, and the two men would not work together again until years later under a different name. Instead, Ranaldson struck out on his own and in early 1953 founded Economy Homes and Builders, later the Economy Realty Company. This venture proved quite successful as Ranaldson continued operating under this name into the 1970s.⁵¹

Ranaldson’s early success with Economy Realty can be partially attributed to his involvement with The Cleveland Co-Operative Homes program. This initiative began in 1954 and involved a partnership between Ranaldson’s Economy Realty Co., William O. Walker with the *Call & Post*, and M.C. Clark with the Black-owned Dunbar Life Insurance Co. It was an effort to make home-owning more accessible to African Americans and the organizers held a number of promotional events at the historic Black YMCA branch on Cedar Avenue. The proposed strategy was to build entire neighborhoods at once, utilizing economies of scale in order to bring down the cost of building materials – a serious consideration because Black companies generally had greater difficulties accessing credit to buy supplies in bulk than White-owned ones. The cooperative or “group building” approach had the support of DeHart Hubbard, one of the Federal Housing Administration’s Race Relations Advisers at the time. The method had been previously tested in Warren, Ohio, as well as a few other low-income communities in Ohio, and had actually been outlined by the federal government under the terms of the 1954 Housing Act.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952.

⁵¹ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; *Cleveland City Directory* (1955, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1968, 1970-71, 1972, 1977), available through www.ancestry.com.

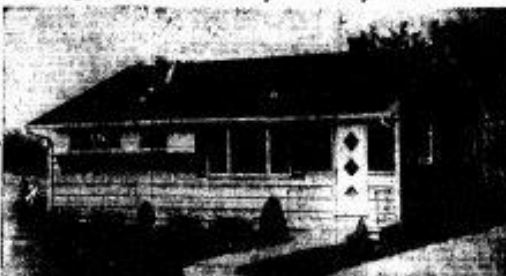
⁵² *Call & Post*, September 11, 1954; *Call & Post*, September 4, 1954.

The Cleveland Co-Operative Model Homes, later called the Inland Homes, were prefabricated houses designed to be assembled quickly. Most had three bedrooms and cost between \$13,500 and \$15,000, with the higher price point including a full finished basement. The lowered lot and materials prices, along with the Veterans Administration's backing of reduced-cost mortgages, enabled people to purchase homes with a down payment of about \$1,500 (around \$14,000 in today's dollars). Provided that enough veterans bought in the proposed new developments, the favorable interest rate and monthly financing provided to GI's for their service was also promised to buyers not otherwise eligible for GI Bill benefits. The Co-Operative's model home is located at the corner of Glen Park and Lee Roads and was unique for two reasons – it was the first new street to be constructed for primarily African American occupancy, and early buyers into the new development on Glen Park included both Black and White Clevelanders.⁵³

CLEVELAND CO-OP HOMES

OFFERS YOU

"The Chance of a Lifetime"



**STOP PAYING RENT!!
OWN A NEW HOME
AT UNBELIEVABLY
EASY TERMS**

- Investments protected in Bureau Account at Economy Savings & Loan Co.
- Each family receives individual deed and 50% as soon as all houses are sold.
- Homes to be fully protected by deed restrictions and by city zoning laws.
- Choice of 2 plans of homes with 6 variations of floor alterations.

**100 New Homes
TO BE BUILT UNDER
FHA CO-OPERATIVE PLAN ON
A NEW STREET ON THE EAST SIDE
ALL NEW UTILITIES, SIDEWALKS, PAVING**
[Location To Be Announced As Soon As Co-Op Is Organized]

**Model Home Open Daily, 1 P. M. to 9 P. M.
4609 Lee R. Corner Lee and Glen Park**

**Model Home Furnished by Boyd Furniture Co.
E. 86 & Cedar Avenue**



Compare These Prices & Terms

THE FHA CO-OP PLAN MEANS

- 1. LOWER PRICES**
\$12,500 to \$15,000
Depending On Size (864, 968 or 1000 Sq. Ft.) of House and On Basements or Non-Basements
- 2. LOWER DOWN-PAYMENTS**
AS LOW AS \$1,200—LESS TO VETERANS
- 3. SMALLER MONTHLY PAYMENTS**
AS LOW AS \$55.00 (Plus Taxes and Insurance)

STUDY THESE FEATURES

And Decide If You Want To Buy A Modern Home
Or To Continue Accumulating Rent Receipts

ALL 100 HOMES WILL HAVE

* 3 Full Size Bedrooms * Automatic Gas Heat * Marble Tile Bath * Kitchen Ventilating Fan * 18 Year Guaranteed Hot Water Tank * All Copper Plumbing * Truss-Roofed Kitchen Cabinets * Hurricane Counter Tops * Birch Hardwood Interior Doors IN BASEMENT HOMES ONLY * Gas Traps and Galleys Disposal * Hard Wood Floors * Laundry Trest * Space for Recreation Room	* Sliding Mock Closet Doors * Aluminum Windows (Heavy Wood Finishing) * Bookcase in Living Room * Walls and Ceiling Lined * Governmental Type Construction * Electrician Design * Wide Leds (from 18 to 24 Feet) * Yards and Lawns Seeded * All Utilities Paid—No assessments IN NON-BASEMENT HOMES * Asphalt Tile Floors * Carboys Storage Sheds * Large Storage Room * Bendix Combination Washer-Dryer
---	---

SPONSORING COMMITTEE

Wm. O. Walker, Call & Post M. C. Clark, Dunbar Ins.
Rufus Roundson, Economy Realty

ECONOMY REALTY, 2584 E. 55. Room -- 221-22
Phone EX. 1-2810 MU. 1-3298

ORGANIZATION MEETING WILL BE HELD
FRIDAY, SEPT. 10th, 1954 8:00 P. M.
CEDAR BRANCH Y. M. C. A.

Figure 10: Call & Post ad, 9-11-1954, for Co-Operative Homes.

⁵³ Call & Post, September 4, 1954.

Economy Realty and Builders continued as a successful business for at least the next twenty years. Following his involvement in the Glen Park project, Ranaldson announced in July 1957 that his company was opening a new development along Kollin Avenue, even further south off Lee Road near the city's border with Maple Heights (Figure #18). Houses in the new development were three-bedroom ranch homes, priced between \$15,900 and \$17,500. All the homes featured full basements, all-copper plumbing, and forced-air gas furnaces, and Economy Realty and Builders advertised that a home could be occupant-ready in 90 days. By 1961, Ranaldson had moved his own family to 16801 Kollin Avenue – at which time he apparently aspired to run for political office because he was collecting petition signatures to represent Ward 30 in City Council that same year. In 1965, Ranaldson signed up with Fair Housing Associates, a cooperative that enabled participating real estate brokers to share their listings, thereby reaching a wider pool of potential buyers.⁵⁴ Economy Realty Company continued in business through the 1980s, although advertisements for their services in the *Call and Post* (and listings with Fair Housing Associates) were discontinued after 1965. Whether Rufus Ranaldson himself continued operating Economy Realty himself or passed the company on to an associate or one of his children is unknown.

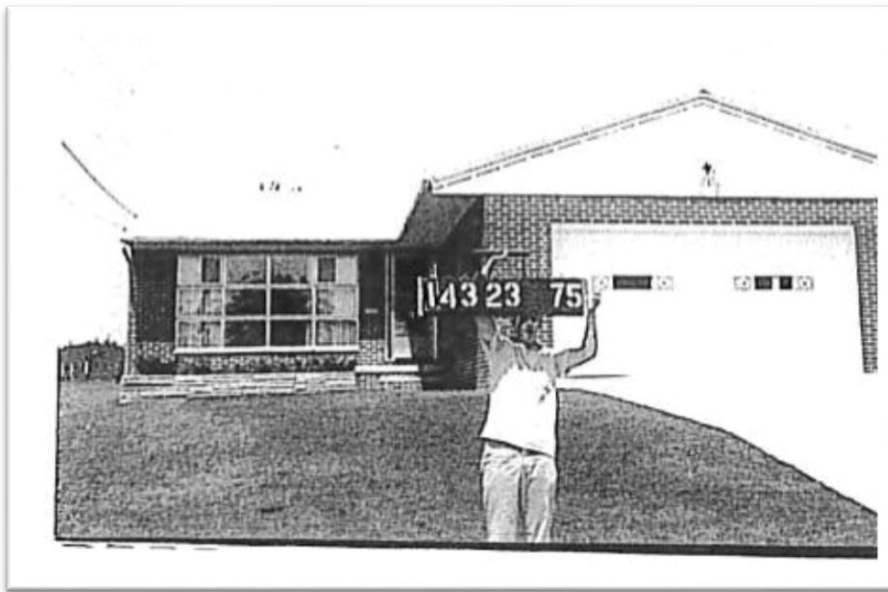


Figure 11: The home Rufus built for himself and Imogene on Kollin Avenue.

⁵⁴ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, July 20, 1957; *Cleveland City Directory* (1961); *Call & Post*, August 26, 1961; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, October 23, 1965.



Figure 12: Rufus Ranaldson, 1949 (Courtesy Imogene Ranaldson).

Rufus Ranaldson passed away on May 24, 2008, in Cleveland, Ohio.⁵⁵

Ranaldson's homes are variations on a few different designs, with a combination of brick clapboard, and "new" materials such as asbestos or "Cementex" siding. His Kollin Avenue development has the best overall design consistency of any of the neighborhoods studied, other than the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood.

⁵⁵ U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2014).



The "Inland Model Home" at Lee and Glen Park.



Clockwise from left:
16806 Kollin, 16613
Kollin, and 16812
Kollin.

RUFUS RANALDSON						
Present Name	OHI No.	Address	Style/Type	Date	Themes	
Edward Bencs House	CUY1178210	16601 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1960	African American, City and Regional planning	
Craig Barton House	CUY1178310	16602 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1957	African American, City and Regional planning	
Jason E. Houser House	CUY1178410	16608 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Andrea L. Thomas House	CUY1178510	16614 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1951	African American, City and Regional planning	
Faye I. Owens-Smith House	CUY1178610	16701 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Phyllis and Marsatta Jackson House	CUY1178710	16706 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Jack and Delores Pittmon House	CUY1178810	16707 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Lamar and Christina Jackson House	CUY1178910	16712 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1957	African American, City and Regional planning	
Carmen Gaines House	CUY1179010	16713 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Imogene Ranaldson House	CUY1179110	16801 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Erica Butler House	CUY1179210	16800 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1955	African American, City and Regional planning	
Robin G. Bennette and Cordell & Leon F.	CUY1179310	16805 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Rhonda D. Taylor House	CUY1179410	16806 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1957	African American, City and Regional planning	
Cleosene Johnson House	CUY1179510	16818 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Joseph Price House	CUY1179610	16702 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1957	African American, City and Regional planning	
Gregory E. Lovelady House	CUY1179710	16812 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1957	African American, City and Regional planning	
Robert L. Bush House	CUY1179810	16605 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1958	African American, City and Regional planning	
Pegge Hubbard House	CUY1179910	16613 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1959	African American, City and Regional planning	
Eric L. Johnson House	CUY1180010	16813 Kollin AVE	Ranch	1961	African American, City and Regional planning	
Michaela A. Brown House	CUY1180110	4609 Lee Rd	Ranch	1954	African American, City and Regional planning	

V. Summary and Recommendations

A. Summary

Survey data, maps and photos have been entered into individual OHI I-Forms for each of seventy-seven (77) survey properties, all new. A Map of the Survey Area is included as Appendix A.

B. Recommendations

1. Designate Myrtle Avenue & Highview Drive

The Myrtle-Highview Historic District is potentially eligible using National Park Service Guidelines which define significance as “present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, specifically,

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction...”⁵⁶

The district is associated with Arthur Bussey, William Woodridge and Rufus Ranaldson. This one neighborhood illustrates the changes in the larger neighborhood as the 1950s houses are large and brick and demonstrate what a rare place the neighborhood was at the time—a planned suburb of all brick houses available to African Americans. The early 1960s houses, much smaller, simpler ranches demonstrate how the larger area has been integrated and the neighborhood has lost its aura of exclusivity. The last houses—built by a Jewish developer for African Americans—demonstrate that this southern neighborhood has been surpassed by other neighborhoods closer to Shaker heights and that even Shaker and some other eastern suburbs were integrated by the late 1960s.

2. Designate Kollin Avenue.

⁵⁶ National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form Bulletin, 37.

While no individual houses are eligible for designation either Cleveland or National Register designation, Kollin Avenue is potentially eligible as both a Cleveland Landmark and National Register District. Nomination as a Cleveland Landmark District requires a Statement of Significance and the support of the City Council Representative and the Cleveland Landmarks Commission.

The Kollin Avenue Historic District appears to qualify for listing on the National Register under criterion A: Community Planning and Development and Ethnic History. The district is associated with the idea of "Cooperative Building" promoted by Ranaldson. Working together and pooling their resources, African Americans were able to accomplish what white developers accomplished alone, building an entire street of similar houses and enjoying economies of scale in buying materials and hiring subcontractors. Other resources surveyed are scattered among other nonrelated structures and lack clear boundaries or a unity of design and significance.

3. Sponsor Ohio Historic Marker Nominations to recognize the Black Builders of Lee-Seville. This history is unknown and would help strengthen these struggling neighborhoods by creating a stronger sense of place and importance.

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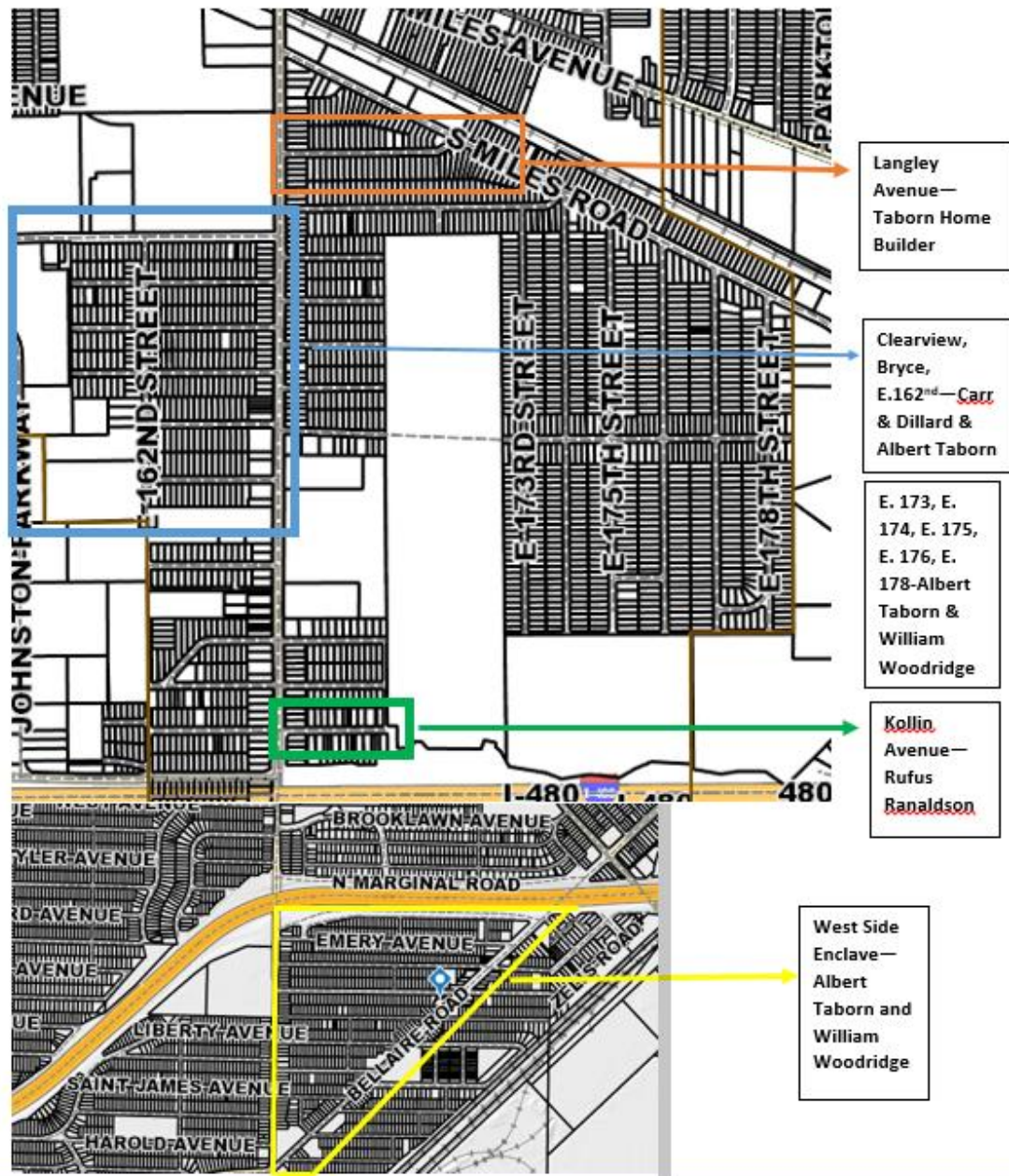
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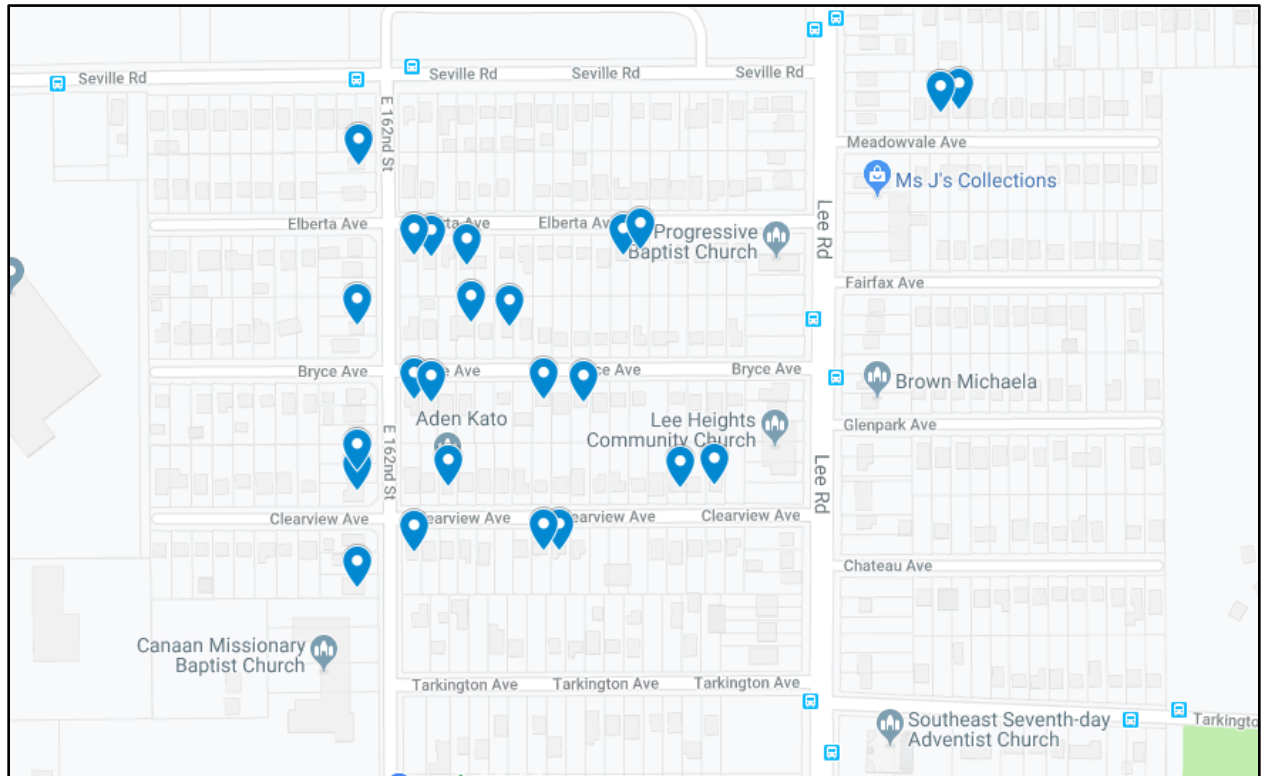
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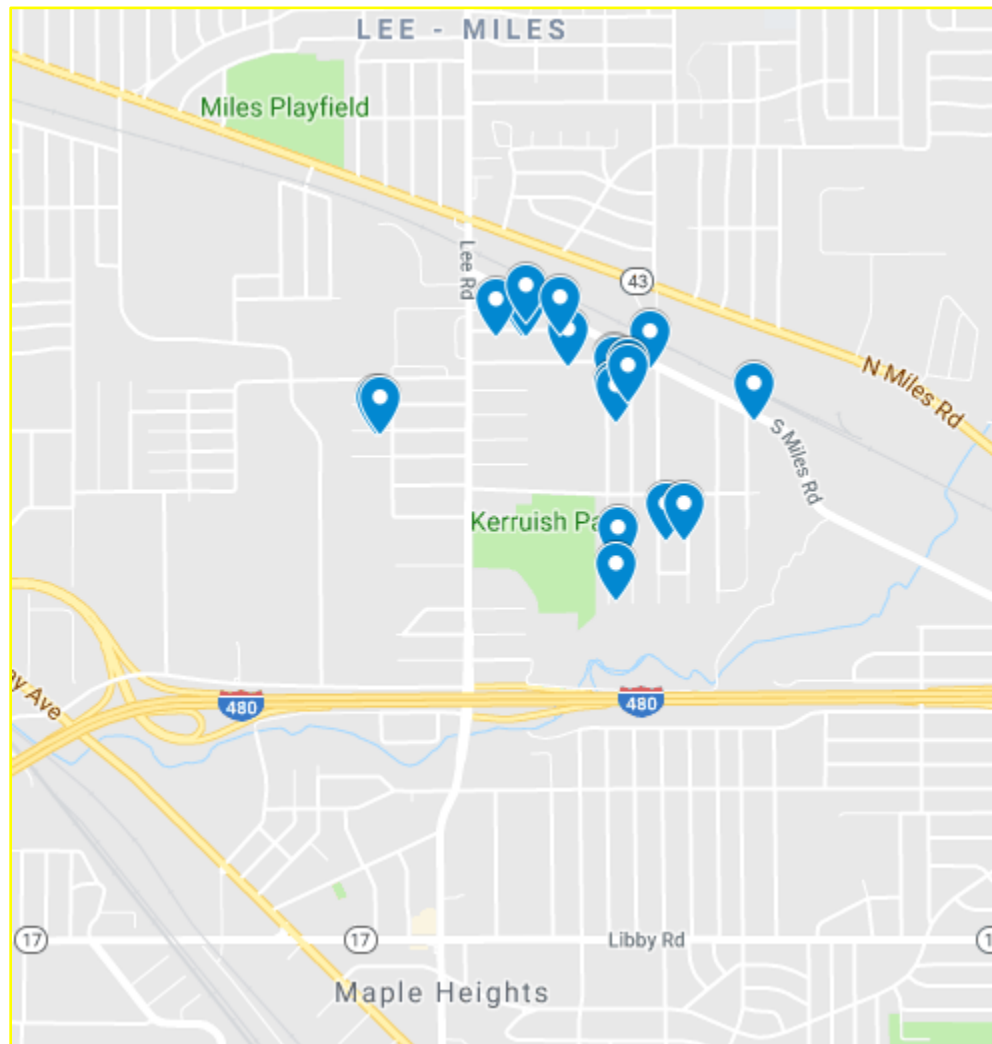
Appendix A: Survey Maps

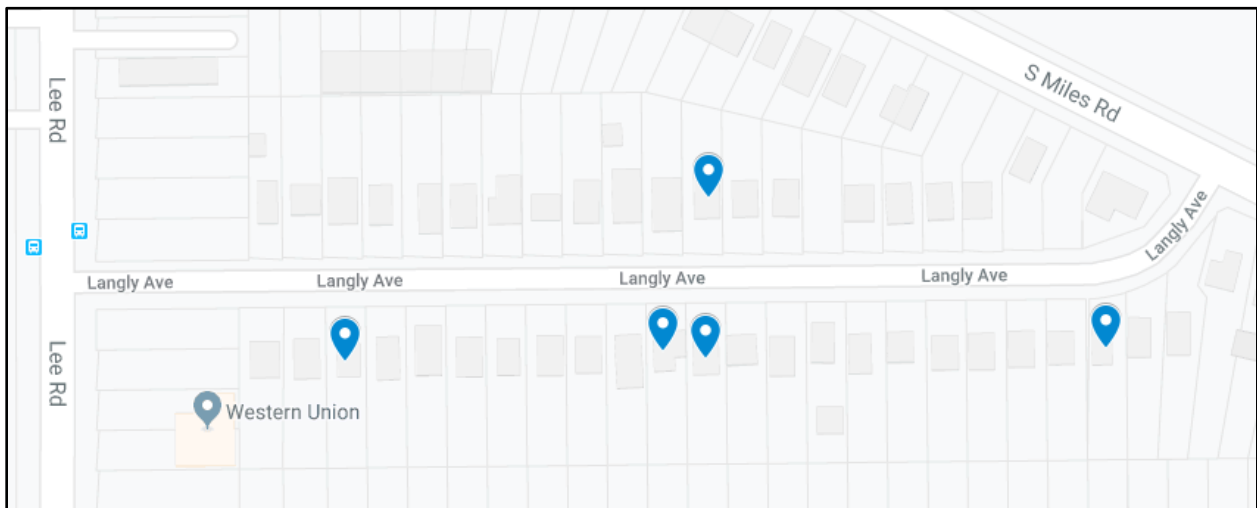
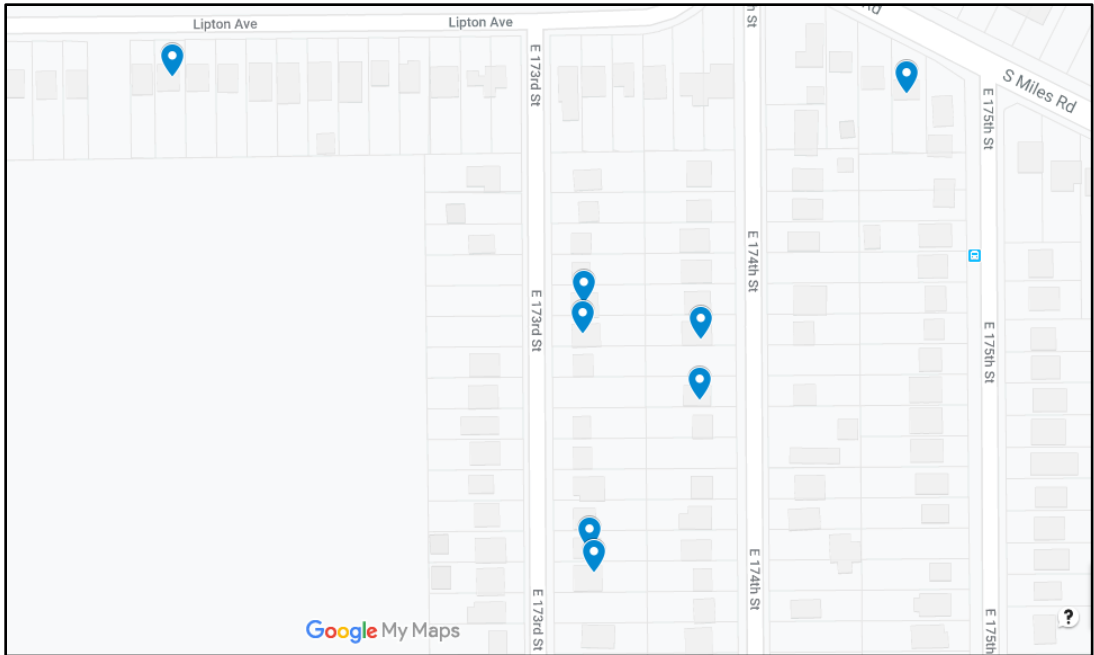


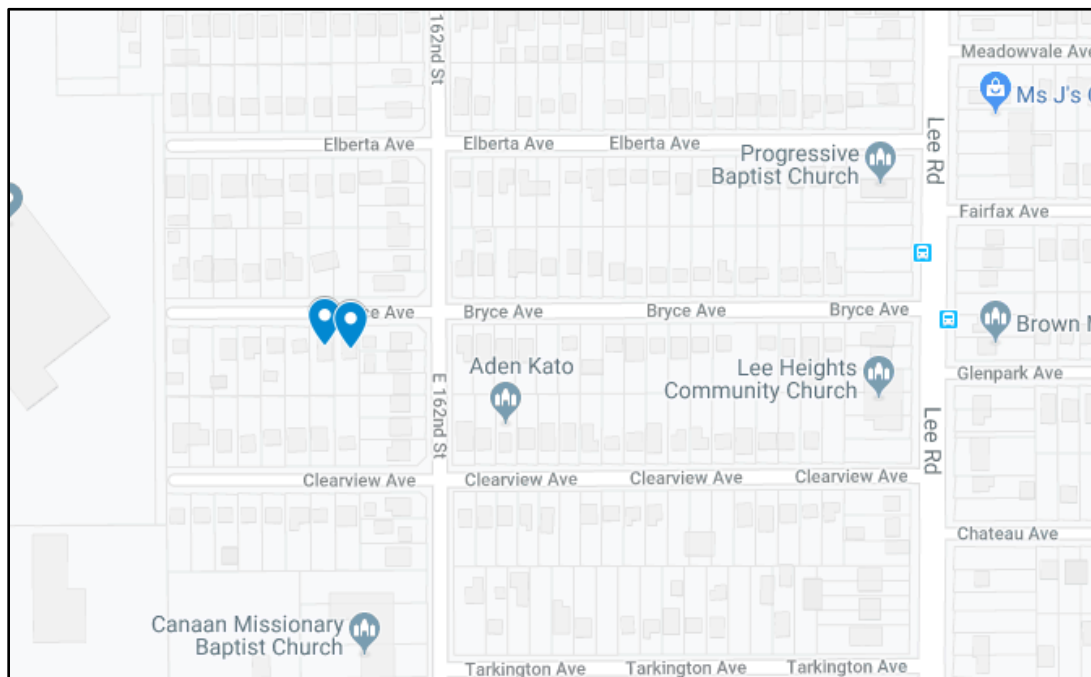
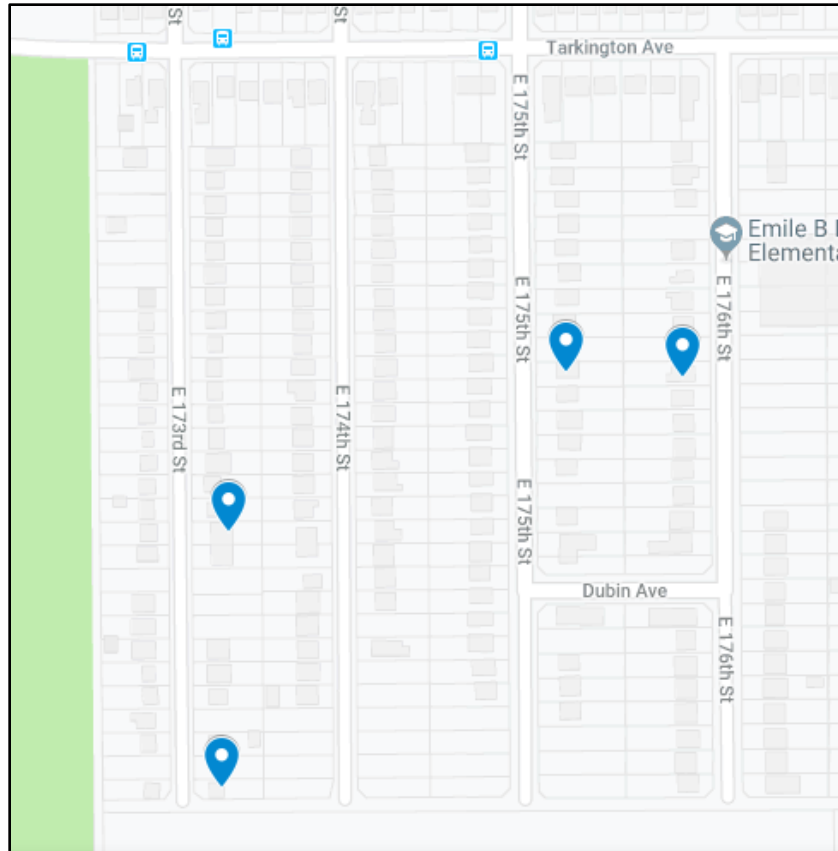
Carr & Dillard—Lee-Seville



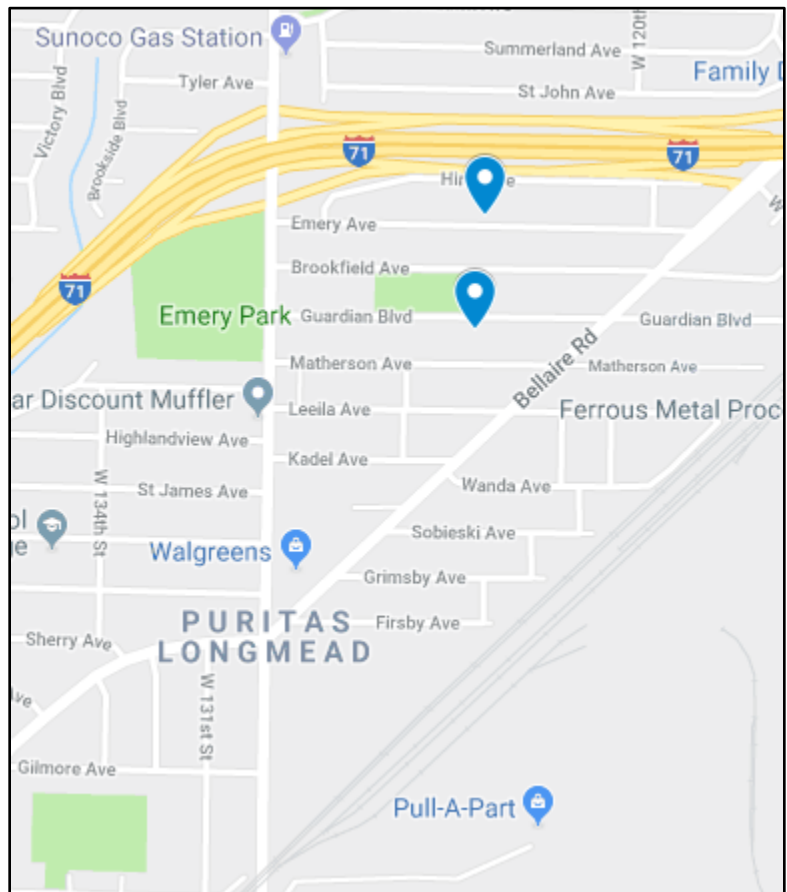
ALBERT TABORN--LEE-SEVILLE



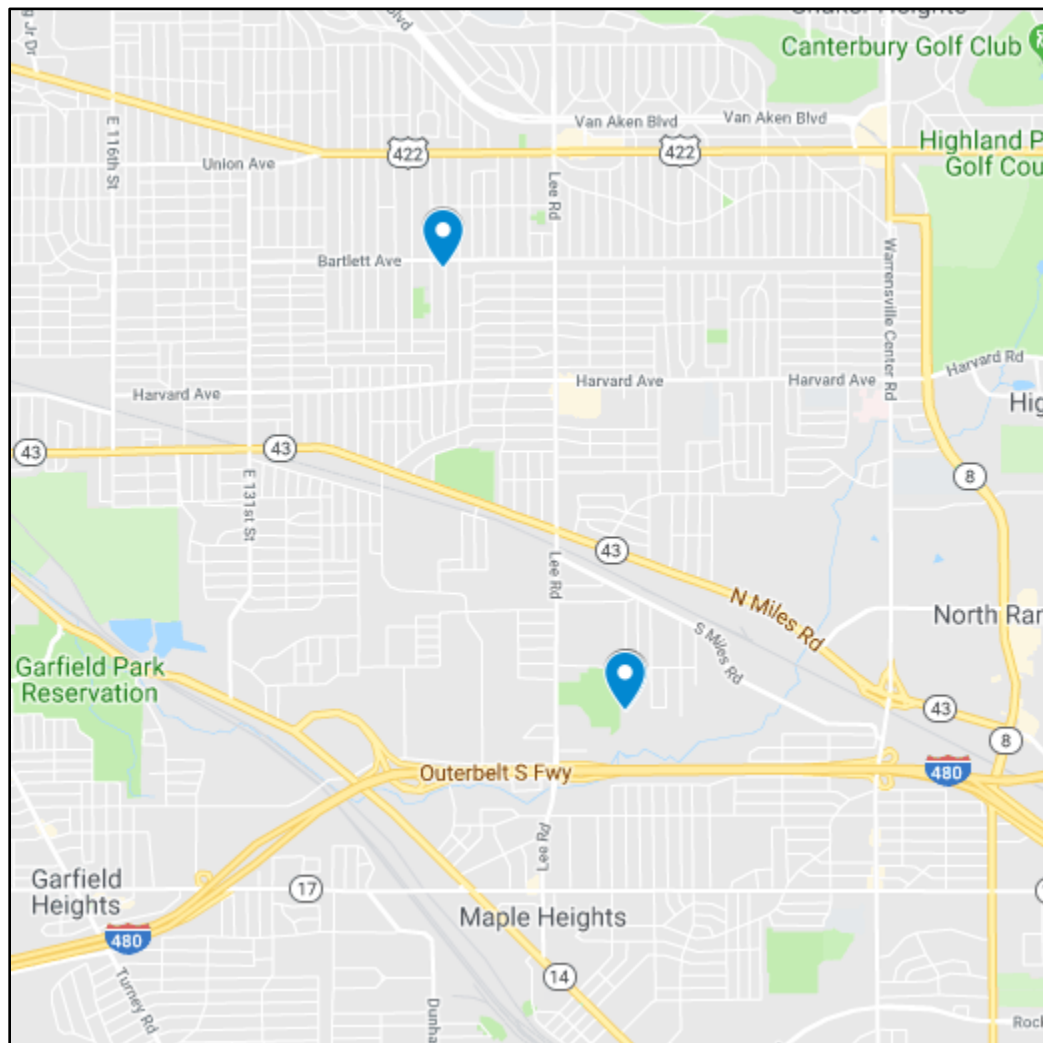




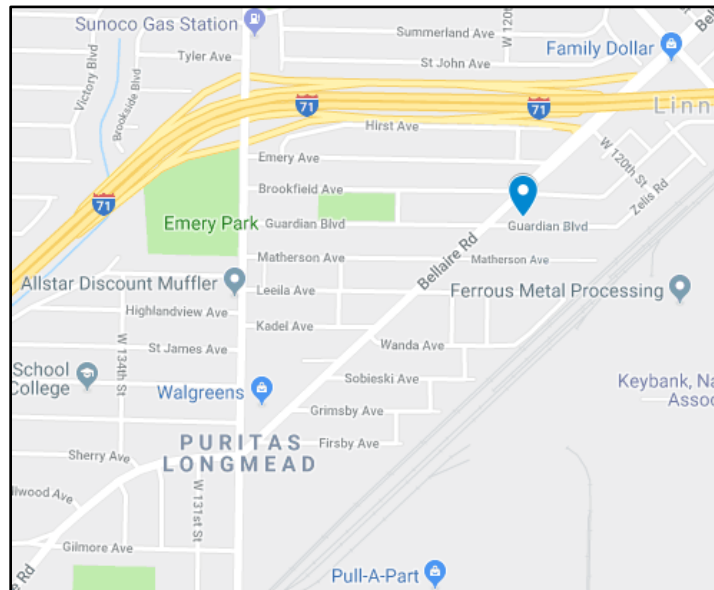
Albert Taborn—West Park Enclave



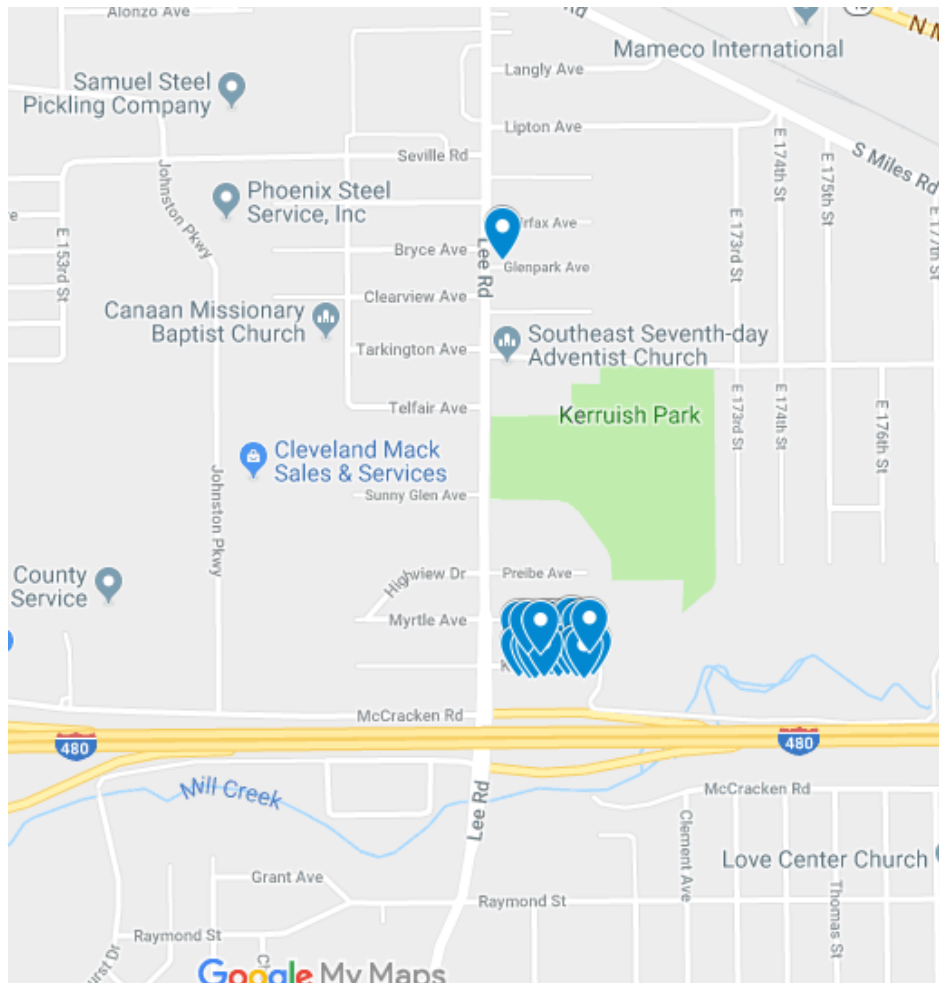
William Woodridge—Lee-Seville



William Woodridge—West Park Enclave



Rufus Ranaldson



While the “Co-Operative” Building Model Home was at Glen Park & Lee, the neighborhood was developed on Kollin Avenue, five blocks south on Lee Road.

