OVERGROUND RAILROAD

The GREEN BOOK *and the* ROOTS *of* BLACK TRAVEL *in* AMERICA

CANDACY TAYLOR

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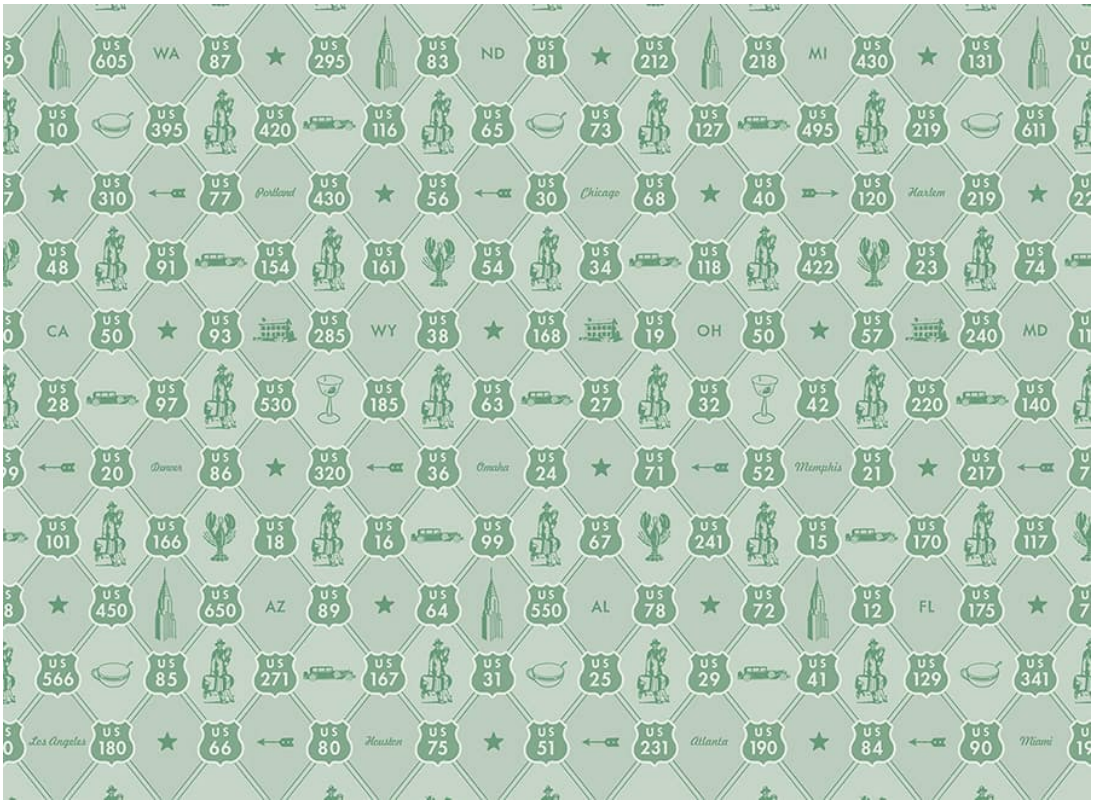
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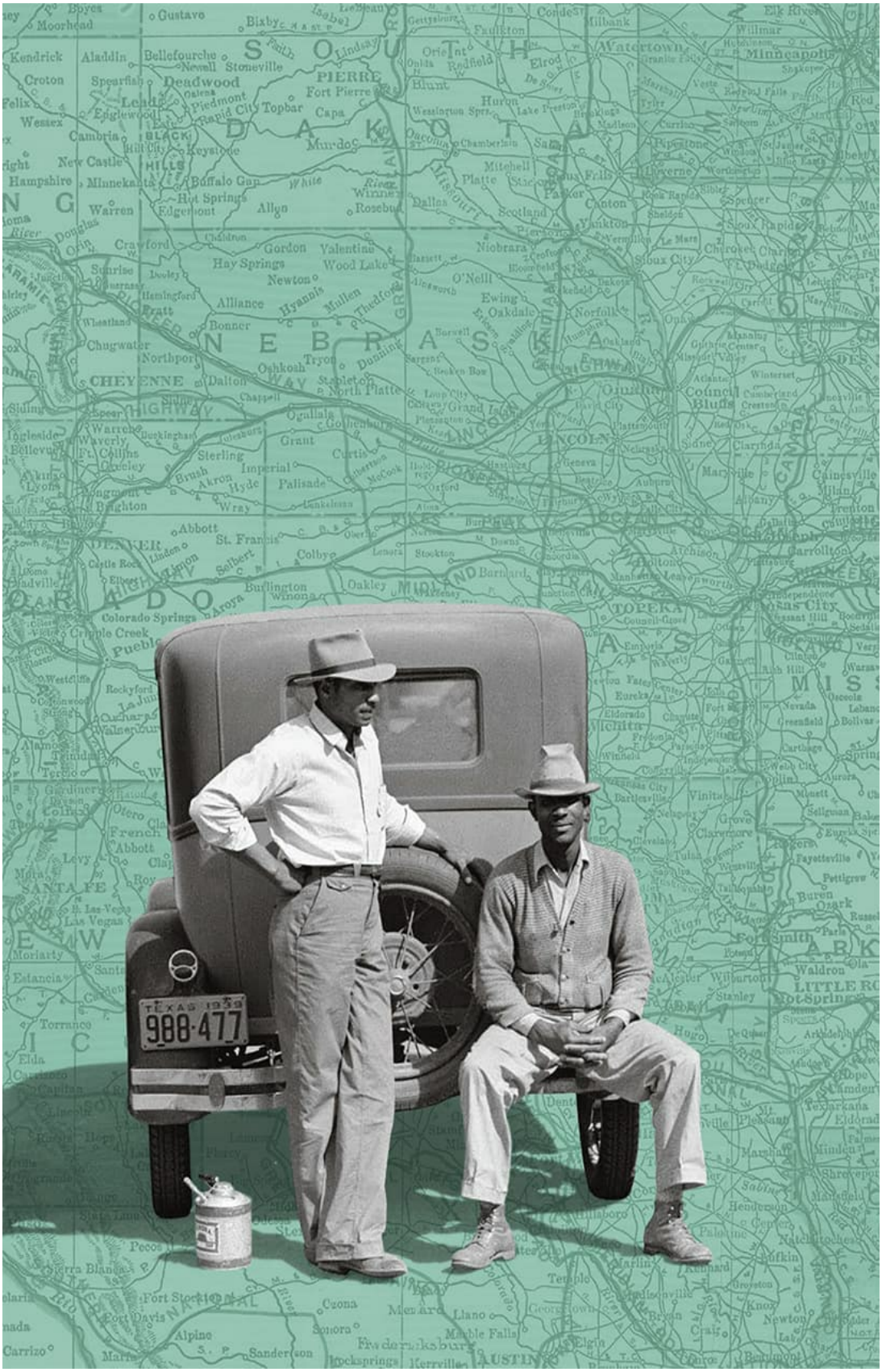
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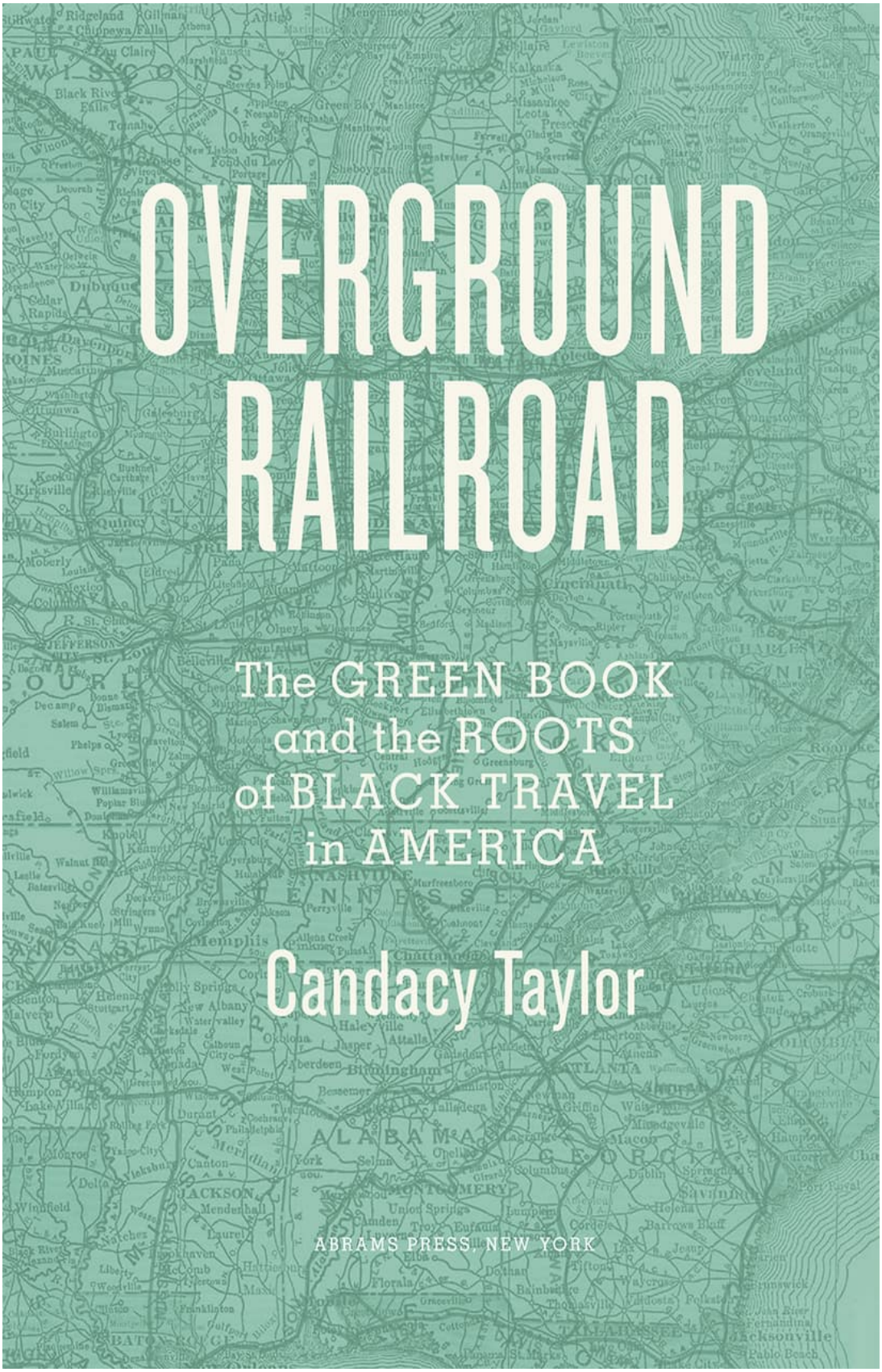
OVERGROUND
RAILROAD
The GREEN BOOK
and the ROOTS
of BLACK TRAVEL
in AMERICA
Candacy Taylor
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For Ron, Mom, Aimee, Adger, Sophie, and Chris

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INTRODUCTION

ARE WE THERE YET?

“Don’t you dare say a word.” Ron was sitting in the back seat as his father pulled the car to a stop at the side of the road. His father had told him to be quiet before, but this was the first time Ron felt the words reverberate to the pit of his stomach. Moments later, the sheriff stood over the well-appointed 1953 Chevy sedan complete with all the modern features you read about in the magazines.

“Where did you get this vehicle? What are you doing here? And who are these people with you?” the sheriff asked.

Ron’s father answered, “It’s my employer’s car.” He pointed to his wife, sitting upright and expressionless in the passenger seat. He pretended that she wasn’t his wife and said, “This is my employer’s maid, and that is her son in the back. I’m taking them home.”

Ron at age seven

The sheriff took a long, hard look at Ron's mother and then angled his eyes to the back seat. A young Ronald sat tight-lipped, too afraid to turn his head or even take a breath. "Where's your hat?" the sheriff barked at Ron's dad.

"Hanging up right behind me in the back seat, officer."

The sheriff waved. "All right. Move on."

As they drove north across the Tennessee border, a sad, eerie silence hung in the air. The jovial conversation they were having right before the sheriff pulled them over had stopped dead. And although there was no discussion about what had just happened, the gravity of the situation was clear. Ron watched Daddy and Mama exchange knowing glances and then turned his head to look at the black, unassuming cap that had been hanging next to him in the back seat ever since he could remember. It wasn't until that moment that he realized why he had never seen his father wearing it. Mama wasn't a maid, and Daddy wasn't a driver. He had a good job with the railroad, and this was their family car. Until that day, Ron never paid attention to that cap, but now he realized that it wasn't just any hat. It was a chauffeur's hat. A ruse, a prop—a lifesaver.

During the Jim Crow era, the chauffeur's hat was the perfect cover for every middle-class black man pulled over and harassed by the police. If Ron's father had told the sheriff the truth—that he was driving his own car and that they were a family on vacation—the sheriff wouldn't have believed him. He would have assumed the car was stolen. In the event that the sheriff did believe it was Ron's father's car, the rage and jealousy he might have felt at the thought of a black man owning a nicer car than a police officer might have triggered a beating, torture, or even murder. From that day on, Ron noticed these hats strategically placed, like unarmed weapons, in the back seat of nearly every black man's car.

. . . . . .

Standing in the kitchen between the sage-speckled countertop and the wall-mounted oven, I listened to Ron's story, stone-faced. "Everybody had one," he said, referring to the chauffeur's cap. "And you always kept it in the car." And then, without any provocation, other stories about his days growing up in Tennessee tumbled out. Ron talked about his cousin slipping out of town

in the middle of the night because the Ku Klux Klan was set to lynch him. I listened with a knot in my stomach, trying to swallow my rage and sadness before tears filled my eyes. I didn't want my emotions to distract him from telling his story.

Ron Burford was my stepfather. I had known this man for more than thirty years, but this was the first time he had told me anything about the pain of growing up in the Jim Crow South. And it's not that he was a quiet man; Ron loved to talk. He could talk for hours. My mom and my sister and I would try to scoot out of the kitchen before he started in on another one of his long Southern yarns, ones that we had heard before. But it wasn't until I started this project that he shared these stories with me. It was only then, at the age of forty-six, that I realized I had earned his trust. This was a huge accomplishment, because after what he and most black men of his generation had lived through in this country, he felt he couldn't trust anyone.

I think Ron started to trust me around 2014, soon after I called home asking about the *Green Book*. I had just seen a copy of it for the first time, tucked away under glass at the Autry Museum of the American West, in Los Angeles. It was a travel guide that was published for black people during the Jim Crow era. I'd never known such a thing existed. Right after leaving the Autry, I called my parents in Columbus, Ohio, and asked Ron if he had ever used the *Green Book*. He said, "I'm not sure; probably. There were a few black guides back then."

He was right. There were about a dozen other black travel guides, but the *Green Book* was in print for the longest period of time and had the widest readership. Victor Hugo Green, a man with a seventh-grade education, published the first *Green Book*, in Harlem in 1936, and he worked on it until his death in 1960. His wife, Alma, took up the mantle and kept the *Green Book* going until 1962. In 1965, Langley Waller, an engraver and former writer for Harlem's newspaper the *New York Amsterdam News*, published the last two editions of the *Green Book*, the 1963–64 and 1966–67 editions. (There was no 1965 edition.). Although these are distinctly different in design, scope, and tone from the original, what never wavered throughout the life of the *Green Book* was the courage and security it afforded black people, so they could pack up their cars and go.

Listings in the *Green Book* blanketed the entire United States, and later editions included Canada, the Virgin Islands, Europe, and Africa. The guide was distributed by mail order, sold by black-owned businesses, and made

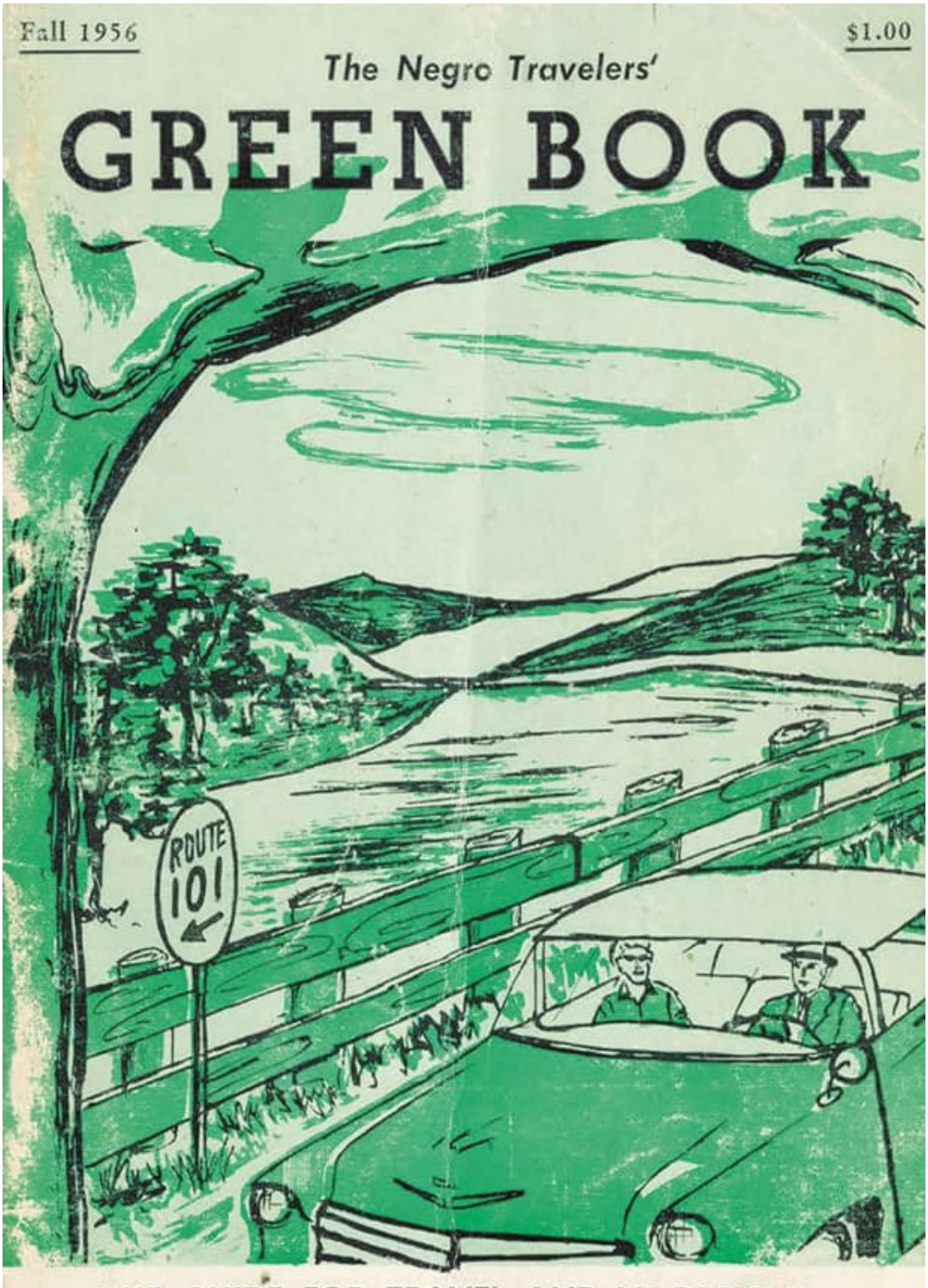
available through a savvy media campaign led by Esso gas stations (which operate as ExxonMobil today). It was successful due to word of mouth but also as a result of an ambitious grassroots operation of a national network of mailmen led by the guide's creator, and fellow postal worker, Victor Hugo Green. This multipronged marketing strategy was so effective that by 1962, the *Green Book* had a circulation of nearly two million.

The *Green Book* was published during a time when car travel symbolized freedom in America, but since racial segregation was in full force throughout the country, the open road wasn't open to all. When black motorists picked up a copy of the *Green Book*, they were greeted by the words "Just What You Have Been Looking For!! NOW WE CAN TRAVEL WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT." The *Green Book* was called the AAA guide for black people, but it was so much more. The businesses listed in it were critical sources of refuge along lonely stretches of America's perilously empty roads. To stay safe, black folks never left home without a plan, props, a cover story, and a copy of the *Green Book*.

Fall 1956 $1.00

The Negro Travelers'

GREEN BOOK



THE GUIDE FOR TRAVEL AND VACATIONS

20 Years of Servic[illegible]he Negro T[illegible]veler

Carry your GREEN BOOK with you—you n[illegible]ed it.

Green Book cover, Fall 1956

"Just What You've Been Looking For!!" *Green Book*, 1948

Given the violence that black travelers encountered on the road, the *Green Book* was an ingenious solution to a horrific problem. It represented the fundamental optimism of a race of people facing tyranny and terrorism. When I first saw it, I was struck that something so simple, and so practical, could be so powerful. Not only did it show black travelers where they could go, but it was also a compelling marketing tool that supported black-owned businesses and celebrated black self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship.

In the early 1930s, right before the *Green Book* was first published, black Americans had banded together to create the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign. Once they understood the impact of the reach of their collective economic power, the campaign galvanized black communities to boycott businesses that wouldn't hire them. So when the *Green Book* came along, it became the perfect vehicle to carry this effort forward because it was practically a Yellow Pages of black-owned businesses.

By 1930, blacks in the United States owned approximately 70,000 small businesses, and over the *Green Book*'s nearly thirty-year reign, it listed more than 9,500 of these, including hotels, restaurants, gas stations, department stores, tailors, nightclubs, drugstores, hair salons, haberdashers, sanitariums, funeral homes, real estate offices, and even a dude ranch. More than 80 percent of the listings were clustered in traditional African American neighborhoods such as Harlem, South Central Los Angeles, and Bronzeville in Chicago. The majority were black-owned, but there were also black-friendly white-owned establishments, such as Macy's, Brooks Brothers, the Drake Hotel in Chicago, the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles, and even Disneyland.

Although the *Green Book* provided safe accommodation for black travelers, this solved only half the problem. Getting there could be a dangerous, life-threatening proposition. Not only did black motorists navigate a country with thousands of "sundown towns," all-white communities that banned black people from entering the city limits after dark, but they also couldn't eat, sleep, or buy gasoline at many white-owned businesses. Even Coca-Cola vending machines had WHITE CUSTOMERS ONLY printed on them. To avoid the humiliation of being denied basic services, many black motorists were forced to travel with ice coolers, bedding, portable toilets, and full gas cans. Herbert Sulaiman, of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, remembers as a child smelling the odor of gasoline coming from the trunk. "You don't forget smells," he said.

Despite the dangers, black motorists hit the road anyway, venturing out on the desolate two-lane highways that connected urban and rural America. It wasn't until I started this project that I understood why each time I left for the airport after visiting my parents in Ohio, Ron would try to load me up with food for the trip. I'd say, "No, thanks. I can just pick something up at the airport." Until I started writing this book, I hadn't realized what a privileged statement that was. Black folks of Ron's generation never left on a trip without taking food because there was no guarantee they would be served anywhere. Ron knew, intellectually, that times had changed, but his survival instincts had never left him.

"Next Services 100 Miles," Wonder Valley, California

While working on this book, I came to understand why Ron was so guarded, especially around white people. When I was young, he had never talked about the rules that governed his life growing up in the Jim Crow South. Later, he told me that he had been taught to never look a white person in the eye. And if a white person walked toward him on the street, he would have to cross immediately, or there could be grave consequences—like what had happened to his cousin who had a KKK lynch mob after him. As a teenager, I would roll my eyes at Ron's relentless suspicion of people, which I felt verged on paranoia. But after hearing his stories, I finally understood why he had every reason to doubt, question, and side-eye a situation that didn't pass his smell test. I don't think all his fears were warranted, but now I wholeheartedly understood why he had them.

Ron died the week I started writing this book. He lost his life from complications due to exposure to Agent Orange during his service as a marine in Vietnam. His voracious lifelong love affair with Southern food, or what he called "good living," also likely contributed to his death.

It was heartbreaking to lose him at such a pivotal point in the project, but when people die, it calls us to look back on their lives, and it wasn't until he died that I realized how much of Ron's life experiences touched nearly every chapter of this book. We talked more the year before he died than we had at any other time in our lives. I suspect he knew he was dying, but he didn't tell anyone. When I was home visiting during this period, almost every evening, at a time when he would normally have gone downstairs to his man cave, instead, he would sit with me on the couch and show me pictures and tell me stories.

Ron was so proud of the work I was doing. He told me this book had to be the most important thing in my life. "Don't worry about anything else," he said. "Don't let anything distract you. You don't need to be out there gallivanting," using his favorite word for what I did. "Just sit still, be quiet, and write this book." I had already written two other books, but he and I knew this one was different. After learning about the *Green Book*, I, a black woman who has driven over half-a-million miles documenting American culture over the last twenty years, never looked at travel, or even America, the same way again.

As I grieved Ron's passing, I wrote every morning, watching the sun rise across the Bisbee, Arizona, mountains. I recounted all the conversations we'd had, and just like that, as Ron guided me through every page, he went from

being my guardian to being my guardian angel.

The year before Ron died, Donald Trump's presidential inauguration sent Democrats over the edge, confirming that their worst nightmare was coming true. Later that year, white supremacists stormed Charlottesville, Virginia, and murdered thirty-two-year-old protester Heather Heyer. "I'm not surprised," Ron told me over the phone. In a calm, steady voice he said, "People don't want to see what's right in front of them." I didn't say anything. I just let the sentence hang in the air. After passing the sixth Confederate flag that day while driving through upstate New York, I wasn't surprised, either.

Most Americans, however, were stunned. They insisted that this wasn't the America they knew. They were confused, and devastated that the country they were so proud of was not living up to its promise of "freedom and justice for all." Many of my black friends called me and said, "Well, here we go again" and "This is nothing new." But most of my white friends called me in tears. They were incensed by Trump's racist rhetoric and terrified that we were losing the progress we had made as a country since the election of Barack Obama. I shared their anger, but I wondered why they hadn't already felt outraged. One white friend said, with hysteria in her voice, "I'm afraid they're going to round up all the Muslims!" I said, "Where have you been? For the last forty years, black folks have been rounded up and imprisoned under the watch of President Bill Clinton, the Bushes, and Barack Obama. No one seems to care about that."

Once I hit the road scouting *Green Book* listings, I drove nearly forty thousand miles on America's two-lane highways, across acres of wide-open plains and deserts, over mountains, and along coastlines, but I also passed miles of blight and boarded-up buildings in Baltimore, Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland. After seeing communities decimated by poverty, crime, and destructive government policies, I was bewildered, brokenhearted, and then furious that human beings were living in such inhumane conditions.

Ron was my comrade while I was on the road researching this book. We spoke regularly on the phone, and as he requested, I texted home every day, giving him detailed accounts of my travels. He was worried for my safety, and I couldn't blame him. He had every reason to be concerned, but he never discouraged me from doing this work. Instead, he supplied me with a stun gun, a knife, and a canister of Mace. And then he taught me how to use them.

On the road, I was verbally threatened, chased by dogs, physically lunged

at, and nearly physically assaulted. I understood the risks, and took things one day at a time. The only moment I really feared for my life was when I was scouting *Green Book* sites on the South Side of Chicago. Fifty-three people had been shot the same weekend I was there. Although I was trained in Model Mugging (a program of self-defense for women), and Ron had taught me self-defense techniques, there was nothing I could do to stop a stray bullet. On the days when I was too nervous to get out of my car to pump gas, or the times when it was too dangerous to stand on the streets to photograph sites, I thought, Isn't this ironic? The whole point of the *Green Book* was to keep black motorists safe on the road, and it's eighty years later, and I can't find a safe place to use the bathroom.

Author standing in front of Clifton's, a former *Green Book* restaurant in Los Angeles, California

As I crisscrossed the country with a knife under my seat, a stun gun in the car door pocket, and Mace behind the gear shift, the words Victor Green wrote in his introduction to the *Green Book* rang through my mind: “There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication[,] for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment. But until that time comes we shall continue to publish this information for your convenience each year.”

Despite the overt racism Victor Green must have experienced during his life, when he wrote this introduction, he had reason to be optimistic. Just a few years before he created the *Green Book*, the concept of the American Dream was born. It was defined by James Truslow Adams in 1931 as “a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.” It was an ambitious goal, but Americans from all races and classes wanted to believe in the American Dream. Remember, there was no established civil rights movement in the 1930s, no Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., so to be a black business owner during the Jim Crow era was the highest expression of the American Dream.

It took another thirty-three years before Adams’s dream of social equality would be written into law as the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Unfortunately, Victor Green died in 1960, so he didn’t live to see racial integration. But if he had, it may have broken his heart, because after integration became law, racism continued to shape America’s social, political, and physical spaces. The Federal Housing Administration redlined neighborhoods, denying housing loans to blacks and preventing them from accessing the same wealth-building opportunities freely given to whites. More recently, there have been brazen attempts to dismantle the 1965 Voting Rights Act. And unconstitutional policing policies such as “stop and frisk” have caused the prison population to skyrocket 700 percent, and today, as a result, nearly one in three black men is incarcerated.

When I talk about the *Green Book*, some people say, “Thank god we don’t need that anymore.” And yes, it is true that we have made progress, but some of the communities that were once safe havens for black people are now just as dangerous as the sundown towns blacks were avoiding during the

second wave of the Great Migration. As I drove through neighborhoods where *Green Book* sites once thrived, I could see the indelible scar that mass incarceration had left on these communities. I believe that a century from now, people will look back on this time in disbelief and wonder how we could stomach locking up nearly one-third of the black population. I believe this era of mass incarceration will prove to be at least as horrific, barbaric, and shameful as segregation was during the Jim Crow era.

Wonderland Liquor, a former *Green Book* site in Baltimore, Maryland

After surveying the tragic spectacle of ruins and poverty in dozens of cities and rural communities throughout America, I can't help but think that this was not the future Victor Green imagined. It was during these trips that I realized that if we want to understand the historical role of the *Green Book* and its residual impact today, it shouldn't be reduced to being merely regarded as a travel guide that was needed during a shameful chapter in American history. While photographing the Hampton House in Miami and patiently waiting for a young prostitute, naked from the waist down, to walk out of my frame, I realized I wasn't interested in presenting the *Green Book* as a historic time capsule. I wanted to show it in the context of this country's ongoing struggle with race and social mobility, because the problems black Americans face regarding police brutality, homicide, unfair drug sentencing, and mass incarceration are arguably just as debilitating and deadly as the problems the *Green Book* helped black people avoid more than eighty years ago.

Clearly, we still have work to do, and not only in the government sector—since the *Green Book* ceased publication, racism persists in the travel industry as well. In May 1994, the restaurant chain Denny's was successfully sued for making black customers wait longer and pay higher prices than white patrons. At fifty-four million dollars, the settlement was the largest and broadest of its kind. More recently, home-sharing start-ups such as Noirbnb and Innclusive were created in response to widespread discrimination experienced by black Airbnb customers. In Missouri, the NAACP initiated a travel advisory in response to Senate Bill 43 that was passed in the Missouri Legislature which found that black motorists were 75 percent more likely to be pulled over than white motorists. Soon after that, the NAACP announced another travel advisory after numerous complaints of unfair treatment of black passengers on American Airlines.

During this time, I was inundated with media requests to discuss the NAACP travel advisories, and I was still getting regular calls from friends who were terrified at the state of the country. I knew things were serious and that we needed to push back and demand our constitutional rights, but I wasn't panicked. We had survived this before.

One of the gifts of the *Green Book* is that it shows an annual record of black travel during America's most turbulent decades of racial conflict leading up to the civil rights movement. As I looked closer at American history, I saw that racial progress has never traveled in a straight line. It's a

cyclical, reactionary process that swings back and forth like a pendulum. For this reason, I have chosen to examine the *Green Book* editions chronologically. I want to show why it wasn't surprising, especially to Ron (and others like him), that right after Barack Obama left office, America elected a president who was embraced by white supremacists. But I don't want to give Trump too much credit. Although he exacerbated the problem of race and division, he didn't create it. If anything, his presidency showed Americans the hate that has been hiding in plain sight, both in our communities and in our government policies. Still, after his election, I was excited to see people out in the streets and outraged.

The *Green Book* deserves special attention now because our past and current policies shape how not just black people but people of all races and gender identities navigate this country. During my research for this book, I learned so much about America just by getting off the interstate and driving through neighborhoods. Photographing *Green Book* sites gave me a greater understanding of and insight into the guide that I never would have had merely reading it in my office at Harvard University. On the road, I felt the tenor of a bygone era and saw a new cycle of grit and survival along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevards and in the dilapidated houses on dirt roads across the nation.

With the *Green Book* in the rearview mirror, I saw America for what it is, not what it imagines itself or even aspires to be. Nearly every podcast on my Stitcher app covered Trump's refusal to denounce white supremacy in response to Heather Heyer's murder in Charlottesville. Those news reports conjured thoughts of Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Alton B. Sterling, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, and Eric Garner. It was their memories that fueled my journey to drive for months working sixteen-hour days. After scouting more than 3,600 *Green Book* sites, I realized that most of my well-meaning liberal friends in the coastal cities had never seen the poverty that millions of Americans are living in. By the time I got to Detroit, after leaving Los Angeles and driving across the country, I was in tears.

Once the sadness subsided, I found strength and resolve in the *Green Book* buildings that are still standing. *Green Book* sites range from A-frame houses to simple storefronts to Spanish Colonial hotels. Regardless of their stature, these former safe zones are symbols of refuge that redefine sanctuary, the agency of place, and the story of race in America. After three years of

scouting nearly five thousand *Green Book* sites, I learned that less than 5 percent are still in operation and more than 75 percent are gone. That is why it was so important for me to document the ones that are left.

Elk's, a *Green Book* nightclub in Phoenix, Arizona

In most traditional African American neighborhoods, *Green Book* buildings were destroyed in the name of urban renewal, and many of the remaining sites are in ruins, and others have been leveled or radically modified beyond recognition. While traveling, I ran a tight ship, following a mapping system in which I could scout thirty sites a day. Since most of them are gone, there were times when I would drive for days and not find a single one. On the rare occasion when I did find a *Green Book* listing that was still in business, it towered over the sidewalk like a rare and beautiful force of nature. It's incredible that any business would survive up to seventy years. Given that most *Green Book* businesses were owned by black families, to find one that is still operating was reason enough to celebrate. The sites that are still with us symbolize survival: They endured the times the pendulum swung forward and a wrecking ball swung back. These businesses survived urban renewal, gentrification, and white supremacist policies. And the people in these communities survived underfunded schools and overfunded prisons. All of this cemented my faith that we would survive Trump.

Green Book businesses are powerful. They shape the narrative of black mobility and tell a story that is not all about struggle. These sites of sanctuary symbolize black ingenuity, resourcefulness, strength, entrepreneurship, and resilience. They carry a cultural memory with them and reveal the untold story of black travel, offering us a rich opportunity to reexamine America's story of segregation, black migration, and the rise of the black leisure class. To honor and celebrate these places, I have included a *Green Book* site tour at the end of this book. I hope you visit these businesses, as a witness, and reflect on this history.

When you go to these sites, remember that America is a messy collection of customs, traditions, values, and belief systems that have been shaped by capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Hate is hard to understand, and our relationship to it is deeply layered because history is fleeting, ephemeral, and slippery, and it changes according to who is telling it. The past is usually presented as a buttoned-up, simplified, and often sanitized story that sidesteps the turbulence and whitewashes the journey, making it look like one smooth ride—one where we learned from our mistakes, righted our wrongs, and kept getting better. But this isn't how it happens. For every major push forward for black equality, there was a swift and urgent "whitelash." So, are we there yet? Hardly.

This is not a book about the history of road-tripping and black travel. It's

more of a pilgrimage toward understanding a country so blinded by symbolism that it can't or won't tackle the pervasive, relentless forces that created the environment for the *Green Book* to thrive in the first place. It is a book that I hope will show how we got here and why, after all this time, we still have so far to go. ♦

1
DRIVING WHILE BLACK
1936 – 38 Editions

Farmers sitting on the back of an automobile, San Augustine, Texas, 1939

As Ron hurried down the plush carpeted stairs on his way to the garage, carrying a stack of Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Howlin' Wolf CDs, he said, "Okay. I'm ready to roll!" I stared at him and shook my head. "It's after ten o'clock. Why can't you drive during the day, like a normal person?" His answer was always the same. "Traffic."

Scenes like this one played out for years. Every time Ron took a trip, whether he was going home to Memphis, Tennessee, or heading north to Canada to take a deep-sea fishing charter, he insisted on driving at night. I would get so frustrated. Why would he risk his life and others' by falling asleep at the wheel? For me, the whole point of a road trip was to drive during the day so you could see everything. Then I finally realized that driving at night was a common practice for black people from Ron's generation, to avoid being harassed by the police. Seeing nature on the open road was the last thing they cared about; it was more important *not* to be seen.

From the 1920s to the present, each generation of black Americans had to incorporate strategies to protect themselves from law enforcement. Gary Kirksey's grandmother Mrs. W. Jackson operated a tourist home (a private residence offering lodging) in Alliance, Ohio, that was listed in the *Green Book* from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s. While Kirksey was in high school, his family bought a new car, and his father told him to drive with the car registration in his wallet, not in the glove box, as most people do. His father said, "If you get pulled over . . . the first thing they are going to question is whether it's stolen." Later, when Kirksey was pulled over for speeding and the cop questioned whether the car was his, he found that his father's approach worked. "When I pulled the registration out of my wallet, it was the end of the conversation."

Safety rituals have evolved with the times, so Kirksey's technique probably wouldn't work for black motorists in 2020. And the stakes are even higher today, as black men are twenty-one times more likely to be killed by police officers. For instance, to avoid getting shot in 2020, it's best not to have to reach for anything when a police officer is standing outside your car door. So, wallet placement is now something black motorists have to consider. Wesley Lowery, an African American journalist at the *Washington Post*, says he drives with his wallet in the center console (a feature that didn't exist in cars in the 1930s), instead of storing it in his pants pocket. He does this so he doesn't have to reach for it in the presence of a police officer, who

could mistake it for a weapon.

To stay safe, black families over the last eighty years have driven with props, such as a chauffeur's hat (as Ron's father did), and at night, or had cars with tinted windows. In the 1930s, when the *Green Book* was first published, no matter what prop they were using, it was always important to drive under the speed limit, because exceeding it by just one mile per hour could result in an arrest. Driving too slowly, however, could also attract attention, so to avoid getting pulled over, most black men at the time learned to drive a mile or two under the speed limit. A slower car in front could pose yet another problem for black motorists in Jim Crow states, where it was illegal for a black driver to pass a white driver. In the end, it was just easier to follow Ron's rule to drive at night and be invisible.

In the early 1930s, it's likely that Victor Green employed some of the strategies mentioned above while he drove his wife, Alma, from Harlem to her hometown of Richmond, Virginia. It was also during this time that Green managed the career of his brother-in-law Robert (Bob) Duke, an accomplished musician who lived with the Greens and taught music lessons in their home. Victor Green undoubtedly heard from Duke one humiliating story after another about the obstacles he and his fellow musicians faced in seeking safe accommodations on tour. These stories likely inspired Green to develop his guide. However, legend has it that Green got the idea to produce a black travel guide from watching his Jewish friend use a kosher guide to vacation in the Borscht Belt, in New York State's Catskill Mountains.

By the mid-1930s, Green had teamed up with a fellow postal worker named George I. Smith to publish the first *Green Book*. The first edition was small, only ten pages, but it was a mighty weapon in the face of segregation. After two years, Green and Smith parted ways for unknown reasons, but Green's brother, William H. Green, joined Victor and Alma in the project, editing the *Green Book* until he died in 1945.

When the first edition of the *Green Book* came out, there were nearly thirty million cars on the road. In January of the following year, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated into a second term as U.S. president, and despite the dust storms that suffocated the state of Oklahoma and a catastrophic flood that swallowed parts of Mississippi, Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois, many Americans, black and white, were optimistic about the future. Nearly a decade had passed since the Great Depression, and unemployment had dropped to 14.3 percent from almost 20 percent in 1936; and although three

and a half million black families (approximately 30 percent of the black population) were on government assistance, black employment was the highest it had been since the Great Depression.

Victor Green created his guide in this era of optimism, and the first two editions were centered on New York City's Harlem, where he and Alma lived. Today, Harlem is the iconic heart of black culture and identity, but when Victor dreamed up his guide, the neighborhood wasn't yet the black mecca it eventually became. In the early 1900s, Harlem was home to a number of recent, white immigrant groups, including Jews, Italians, and Irish. Black people comprised only about 10 percent of the population. Following the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, a steady influx of black residents increased the black population to 70 percent in 1930. This demographic shift incited fear and led to aggressive policing tactics as authorities attempted to keep black residents out of the white areas.

The rules for segregated establishments changed from block to block, so black people didn't know where they would be served. Doll Thomas, who started working in Harlem theaters in 1914 and became the film projectionist and the technical director at the Apollo Theater, told author Ted Fox, for his illustrated history *Showtime at the Apollo*:

> There were no blacks on 125th Street. It was all Irish . . . [T]he theater that's now the Apollo, you entered from 126th Street up the back stairs. The Alhambra just wouldn't sell [black people] an orchestra seat. They were either sold out or they'd flatly refuse. Also on 125th Street, Frank's Lunchroom—you couldn't get served in there. Across the street was Childs. You couldn't get served in there. Next door was Loft's Candy Shop. Couldn't get served in there. Right down the street was Fabian's Seafood Shop. Couldn't get served in there. All the bars here and everything else was the same way.

The Apollo Theater was listed under "Colored Show Houses" in the 1937 *Green Book*. Before it was the Apollo, the building housed the burlesque theater Hurtig and Seamon, which didn't allow black people to enter through the front door. Once inside, black ticket holders were banned from general seating and forced to sit in the balcony.

The Apollo Theater, a former *Green Book* site in Harlem, New York

The Apollo opened in 1934, and the following year, Frank Schiffman took it over. He told a New York newspaper in 1937, “I’m the largest employer of colored theatrical help in the country”—and he was. For years, the Apollo was one of the only theaters in New York City that hired African Americans, and the majority of its staff was black. Schiffman’s family operated the Apollo until the late 1970s, and they are often credited with integrating 125th Street. Schiffman also helped launch the careers of Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, James Brown, Diana Ross, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, and Billie Holiday.

The Lafayette was another theater listed under “Colored Show Houses” in the 1937 *Green Book*. Black people were not welcome at the Lafayette until 1925, when Frank Schiffman and Leo Brecher stepped in to change this. Suddenly, black audience members were no longer relegated to the balcony. They were now permitted to sit in the orchestra section. The Lafayette became both one of the first theaters in Harlem to change its segregationist policies and the center for black dramatic and musical talent.

Crowd outside the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem at the opening of *Voodoo Macbeth*

In 1936, Orson Welles produced *Voodoo Macbeth* at the Lafayette, a version of Shakespeare's "Scottish play" with an all-black cast and the setting changed from Scotland to an island in the Caribbean. Welles hired local Haitians to perform, and in less than one month, some 34,000 people purchased tickets. It would play to capacity for another month before going on tour.

While the Lafayette and the Apollo were pushing the boundaries of racial segregation in Harlem, the shifting racial demographics were pushing the neighborhood to its breaking point. In 1935, just one year before Victor Green set in motion the plans for his guide, a riot broke out. On March 19, a rumor spread across Harlem that Lino Rivera, a sixteen-year-old black Puerto Rican teenager, had been beaten to death for stealing a penknife from the S. H. Kress and Co. five-and-dime. The beating death never happened, but the rumor incited a full-blown race riot. Someone in the crowd screamed, "The boy is dead in the cellar there, but they won't even let a doctor look at him!" Then a brick flew through Kress's window, and rioters, both black and white, barreled down 125th Street.

During the riot, white store owners tried to protect their property from frustrated black looters by posting signs that read COLORED STORE or COLORED EMPLOYEE HERE. However, it wasn't only blacks who were violent; on March 20, 1935, the day the fighting ended, the New York *Daily News* reported that "armed bands of Negro and white guerillas . . . roamed through barricaded Harlem . . . assaulting every person of opposite color to cross their paths, setting fires and smashing shop windows after a night of fighting, in a bitter continuation of Harlem's worst race riot in twenty-five years." More than five hundred police descended on Harlem to quell the violence. In the end, an estimated two million dollars in damage was done, hundreds of people were wounded, and three African Americans had died. After the riot, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia commissioned a fourteen-member biracial panel to study the conditions that had led to the riot. The panel included scholar Alain Locke (editor of 1925's groundbreaking anthology *The New Negro*) and sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. The panel produced *The Negro in Harlem: A Report on Social and Economic Conditions Responsible for the Outbreak of March 19, 1935*, which concluded that the riot had been caused by "injustices of discrimination in employment, the aggressions of the police, and racial segregation."

The net paid circulation for February exceeded
Daily---1,650,000
Sunday-2,500,000

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

FINAL

Vol. 16. No. 229 64 Pages New York, Wednesday, March 20, 1935* 2 Cents IN CITY | ELSEWHERE

4,000 RIOT IN HARLEM; ONE KILLED

Story on Page 3

(NEWS photo by Lewis)

A Bottle Crashed

Blood streaming down his face, this victim is lifted to his feet by a policeman. Arrow indicates fragment of a milk bottle that had been shattered on his head. One was killed and three are feared dying.

(NEWS photo by Morgner; © 1935 by News Syndicate Co., Inc.)

This Boy Started Riot

A false report spread by radicals that Lino Rivera, 16, (center) was killed for a minor theft in 125th St. store was spark that set Harlem riot ablaze. Located early today, lad admitted to Lieut. Samuel Battle (left) and Patrolman Alfred Eldridge that he was not mistreated.

(NEWS photo by Smallwood)

A Girl Victim

Wrapped in a beautiful fur coat, Patricia O'Rourke, daughter of wealthy contractor, is escorted from scene by physician. She was seriously injured as she rode through riot district in an auto.

Front page of the *Daily News*, March 20, 1935

The driving force behind Harlem's racial unrest was the long-standing mistrust of the police and white merchants' refusal to hire black residents, which helped keep the black unemployment rate double the national average. Neighborhoods throughout America where white merchants profited from black residents but refused to hire them had inspired the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign. This Depression-era movement galvanized black communities in thirty American cities to picket such businesses. When a Woolworth in Chicago refused to hire black locals in the late 1920s, a massive boycott ensued. Soon after, demonstrations sprang up in St. Louis; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; and Atlanta. In the 1931 issue of the NAACP's official magazine, *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in his editorial, "The Negro's Industrial Plight," "If we once make a religion of our determination to spend our meager income so far as possible only in such ways as will bring us employment consideration and opportunity, the possibilities before us are enormous."

This was the atmosphere in which the early editions of the *Green Book* were created. The guide was the perfect complement to the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" protests, functioning more like a Yellow Pages for black-owned businesses than a traditional travel guide. The 1938 edition went far beyond the first two, with listings for nearly 220 businesses in Harlem, and including roadhouses, tourist homes, service stations, barbershops, beauty parlors, dance halls, and nightclubs east of the Mississippi River.

The 1937 edition was unusual for a travel guide. Only fifteen pages long, it listed more automobile businesses than travel sites. Eighteen of the twenty ads in the first five pages were Harlem-based mechanics, fender and body workers, ignition specialists, welders, tow service providers, and auto painters. (The two non-auto-related ads were for a radio repair shop and a store specializing in an entirely different sort of wheels: Hollis' Bicycle Store, owned by Harri Hollis, who described himself as a "Colored Pro Bike Champ.")

There was a clear market for car-related businesses in the late thirties because by then, 85 percent of Americans vacationed by car. This helped to make the automobile industry one of the leading industries in the world. But even more important, a vehicle provided black families with the freedom and job opportunities they needed to pull themselves out of the servant class and into a stable middle-class lifestyle.

The 1938 *Green Book* published an article, "The Automobile and What It

Has Done for the Negro," by Benj. J. Thomas, the proprietor of the Broadway Auto School. In the article, Thomas writes, "In New York City alone, one third of the Mechanical work is being done by Colored men. The automobile has been a special blessing to the Negro . . . 25 years ago, the average young colored man was doing porter work, bell hopping, running an elevator or waiting on table[s], and the average wage at that time was $5 per week." Now black men in the automotive trade who were earning a solid middle-class wage were becoming a crucial part of burgeoning businesses both employing and serving the black community.

While black men moved into more lucrative businesses, over 60 percent of black women continued to work as domestic servants, and others worked as seamstresses, janitors, laundresses, waitresses, and cooks. In New York City, over 90 percent of women working in these trades were generally paid less than five dollars a week. However, black mechanics could earn as much as twenty-five to fifty dollars a week. And even those who weren't mechanically inclined could do body, fender, factory, retail, or upholstery work, at an average of fifteen dollars a week.

Although auto industry jobs made it possible for many black families to afford their own cars, it wasn't easy, as the average price of a new car was 760 dollars, and the annual salary for most black men in the auto industry averaged about 1,500 dollars—so the purchase price for a car represented more than half a year's income. Regardless, to many black Americans, the freedom that came with owning a car was worth the sacrifice. Having a car shielded them from physical harm, humiliation, harassment, and the psychological terror of a segregated America. With a car, they had an option other than being corralled into subpar seating on buses, streetcars, trolleys, and trains that were almost guaranteed to be uncomfortable and dirty. W. E. B. Du Bois writes about this in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*:

> Did you ever see a "Jim-Crow" waiting-room? . . . There is no heat in winter and no air in summer . . . to buy a ticket is torture; you stand and stand and wait and wait until every white person at the "other window" is waited on. The agent browbeats and contradicts you, hurries and confuses the ignorant, gives many persons the wrong change, compels some to purchase their tickets on the train at a higher price, and sends you and me out on the platform, burning with indignation and hatred!

> The “Jim-Crow” car is up next to the baggage car and engine. It stops out beyond the covering in the rain or sun or dust. Usually there is no step to help you climb on, and often the car is a smoker cut in two, and you must pass through the white smokers or else they pass through your part, with swagger and noise and stares. Your compartment is a half or a quarter or an eighth of the oldest car in service on the road . . . the floor is grimy, and the windows dirty.

Avoiding the discomfort and psychological strain of this segregated travel experience is the reason black Americans did anything they could to have their own car—and the *Green Book* was the perfect guide to support those fortunate enough to afford one.

For those who couldn’t afford to purchase a car outright, it was nearly impossible to get credit or financing from a bank. Some black industrial workers in need of financing went to the People’s Finance Corporation. Created in 1922, it was the first bank of its kind to loan money to black people who had little collateral. The People’s Finance Corporation started in St. Louis and then spread to Cleveland, Detroit, Newark, and Kansas City. Most black Americans didn’t have access to or knowledge of it, but those who lived in New York and had a *Green Book* could go to the “Community Auto Loan” company (listed in the 1938 edition) on Seventh Avenue.

Black Americans who went to mainstream banks for auto financing were generally denied loans, but even after World War II, the roughly 3 percent of black men who received bank credit were often charged higher interest rates than white customers. Moreover, black men living in the South needed a white man to cosign for a loan. (Women of any race were denied credit without a male cosigner until well into the 1970s.)

When the *Green Book* was first published, there were only a few black-owned car dealerships in the entire country, and auto financing was a significant hurdle for black consumers. Even those who had the cash had trouble finding dealerships that would sell to them. In many cases, black people weren’t even allowed on the showroom floor. For instance, in the early 1930s, General Motors had an unwritten policy not to sell its Cadillacs to black motorists because the company felt black people would undermine its brand. So black consumers got creative and bought the company’s cars secondhand or paid white people to act as “front men” and shop for them. It

took a while for GM to catch on. The ruse was discovered when black motorists brought their Cadillacs to dealerships for service. Initially, Cadillac mechanics thought these customers were workers bringing in their employers' cars, but once they realized that black men owned the cars themselves, they were stunned.

Nicholas Dreystadt, a Cadillac service manager, urged executives to allow black people in the showrooms, arguing that this was a missed opportunity for potential profits. He pressured General Motors to advertise to black consumers, and it worked. By the late 1930s, these marketing efforts had boosted the company's sales and helped GM recover from the Great Depression, so much so that it named Dreystadt the head of the Cadillac division.

Being black and finally being able to drive a Cadillac still came with its problems. The fact that black musicians and other entertainers could afford to purchase nicer cars than most white folks often offended and angered whites. Some black people who could afford a nicer car chose to drive a less expensive one, to avoid confrontation. In 1930, a few years before Cadillac opened its showroom doors to African Americans, journalist George Schuyler addressed this issue, saying that "Blacks who drove expensive cars offended white sensibilities, and some blacks kept to older models so as not to give the dangerous impression of being above themselves."

WE CAN FIX EM. *Green Book* advertisement, 1937

Whether it was a Cadillac or a jalopy, purchasing a car was the first hurdle. The next one was finding insurance. In the late 1930s, most insurance companies refused to insure black motorists. During this time, Thurgood Marshall, then special counsel for the NAACP, started investigating the issue after he received letters from frustrated black Americans throughout the country who couldn't find anyone to sell them insurance. They had written the NAACP asking for a list of insurance companies that would serve them.

In 1939, Marshall received a letter from Louis Pink, who worked at the New York State Insurance Department, saying:

> We are assured by the [insurance] companies that it is not a case of discrimination. They claim that Negroes are bad risks and it is for that reason that the companies as a rule decline to write their business . . . It is easy to understand why [black people] feel there is discrimination because the fact remains that only a few of them are able to get insurance.

Presley Gulf Station, a former *Green Book* site in Memphis, Tennessee

At the end of the letter, Pink writes, “The experience of the companies does indicate for one reason or another [black people] represent more than the ordinary risk . . . It has been suggested that the companies would write those risks if they were able to charge a higher premium to cover the additional hazard. That of course, is not permitted under our laws and would undoubtedly be considered as definite discrimination. Another suggestion has been made that a group of responsible negroes form a company of their own. This would seem questionable because if they are not bad risks they should not be compelled to resort to a company of their own, and if they are bad risks you'd be setting up a company, the business of which would be represented primarily by bad risks.”

Pink didn’t know that there were already black insurance companies, and because most black Americans were also unaware of their existence, fifty black insurance companies set forth an initiative to observe “National Negro Insurance Week.” An educational campaign scheduled for May 8–13, 1939, it was designed to inform the public of these black insurance companies willing to insure and employ their community.

Also in the spring of 1939, the *Chicago Defender* printed an article outlining the trouble black Americans were having obtaining auto insurance. The article featured the story of a man named David H. Williams, who was being charged in court for not holding liability insurance. Williams had explained to the judge that when he tried to get insurance, none of the companies would insure him. The judge asked an insurance expert to research Williams’s claim and found that forty-three of the forty-seven insurance companies queried denied service to black motorists. The judge was shocked at the results and concluded, “As things are now, Negroes simply cannot comply with the law because they cannot obtain insurance.” The NAACP and the Urban League continued to challenge the discriminatory practices of insurance companies, but unfortunately, there were no significant strides in this area during the three decades the *Green Book* was in publication.

Regardless of the challenges to get financing and insurance, Victor Green was eager to help his community join the ranks of the motoring public. The auto industry was undergoing a significant change, and it was making headlines. Toyota had recently been founded in Japan, and the Waterman Aerobile, a “flying car,” took its first flight. Although the Aerobile was intended to be an affordable alternative to airplanes, it never took off with the

public. Toyota, of course, fared better. Success or failure aside, this was an exciting time for auto innovation and technology.

On the first page of the 1937 *Green Book*, Victor Green's introduction called on readers to "get together and make Motoring better." Yet preparation for a road trip required extra work for black motorists planning to travel through a state with only a few *Green Book* listings. They had to prepare for inconveniences and even atrocities that white motorists never had to consider. Even if there was a black-friendly motel or tourist home listed, there were no guarantees it would have space available. And there was no way to reserve a spot, as most *Green Book* listings didn't include phone numbers.

Black families therefore would spend weeks preparing to travel America's byways. They'd pack sheets and blankets, which doubled as privacy partitions in case they had no choice but to relieve themselves on the side of the road. And because there was no guarantee they would find a restaurant, food was packed in ice and placed in "shoebox lunches." Herbert Sulaiman remembers traveling with his parents as a child. "You had to be prepared," he said. "Traveling in those days meant the women would fix food at night. They'd fill the thermos jugs, you had eggs, fixed ham sandwiches and turkey sandwiches and fried chicken."

Despite the uncertainty of what black travelers might encounter on the road, the *Green Book* focused on solutions rather than problems. Its tone was never threatening, and there was no mention of the dire consequences of being stranded or denied service. Instead, a lighthearted spirit can be found throughout the 1937 edition, which was printed entirely in green ink.

One of the *Green Book*'s most amusing pieces was found in "How to Keep from Growing Old." This tongue-in-cheek column appeared in the first four editions of the *Green Book* and sporadically throughout the life of the guide. Keenly aware of the hazards of irresponsible driving, Green spent most pages of his *Green Book*s telling motorists what they *should* do to ensure arrival at their destination with minimal-to-no damage to themselves or their vehicle. However, "How to Keep from Growing Old" told them what they *shouldn't* do.

Unfortunately, we know very little about Victor Green, so we can only speculate about what he decided to put in his guide. "How to Keep from Growing Old," though, gives us a window into Green's sense of humor, because he reminds readers to find humor and fun wherever they could. When the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, traveled with her father as a child,

she remembered that “the traveling was and wasn’t fun . . . we couldn’t eat in the restaurants in the South and so we had to go in the market to get what you called ‘souse’ [hogshead cheese] and white saltine crackers. But listen, darling, I loved souse . . . that was fun. We’d laugh right on down the highway and still have a good time.”

In addition to having fun, Green cheerfully cautioned drivers to be on the alert at all times for bad or distracted drivers. In a fifteen-point checklist of “Safe Driving Rules” he published in the 1938 edition, he gives readers clues about ways to stay safe, writing, “Watch out for the driver who crosses the White Line,” and “Remember that Junior thinks that the ignition key is something to play with.”

On this page of the 1937 edition, the article “Prepardness” [*sic*] begins with “An Ounce of Prevention is worth more than a Pound of Cure,” a play on the familiar saying. In the article, Green outlines the importance of getting a proper tune-up and lays out the procedures for those unfamiliar with car maintenance. The tips are thorough, and the advice is practical and positive. “Be prepared before you start, and more than likely you will have a pleasant and enjoyable trip with no regrets when you return.”

Also in “Prepardness,” [*sic*] Green emphasizes the importance of checking the car’s brakes, steering, and the condition of the tires before hitting the road. He instructs readers to carry a spare set of headlight bulbs and fuses, because although the car “may appear to be in good working order, long-distance trips can cause minor, unnoticeable faults to quickly turn into major breakdowns . . . Nothing is more of a killjoy [than] when the motor starts to spit and pop and then stops.”

Underlying his sound mechanical advice is Green’s full awareness that for black drivers, being stranded wasn’t just an inconvenience. Depending on where they were, it could mean life or death. In the late 1930s, the federal Interstate Highway System hadn’t been developed yet, so cross-country travel required driving long distances on county roads, and then along small town Main Streets, where black families were much more vulnerable to run-ins with the local sheriffs.

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HOW TO KEEP FROM GROWING OLD

Always race with locomotive to crossings. Engineers like it; it breaks the monotony of their jobs.

Always pass the car ahead on curves or turns. Don't use horn, it may unnerve the fellow and cause him to turn out too far.

Demand half the road—the middle half. Insist on your rights.

Always speed; it shows them you are a man of pep even tho an amateur driver.

Never stop, look or listen at railroad crossings. It consumes time.

Always lock your brakes when skidding. It makes the job more artistic.

In sloppy weather drive close to pedestrians. Dry cleaners appreciate this.

Never look around when you back up; there is never anything behind you.

Drive confidently, just as tho there were not eighteen million other cars in service.

Green Book" send 10c in stamps for cost of handling and postage.

This “How to Keep from Growing Old” article was reprinted in several editions of the *Green Book*.

PREPARDNESS

An old but true addage "An Ounce of Prevention is worth more than a Pound of Cure."

Many motorist who use their cars daily for local routine with never any trouble, fail to realize that a car that appears to work well under local needs may be quite unfit to undertake the grueling of a long distance trip. Minor faults remain unnoticed through months of ordinary driving, but when the car is called upon to work at maximum power over long periods of time and distance, these small and minor faults develop into major difficulties and detract the fun and enjoyment from motoring. A successful and enjoyable motor trip depends mostly on a well groomed car.

Both safety and pleasure are at stake when a motorist starts on a trip before the car has been thoroughly checked and the faults removed. The first thing to be certain about are the brakes and the steering apparatus. Most mishaps are caused by bad brakes and defective steering. In most cases simple adjustments are only necessary to remove this evil. Next, be sure you have good tires. Good tires insures safety. Your best tires should always be on the front wheels. By doing this you reduce the chance of front tire trouble which means more dependable control. Good and proper lighting comes next. Make sure you have good bulbs and your headlight beams properly adjusted. Carry a spare set of bulbs and fuses. A good windshield wiper adds comfort and safety. Wiper blades are inexpensive but very valuable in a rain storm.

Nothing is more of a killjoy when the motor starts to spit and pop and then stops. To overcome this and add comfort and uninterrupted pleasure; everything should be done to prevent these enforced halts. A motor tune-up is the solution. This checkup when done properly will remove the hidden evils, and will allow your motor to perform at its maximum efficiency.

The proper tune-up should consist of;

1. Complete Ignition inspection, which includes Lighting and Engine Wiring, Sparkplugs, Distributor Points, Generator, Starter, Condenser, Coil, and Timing.

2. Carbureation, which includes, Carbureator Cleaning and adjustments and Engine Valve adjustment.

3. Timing Chain and Fan Belt adjustments; and a general tightening up throughout.

Last but not least is Lubrication. A complete change of lubricants in the Crankcase, Transmision and Rear Axel is recommended and a thorough greasing of the Chassis. Insist that the Lubricants used are those recommended by the manufacturer of your car. Accept no substitutes. Shock Absorbers should not be overlooked as they are subject to severe use on long trips. Have them filled and adjusted.

So when we say let's go places; be prepared before you start and more than likely you will have a pleasant and enjoyable trip with no regrets when you return.

“Prepardness” [*sic*], *Green Book* article, 1937

A huge concern for black motorists was getting stranded in a "sundown town," an all-white enclave that banned black people from entering after dark. Thousands of sundown towns were scattered throughout the country. Harvard sociologist James Loewen, in his book *Sundown Towns*, defines a sundown town as a city, town, or village that had nine or fewer black residents. He also traces towns whose black populations virtually vanished within twenty-four hours of a mob lynching or riot, usually because they were fleeing angry white mobs.

Loewen writes that sundown towns were largely a northern construct, starting in about 1890 and lasting well into the 1960s. In fact, he found hundreds of sundown towns in Illinois alone. The five states with the most sundown towns were Ohio, Kansas, California, Missouri, and Nebraska. Ironically, Mississippi, a state that became a global symbol of terrorism and white supremacy, had only thirteen sundown towns.

Most sundown towns made it very clear that black people were not welcome. Some posted signs at the county line reading, NIGGER, DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOU HERE, UNDERSTAND? Others, such as Villa Grove, Illinois, and Gardnerville, Nevada, rang a bell at six PM that warned black laborers and domestics to leave.

In response to sundown towns, one black town turned the tables on white travelers passing through their community. Ellen Sue Blakey, who grew up in southern Oklahoma with her grandparents, tells a story from her childhood about driving to see her great-aunt and -uncle, who lived about sixty miles away.

> On the road was a small black community, whose structures appeared to be left over from the Dust Bowl. Even what appeared to be a store looked as if it had been scoured of paint by the dust twenty years back. On this particular trip, a young black child—a boy about my age, 8 or 10—stood on the porch, arms folded, watching as we drove by. I was unsure if his expression reflected a longing to be in a car going somewhere else or just bitterness that we were able to do so. Perhaps it masked hatred, misunderstanding, sadness or perhaps just curiosity. Perhaps it was a little of all of that. He could not know that we had little more going for us than the color of our skin, but in those days that was enough to create a hierarchy and keep us segregated, a term I had yet to

> learn. I was still too young to understand what I was really looking at, but I was curious as his eyes met mine when we drove by . . . At the community's edge was a sign obviously inspired by sundown towns and their signs telling blacks to basically move on. I'm certain someone there felt a tit-for-tat was fair play. The crude hand-lettered sign on the highway read: "WHITE MAN DON'T SHOW YOUR FACE HERE AFTER DARK." My grandfather took it seriously . . . We always made sure we left my great aunt and uncle's house so that we passed through in daylight hours.

Nearly all the sundown towns are gone now, but even in 2019 there are still communities that are hostile to black people. In the northwestern corner of Arkansas, for example, Harrison, a modern-day Klan town in the Ozarks, is littered with white supremacists. Black residents were run out of Harrison after two race riots, in 1905 and 1909, and in 2010, among its 12,943 residents, 96 percent were white. Today, Harrison is home to at least four hate groups, including the Knights Party Veterans League, the Soldiers of the Cross Training Institute, and David Duke's Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

"Don't Let the Sun Set On You Here, Understand?" Printed in the *Norman Transcript* newspaper in Norman, Oklahoma, date unknown.

In 2014, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan sponsored a WhitePrideRadio.com billboard in Harrison that read, IT'S NOT RACIST TO ♥ YOUR PEOPLE. In 2016, signs along Highway 65 in Harrison warned, "DIVERSITY" IS A CODE FOR #WHITEGENOCIDE. One flyer circulated through town read, "Ferguson [Missouri] was once 95% Caucasian. Ferguson was safe. Then came diversity. Diversity destroyed Ferguson . . . Harrison is 95% Caucasian. Harrison is safe. Discourage diversity. White lives matter."

While I was driving through Arkansas scouting *Green Book* sites, I took the Harrison exit off Highway 65. The town motto, "Adventure awaits you," unnerved me. I didn't see a sundown town sign, but there was an enormous white billboard on the highway with a large black X on a white background and the word SECEDE. I thought it looked familiar; then I realized that the X was the same graphic printed on the flags carried by white supremacists at the 2017 riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Heather Heyer, a white counterprotester, was murdered.

When fresh-faced neo-Nazis in all-American khakis carrying lit Tiki torches marched through the streets of Charlottesville, people could no longer deny the role white supremacy was still playing in America. Millions were horrified at the brazen violence and the crowd chanting, "Jews will not replace us!" When President Trump refused to denounce the neo-Nazis unequivocally, the United States' image as a beacon of diversity and equality was spoiled for most Americans. We wanted to believe that the election of Barack Obama had finally solved our race problem. It had not. The events of Charlottesville had swung the pendulum undeniably back to the nation's white supremacist roots.

The *Green Book* included listings for twelve Charlottesville sites over the three decades it was in publication: four tourist homes, two dance halls, two hotels, a beauty shop, a barbershop, and two theaters. One of the theaters, the Paramount, still stands today. During the late 1930s, black patrons entered the theater through the side door and had to walk up a small, unlit stairway to the balcony and sit in the "Colored" section. Black patrons were also forced to use a separate concession area, separate restrooms, and even separate emergency exits. Although black patrons were segregated at the Paramount Theater, blacks could at least patronize it, which was not true of many of the city's other establishments.

In addition to food and lodging, Victor Green included sites that celebrated the black bourgeoisie and introduced his readers to the upper-class

segments of society they wouldn't normally have been exposed to. For instance, the 1937 edition advertised country clubs and four golf courses, two of which, Saxon Woods in Scarsdale and Sprain Lake in Yonkers, are still in operation in New York State. Even today, in spite of Tiger Woods's dominance of the sport since the turn of the twenty-first century, golf isn't generally associated with African Americans, as either players or spectators, yet Green's inclusion of golf courses indicated otherwise.

The exclusion of black people from golf courses as anything but caddies was commonplace, but in 1943 it was written directly into the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) bylaws that only "members of the Caucasian race" were allowed to join. (The clause was finally removed in 1961.) Despite the deliberate segregation of the sport, black people not only participated in but also influenced the game of golf for more than a century.

No. 638,920. Patented Dec. 12, 1899.

G. F. GRANT.

GOLF TEE.

(Application filed July 1, 1899.)

(No Model.)

Fig. 1.

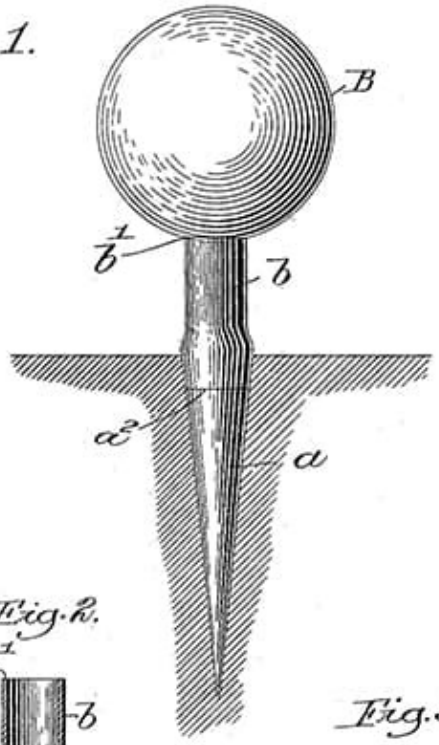


Fig. 2.

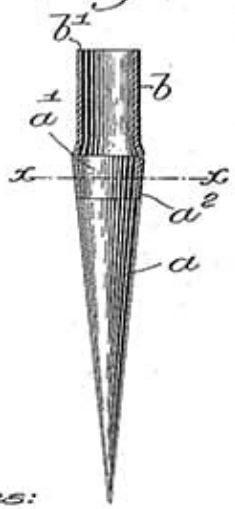


Fig. 3.

Witnesses:
Fred S. Gunby.
Adolf B Kaiser

Inventor:
George F. Grant,
by Crosby & Gregory
Attys.

George Grant’s golf tee patent, 1899

George Grant, an African American dentist, made the most significant contribution when he designed the first golf tee, in 1899. Before his invention, players had to carry buckets of sand from one hole to another to create makeshift mounds from which to tee off. Grant's design became the standard for tees used for decades.

Other notable black names in golf were Ted Rhodes, who played the U.S. Open in 1948 and was often credited as the first black professional golfer, but John Shippen was most likely the first. In a career that spanned from 1896 to 1913 and included six U.S. Opens, Shippen had to pass as a Native American. (He was of black and Shinnecock parentage.) One of the most prominent black female golfers was Ann Moore-Gregory, the first black woman to play in a U.S. Golf Association event, in Indianapolis in 1956.

Twenty-three years after Grant invented his wooden golf tee, Joseph Bartholomew, a native of New Orleans and a self-taught golfer, became the first African American to design a public golf course. In 1922, melding his love of the game with a penchant for architecture, Bartholomew, who had studied golf course design in New York, designed the Metairie Country Club in New Orleans. As a black man, he was forbidden from playing on this course or any of the several he designed in New Orleans and across the state of Louisiana. To spend more time on his courses, and to avoid arrest for merely being there, legend has it that he visited them at night. If at that time an architect couldn't even walk in the light of day on the golf course he designed, imagine how incredible it must have been to look in the *Green Book* and find golf courses advertised.

Since most recreational facilities were off-limits to blacks, Green's "Let's Go Places" section in the *Green Book*'s 1937 edition was a wonderful feature for those wanting to enjoy fresh air outside the city. Along with golf courses, Green listed New York State Parks on Long Island and in Westchester County where African Americans could swim, picnic, and relax on the beach.

Long Island was just thirty miles from Harlem, but for those who didn't have a car, it might as well have been across the Atlantic Ocean. And it is important to point out that access to these recreational spaces by poor and marginalized communities was limited *by design*. In the span of forty-four years, Robert Moses, president of the New York State Parks Council from 1924 to 1968, along with public agencies, built 12 bridges, 627 miles of highways, and more than 2.5 million acres of parks. Although one of these, Jones Beach, was listed in the *Green Book*, Moses, known as the "master builder"

of the twentieth century, was a notorious racist. Historians believe that it was his contempt for poor people of color that motivated him to build the Long Island Expressway overpasses with clearances too low to provide safe passage for the public buses that would have transported them to the beaches and parks he sought to keep white.

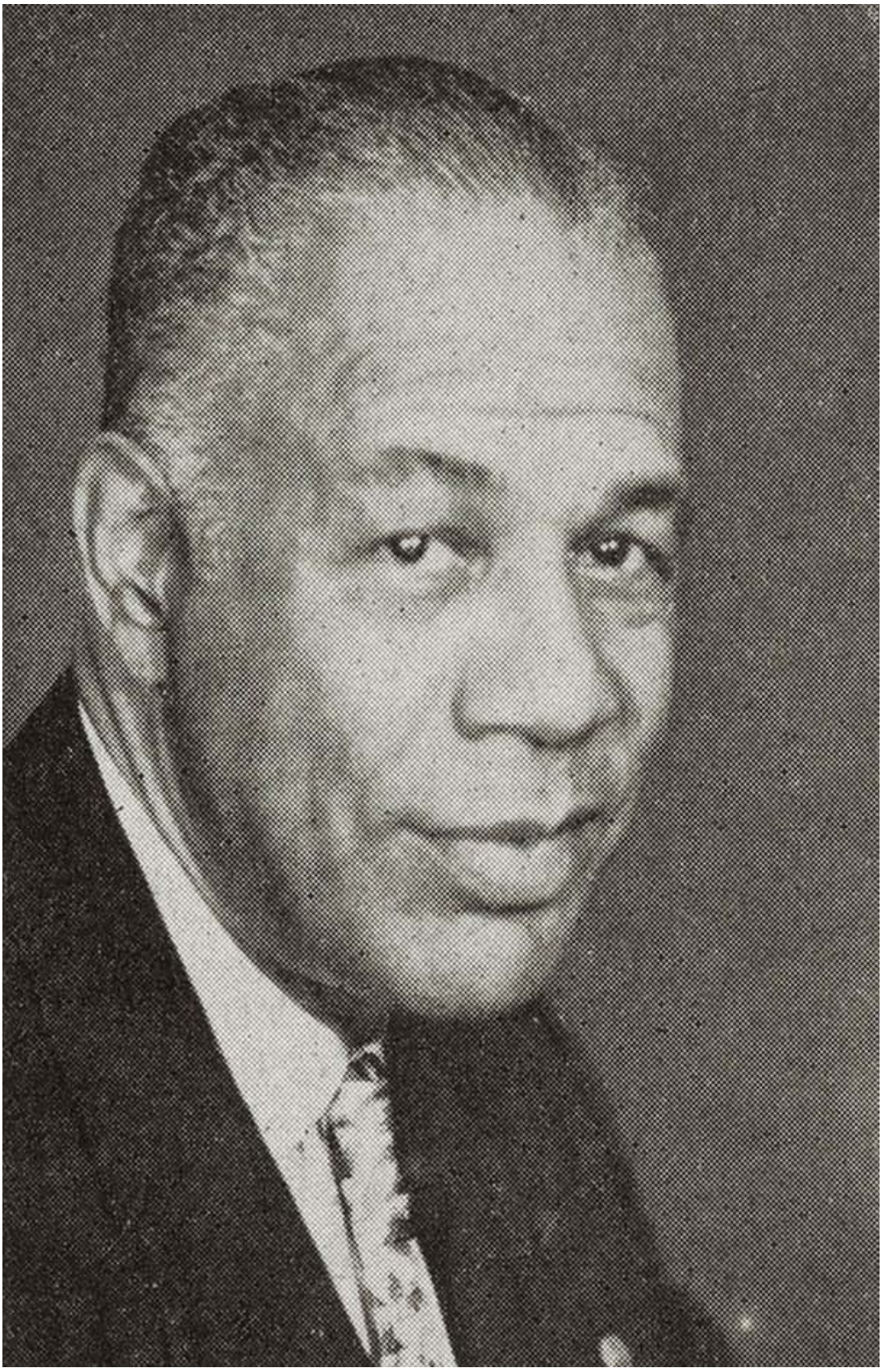
Unfortunately, this attitude was shared by people throughout the country. In 1929, five years after Moses became president of the New York State Parks Council, the *Chicago Tribune* published the following editorial:

> We should be doing no service to the Negroes if we did not point out that to a very large section of the white population the presence of a Negro, however well behaved, among white bathers is an irritation. This may be a regrettable fact to the Negroes, but it is nevertheless a fact, and must be reckoned with . . . [T]he Negroes could make a definite contribution to good race relationship by remaining away from beaches where their presence is resented.

Most beaches were still segregated twelve years after this *Chicago Tribune* piece was printed, so it must have been exciting for black readers to see accessible beaches listed in the 1937 *Green Book*. Moses's scheme to shut blacks out by designing low-clearance overpasses failed because the automobile was their trump card. There were no formal segregation laws on the book in Long Island, so if black vacationers could get there, no law prevented them from staying. So, they packed up their swimsuits, golf clubs, beach towels, and picnic baskets and hit the road.

The South has long been demonized for its history of slavery and, perhaps worse, its defense of it. And as a result the North has been consistently let off the hook, but when bridges and tunnels are designed to corral and control people of color, this is just as bad as, if not worse than, simply posting a Whites Only sign. Presenting the illusion of access and then going to great lengths to employ a hidden, covert system to deny it constitutes an even more insidious racism, and one much harder to fight. For this and so many other reasons, the automobile was powerful for black physical and social mobility. For black travelers, armed with the *Green Book*, the vehicle became a formidable tool that pushed the pendulum of equality forward. ♦

2
THE BUSINESS OF THE GREEN BOOK
1939, 1940, 1941 Editions



Victor Hugo Green, date unknown

Victor Green was on a mission to find the best printer he could, so he headed down to 800 Sixth Avenue, near Twenty-eighth Street, in Manhattan's Flower District. He walked past the trash bins filled with fresh-cut flower rejects, entered the building, and rode the service elevator up to the third floor, where the offices of Gibraltar Printing were located. There he met Howard Glener, the seven-year-old son of the print shop's owner. Glener remembered seeing Victor Green for the first time: "He was a very tall man, impeccably well dressed. He was wearing a suit, a tie, and a hat." Gibraltar's was a white-owned print shop, and it was the first time Glener had seen a black man there; in fact, it was unusual to see a black man in this area of Manhattan at all. Glener said, "I don't know if he would have been served coffee in the local Greek diner down the street." Green was "very distinguished," he remembered. "He had a manner about him."

CUT RATE PRINTING

It's Foolish to pay MORE!

We do not employ any Salesmen

CUT RATE PRICES

You Save Salesman's Commission from 25 to 33%

1000 Business Cards **$4.00**
1000 Envelopes **$4.00**
1000 Statements **$4.00**
1000 Lettterheads **$5.00**
1000 Bill Heads in pad form **$6.00**

SPECIAL PRICES IN LOTS OF 5,000

Prices are subject to change without notice.

MONEY saved by buying from us, is MONEY earned—

WHY PAY MORE?

This is YOUR opportunity to order Printing Direct from us. All you are charged for is Labor and Material.

ALL CASH SALES

Mail Your Order or Call at Factory.

GIBRALTAR
PRINTNG & PUBLISHING CO., INC.
800 Sixth Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

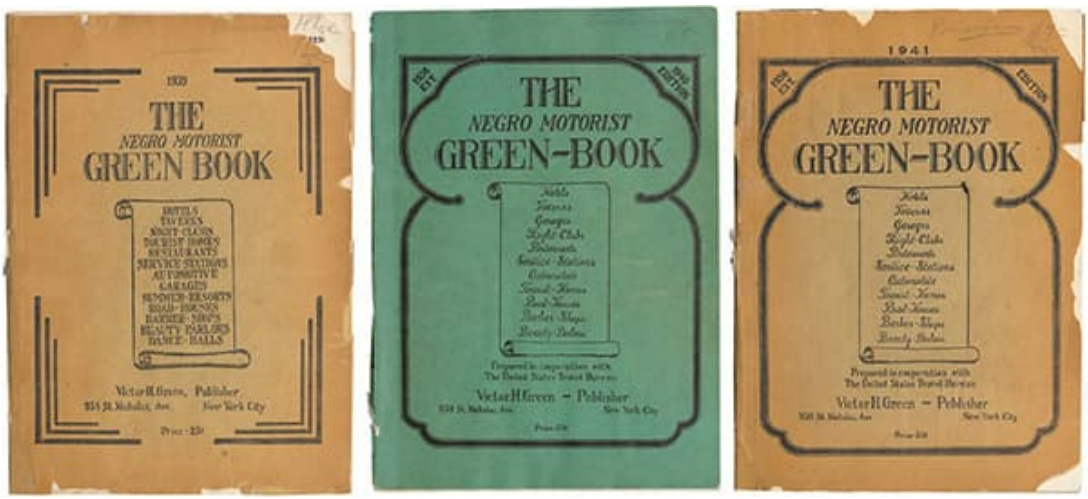
Telephone MUrray Hill 4-1189

Green Book advertisement for Gibraltar Printing

At the time, Victor and Alma Green were living across the street from Duke Ellington, in the Sugar Hill district of Harlem. Sugar Hill, which was a reference to the "sweet life," was a popular neighborhood where luminaries such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Thurgood Marshall lived. Victor and Alma weren't celebrities, but they fit right in this neighborhood because they had class. This is likely what Glener detected that day at his father's print shop. He was taken by Victor's charisma and charm, as was his father, which is why Gibraltar went into business with Green to print his travel guide.

Gibraltar printed the *Green Book* on a large press called the Kelly, a linotype machine that printed all the pages from each edition onto one sheet, which was then folded and cut into a book. This printing method was sufficient for the early *Green Book*s, but in the mid-1940s, Green stopped contracting with Gibraltar; he wanted to use "offset printing" instead, a modern technique that incorporated a paste-up of cold type and a chemical treatment where ink was placed onto metal plates. Green preferred this printing method because he could include more photographs, the type lasted longer, and his guide was less expensive to produce without a reduction in quality. Gibraltar wasn't an early adopter of this new technology, so leaving was a smart decision, since offset printing eventually dominated the print industry. Looking back, Glener understands why Green left, but he said, "This was a huge loss for Gibraltar."

There are no records indicating what printing company Green worked with after Gibraltar, but it's clear he made the right decision. When the *Green Book* was available again in the late 1940s (after a four-year hiatus due to World War II), it had evolved into a more sophisticated product, with more illustrations, deeper ink tones, and more photographs.



Green Book covers, 1939, 1940, and 1941

Producing each *Green Book* must have required an enormous amount of time and effort, but Victor Green kept his day job as a full-time letter carrier for the U.S. post office, commuting from Harlem to Hackensack, New Jersey, five days a week. The commute, coupled with the labor of delivering mail in snow, ice, wind, and rain, must have been exhausting, but Green kept the job because it was reliable, stable employment. During his career, he was a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers, a predominately white union. There was a black postal union, the National *Alliance* of Letter Carriers, but Victor joined the association. Just as Green had forged a relationship with a white-owned printer, this was highly unusual. Still, his charisma must have won the white union members over, as he stayed with the union for forty years.

After his day job, Green worked nights and weekends on his guide. With at least six other black travel guides on the market while the *Green Book* was in publication, he had to work hard to make his stand out. In the 1939, 1940, and 1941 editions, a brand identity emerged, and the *Green Book* hit its stride with a consistent cover design, feature articles, and a two-column layout. The 1939 edition spanned twenty-three new states and included listings for every state except Nevada, New Hampshire, and North Dakota.

The cover for the 1948 *Green Book* features a dapper man wearing a tailored double-breasted coat, a tie, a hat, and two-toned wingtip shoes. His female companion wears the rounded-toe baby doll pumps that had just hit the stores that year. The houses, trees, and one falling leaf in the background place the couple in a nice suburban neighborhood. Both are carrying suitcases and smiling, and decide to look our way in mid-stride en route to their car, to the left of the frame. This couple was so dynamic that their image became part of the logo Green used in following editions and on his business stationery for years.

The first black travel guide, *Hackley and Harrison's Hotel and Apartment Guide for Colored Travelers*, was published in 1930, six years before the *Green Book*. It was created by an African American lawyer, Edwin Henry Hackley, and Sarah D. Harrison, a secretary at Connecticut's New London Negro Welfare Council. Hackley and Harrison created their first edition soon after W. E. B. Du Bois wrote to Harrison seeking safe lodging for a trip to New London. The guide listed hotels and motels in three hundred cities throughout the United States and Canada. Hackley died soon after its publication, and Harrison couldn't produce it on her own, so it was published

only in 1930 and 1931.

Another black travel guide, *Grayson's Travel and Business Guide*, debuted in 1937, calling itself in its subtitle *A National Directory of Hotels, Cafes, Resorts and Motels, Where Civil Rights Are Extended to All*. A couple of years later, the Roosevelt administration published its own *Directory of Negro Hotels and Guest Houses in the United States*, through the National Park Service. Notably, around the same time, the Department of the Interior compiled a directory of black lodging for the "convenience of Negro Travelers." It is unclear how many people actually used the Department of the Interior guide or even knew it existed, but it appears that the *Green Book* was far more popular than this government guide.

Other black travel guides included *Smith's Tourist Guide*, started in 1940; the *Go Guide to Pleasant Motoring* (1952–1959); and *Travelguide* (1947–1963), which had the tagline "Vacation & Recreation Without Humiliation." All these guides were a blessing to the black community, but none was in print as long as or had the reach and readership of the *Green Book*.

The Negro Motorist Green Book

ESTABLISHED
1936

Carry Your
Green Book
With You
You May
Need It.

A Classified

Motorist & Tourist Guide

COVERING THE UNITED STATES & ALASKA

1948 Edition

75c

Green Book cover, 1948

The *Green Book*'s longevity and success stemmed from Victor Green's vision, grit, creativity, and stamina. Like most of the guides just mentioned, the *Green Book* was distributed by mail order and word of mouth. But it was Green's ingenious idea to enlist an army of letter carriers to comb America's streets for advertisers that made the *Green Book* into one of the most densely packed black-and-white travel guides on the market. After 1939, the *Green Book*s boasted more than one thousand listings, and nearly ten thousand businesses were advertised over the life of the guide.

Green was determined to make the best product he could. He opened the 1939 edition with a letter announcing that all the businesses listed had been selected "with care" and were the best and most "responsible in their field." For the first couple of editions, Green traveled to personally inspect many of the places listed in the guide, but of course, as it expanded across the eastern United States and then on to the West, there was just too much ground to cover.

On the third page of the 1948 edition, Green expresses his concern that the guide isn't perfect and admits that because he is relying on business operators themselves to provide the information, some addresses in the *Green Book* might be off by a few numbers. This made scouting *Green Book* sites challenging. For example, the street address for the Norbo, a hotel in Los Angeles, is off by one digit. I went there several times and photographed a building that looked old but not like it could ever have been a hotel. One day, I drove around the block and approached the building from the other side and realized that the Norbo was instead across the street—and it was still in business! (After that experience, I relied on my eyes as much as the addresses while scouting sites. I also relied on tax assessors' records to flesh out the history of the properties; these provided helpful information regarding a site's use and any architectural modifications done to it.) This gives us a glimpse into the challenges Victor Green must have faced as his guide continued to grow.

Green also shares his frustration at not being able to include more accommodations in his *Green Book*. In the introduction he included in editions from 1948 to 1951, he writes, "There are thousands of first class business places that we don't know about and can't list, which would be glad to serve the traveler, but it is hard to secure listings of these places since we can't secure enough agents to send us the information."

To remedy this, he asked readers who visited businesses during their

travels to “please mention the *Green Book* . . . ask them to get in touch with us so that we might list their place.” He also writes, “If this guide has proved useful to you on your trips, let us know. If not, tell us also as we appreciate your criticisms and ideas for the improvement of this guide from which you benefit.”

By 1948, Green needed help, so he placed ads seeking full- and part-time sales agents to find new businesses to list, inspect properties, and sell subscriptions and advertising space. It was, he assured them, an “excellent opportunity to earn extra money on a commission basis [that] will not interfere with your regular work.”

Each edition of the *Green Book* had an average of five advertising representatives. It’s unknown how much they were paid, but on this page of the 1940 edition, in the “Card of Appreciation” section, Green thanks five individuals for their promotional efforts, along with the *Louisville Leader*, a newspaper out of Kentucky; the Cleveland *Call & Post*, a black newspaper in Ohio; and Charles A. R. McDowell, from the U.S. Travel Bureau’s Division of Negro Affairs.

McDowell, a black man, had been appointed by the U.S. Travel Bureau to help black travelers find roadside services. He established relationships with a variety of travel professionals (both black and white) and encouraged them to extend their services to black travelers. He must have had a major role in helping Victor Green, as the cover of the 1940 *Green Book* announced that the guide had been “prepared in cooperation with the United States Travel Bureau.”

In addition to collaborating with Green, McDowell wrote a travel piece for the 1940 edition called “Southward,” which recounts a trip he took from New York State to Georgia. The piece begins with a view from the window of a Greyhound bus traveling from New York City to Washington. McDowell writes about the flowers framing the General Motors offices and the “immense drab, abandoned industrial plants along the Delaware River.” From there, he covers the eighteen-hour trip to Greenville, South Carolina, recounting the drive through tobacco fields to Winston-Salem, on to Charlotte, and then to the “Textile Center of the South,” Greenville. McDowell traveled another 164 miles, through peach orchards, on his way to Atlanta, Memphis, and finally Savannah, where Mrs. Mamie Cox provided “comfort of Negro travelers.”

Green was always looking for people to submit articles about “Negro

motoring conditions, scenic wonders . . . places visited of interest and short stories on one's motoring experience." In the 1937 edition, he offers one dollar for manuscripts, but by the 1940 edition, he was paying five dollars to feature writers. Two dozen articles were published over the life of the *Green Book*. They included personal trips like McDowell's, but also pieces highlighting automobile culture, airline and railroad travel, and the National Parks. Others profiled particular U.S. cities, such as Denver, Los Angeles, Louisville, New Orleans, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

For the most part, the articles were well written, and some were illustrated, giving the *Green Book*s heft, substance, and stature. Although the guide looked important, Green understood that spending time and resources on its appearance was of little importance if people didn't even know about the guide or know where they could purchase a copy. Marketing, he knew, was everything, and it wasn't until he teamed up with James A. Jackson, a black marketing executive from Esso, that the *Green Book* became a brand with staying power.

Green had printed an article in the 1939 edition announcing Jackson's appointment at Esso. The piece was written by E. Frederic Morrow, a branch coordinator at the NAACP and later a field secretary for the organization, who went on to become the first African American to hold an executive position in the White House, in the Eisenhower administration, and the first black vice president of Bank of America. In the article, Morrow detailed Jackson's previous life as a waiter, bellboy, bank clerk, and minstrel performer. By hiring Jackson, Morrow wrote, Esso had "given every reason for the Negro to look upon the Company and its affiliates with favor."

Before Jackson died in New York City at the age of eighty-two—in 1960, the same year Victor Green passed—he could look back on a remarkable career. He was the first black editor at *Billboard* magazine, where he was hired to write about the black entertainment scene. Although he worked there for only six years, the nickname "Billboard" Jackson stayed with him for the rest of his life. For seven years in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he was an adviser to the U.S. Department of Commerce. In 1934, two years before the birth of the *Green Book*, he was hired at Esso, where he worked for twenty-one years. In 1940, he became the first black member of the American Marketing Association, and throughout his career he traveled the United States speaking to black business owners about entrepreneurship and the

importance of marketing.

James A. Jackson (seated) and Wendel P. Alston, Esso marketing executives who promoted the *Green Book*, in their New York office

By the 1940s, Esso was one of the largest business enterprises in the world, and one of the most progressive corporations when it came to the treatment of black people. Jackson distributed *Green Book*s to Esso stations throughout the country. However, Esso did more than hire black marketing executives and sell *Green Book*s at its filling stations—it also employed black men to own gas station franchises, this at a time when some stations wouldn't even sell them gas. Jim and Mr. Eddy, two men featured in *Jim and Mr. Eddy: A Dixie Motorlogue*, author Algernon P. Jackson's personal account of his travels through the South, remember seeing large White Patronage Only signs in front of gas stations in the South. "They at least gave us fair warning and spared us a possible insult . . . We took them at their word, passed on and lost some interest in that city."

Esso couldn't have been more welcoming to black motorists. Because the stations were franchised, this wasn't true for every Esso, but in general, the company was way ahead of its time when it came to race relations. Granted, having black customers helped the company's bottom line, but Esso could still have made money off black people without hiring them as executives or allowing them to franchise their own gas stations. Esso also hired black people to work as chemists, pipeline workers, seamen, and mail room clerks. In the early forties, 312 out of 830 Esso dealers were black, more than 2,000 black men distributed kerosene for Esso, and more than 800 black employees were set to receive Esso pensions.

Black Americans generally didn't band together to support white corporations, but many felt safe and secure with Esso. This was a time when companies such as Shell Oil distributed ads featuring a black man eating watermelon, Whitman's candy company sold "Pickaninny" Chocolate Covered Peppermints, and the American Tobacco Company produced "Nigger Hair" Smoking Tobacco. These companies eventually apologized for their racist advertisements, but it was only after black consumers threatened their bottom line that they agreed to stop running the ads or admitted to any wrongdoing.

Given the pervasive racism that stained the cultural DNA of the country, Esso's compassion and respect for black people represented a reprieve from what they were used to. Herbert Sulaiman remembers the vital role Esso played in his travels with his parents as a child in the mid- to late 1950s. "Esso was the only place that women felt comfortable using the restroom . . .," he said. "[Otherwise,] we'd pull over to the side of the road. A lot of

times there would be picnic tables where you could stop . . . and the young boys, we would go out into the field, go out into the high grass and play for a little bit. I didn't know why at that time, but what it was [was that] women were afraid there were snakes. And country boys, we were taught . . . [how] to deal with snakes . . . so we'd go out there [and scare off the snakes so] the women would go out and relieve themselves. It's a shame . . . to make a woman to have to hold, and hold, and hold before she could relieve herself. And you couldn't go anyplace but Esso stations. At Esso, [it was] no problem."

It's likely that Esso's benevolence for black people had been inspired by Laura Spelman Rockefeller, the wife of John D. Rockefeller, Esso's CEO. Spelman Rockefeller, who was white, had been raised in Cleveland, Ohio, in a house that was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Her parents, Harvey Buell Spelman and Lucy Henry Spelman, had been fearless and powerful abolitionists.

John D. Rockefeller was supportive of the Spelman family's outspoken politics, and he wanted to do something to honor their commitment to racial equality. Not only did he ensure that black people had a place in his company, but he approached officials at the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, a place of learning for young women of African descent, and told them if they changed its name to Spelman, to honor his wife and her family, he would donate a portion of the proceeds from his foundation to the school. They agreed, and changed the seminary's name to Spelman College. Today Spelman is one of the country's leading African American colleges.

Laura Spelman Rockefeller died in 1915, of a heart attack, and in 1922, Rockefeller set up a memorial in her honor that assisted the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which traced the social and economic conditions of black Americans since the Civil War. By 1929, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial had granted ten million dollars to the Spelman Fund of New York.

The Spelman family inspired Esso to have a conscience, but it was James A. Jackson, the marketing executive, who did the groundwork and implemented Esso's vision for treating black people with dignity and respect. When Esso hired Jackson in 1934 as a special representative to research the role and impact of the black consumer in America, the news spread across the black community like wildfire. In 1945, Esso brought in Wendell P. Alston to work with Jackson. They were the perfect team. Jackson already had been to

nearly two thousand places throughout the United States and across nineteen countries. Together, the two traveled about twenty thousand miles each year, and they always used the *Green Book*.

Allendale Esso Service Center in Shreveport, Louisiana

Jackson and Alston regularly appeared in the *Green Book*. In the 1947 edition, Jackson wrote: “Not Only Happy Motoring But Happy Travelling by Any Method, Is Obtainable Through Green Book Routing[,] Say ESSO Special Representatives.” In the article, he recalls the days of traveling without a *Green Book*, writing, “If there had been any such publication as this [the *Green Book*] when I started travelling ’way back in the Nineties, I would have missed a lot of anxieties, worries and saved a lot of mental energy.”

While on the road, Jackson “wondered if my bags were safe, and if the bed I acquired for the night would be mine alone; or if I would have the night companions such as those for which D. D. T. has been created . . . At other places, the doors were innocent of locks; and much of the equipment for bathrooms, such as are commonplace today, were unknown where Negro travelers might stop. It seems that the major bit of bathroom equipment could be found anywhere from fifty to a hundred feet down the yard and on the way, a grape arbor afforded the only shelter from storm.” He continued: “How much nicer it is today, when one is contemplating a trip by train, motor or plane, is able [*sic*] to have determined in advance the places he may stop at while in the different communities; and how much more is the peace of mind of the traveler; and of his family and associates left at home, knowing that in emergency, just where one may be found . . . My years ‘on the road’ might have been concluded long ago, with enough savings to permit my living a life of peace and quiet, now that I am becoming an old codger.”

Lewis Esso Service Station in North Little Rock, Arkansas

If Jackson and Alston hadn't entered the picture, it's likely the *Green Book* wouldn't have had the reach or stamina to outsell and outlast the other black travel guides. The *Green Book* and Esso were a match made for road-tripping. Dino Thompson, a Greek child living in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, describes seeing the *Green Book* for the first time, at Ben Field's Esso station: "I noticed a green-looking book that looked like a comic book. I picked it up and I was looking through it. It might have cost a dollar. I'm pretty sure it cost a lot more than a comic book. I asked about it, and Ben Field told me that it was a travel guide. So I wasn't interested in a travel guide. My dad and I walked by it one day, and he explained that it was a book for Negroes. It was a book that told Negroes where it was safe to eat and sleep. Being nine or ten, you don't quite understand that, but I had already been through the episode . . . when the Klan came, so I understood what it was when some people didn't like other people. So when Dad explained that to me, he laughed and said, 'Hey, even Greeks and Jews and Lebanese . . . they even need a book, but they don't have one,' Dad would tell me. Everybody has to have somebody to look down on."

The Esso station Dino visited wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but there were more than twenty other Esso stations that were. Green celebrated the opening of a few black-owned Esso stations in his 1956 edition with a three-page spread featuring a new Esso in Shreveport, Louisiana; another one in Memphis, Tennessee; and A. C. Lewis's station in Little Rock, Arkansas.

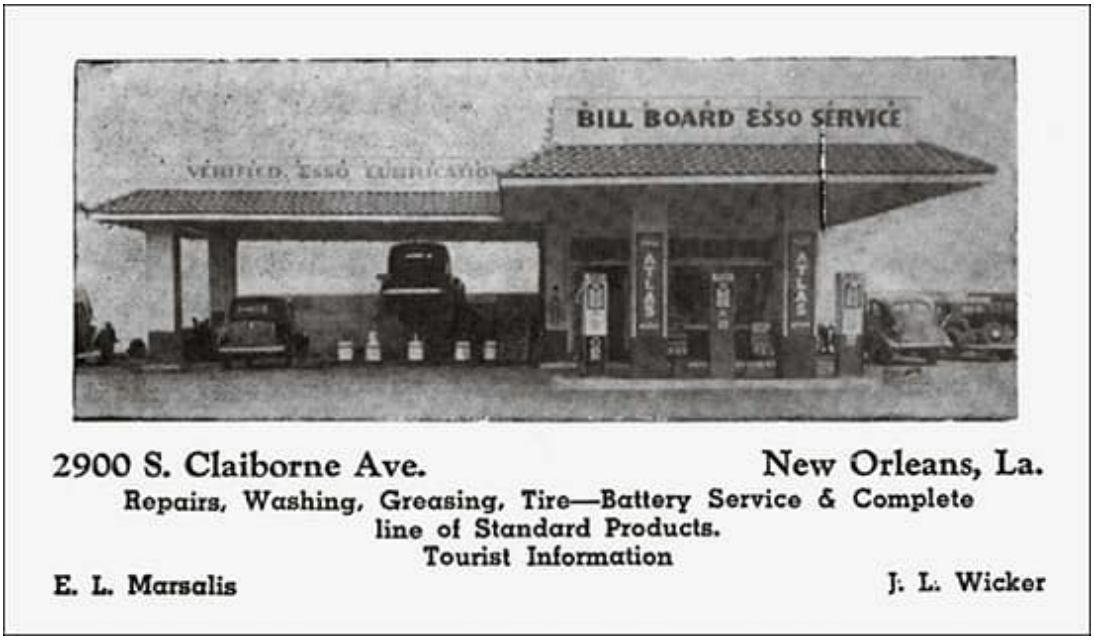
One of the most prominent Esso advertisements in the 1941 *Green Book* was a New Orleans station named "Billboard Esso," after James "Billboard" Jackson.

The Billboard Esso station was owned by Ellis Marsalis Sr., jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis's grandfather. Jackson had taught Marsalis Sr. how to operate his own Esso station, and the experience left such an impression on him that he named the station "Billboard Esso" in his honor.

In addition to the Esso service station, Marsalis ran a cab stand and a ten-room hotel called the Marsalis Mansion, which sat on the outskirts of town, on Shrewsbury Road, bordering the Mississippi River.

The advertisement for Marsalis's "Billboard" Esso took up nearly one-third of the page. In nearly every *Green Book*, Green encouraged business owners to advertise by reminding them to "KEEP YOUR NAME BEFORE THE PUBLIC, IT PAYS," "ENLARGE YOUR SALES AREA . . . PEOPLE ARE TRAVELING . . . THE YEAR ROUND. ADVERTISE IN THE

GREEN BOOK." He explained the value of buying ad space in the *Green Book*, saying, "MR. ADVERTISER! Your Name is Before the Public NOT FOR A DAY OR WEEK BUT A YEAR." "IF YOU WANT MORE BUSINESS YOU CAN GET-IT! BY USING SPACE AND MAKE YOUR BUSINESS KNOWN TO THE TOURIST."



"Billboard" Esso was advertised in multiple editions of the *Green Book*.

By 1938, there were nearly thirty thousand black-owned retail stores, with sales amounting to 71.5 million dollars. More than 300 hotels in the country were black-owned, there were approximately 3,000 black funeral directors, and more than 34,000 hairdressers, about 13,000 of whom were women.

In the late 1930s there were also more than fifteen thousand black tailors, and the *Green Book* listed more than two hundred of them during the three decades it was in publication. Tailors weren't generally listed in white travel guides, but looking clean, pressed, and polished was especially important to the black community. The 1939 *Green Book* included two half-page ads of Harlem tailors. This was a time when most of the laundries in Harlem were owned by Chinese and Jewish merchants; only about one in seven was black-owned. It was quite a competitive business. Some tailors served four hundred customers each week, while others had only fifteen. Rodman Johnson, a successful black tailor, said, "The reason why more colored people haven't entered the laundry field is that it requires so much work, and the profits are small." He continued: "Most of my customers are lower class people including underworld characters. I can't compete with the Chinese on collars and cuffs, which are their specialty, but otherwise I find competition no handicap. There is a good future in it for those who can hold on."

Most black-owned businesses in America have dwindled since the 1930s. In 2016, an article in *Fortune*, "How African American Entrepreneurs Can Power the Economy," found that "The last thirty years also have brought the wholesale collapse of black-owned independent businesses and financial institutions that once anchored black communities across the country. Over the same period, tens of thousands of black-owned retail establishments and local service companies also disappeared, having gone out of business or been acquired by larger companies." The *Fortune* article determined that the cause of the decline was due largely to the lack of antimonopoly enforcement. For example, when MetLife bought United Mutual Life Insurance in 1992, there were no other black-owned insurance companies left, and the number of black-owned insurers dropped by nearly 70 percent. In contrast, when Victor Green was building his travel guide, the number of black-owned retail stores had increased by over 30 percent.

KEEP THIS GUIDE WITH YOU

LA FONTAINE SERVICE

DYEING

CLEANING

TAILORING

VALET

Store No. 1
470 CONVENT AVE.
EDgecombe 4-1365

Store No. 2
764 ST. NICHOLAS AVE.
AUdubon 3-7976

Katherine Fontaine — Elliott Fontaine

We Call and Deliver Anywhere

Phone: AU. 3-0671

THE TALK OF THE TOWN WHEN IN NEW YORK

LITTLE ALPHA SERVICE

84 West 120th St.
Cor Lenox Ave.

200 WEST 136th St.
Cor. 7th Ave.

ONE OF NEW YORK'S PIONEER CLEANERS, WHERE SERVICE IS JUST A SMILE.

6-8 HOUR SERVICE—R. E. EUBANKS, MGR.

Tailor advertisements from the *Green Book*, 1939

Rear view of the Macon Lounge, a former *Green Book* site in Columbus, Ohio

Because Green had support from the community, his fellow postal workers, and the U.S. government, there was nothing to get in the way of his progress. The *Green Book* and the travel industry were the perfect pathways for African Americans to generate revenue because black Americans were steady, reliable consumers. And in the conundrum of segregation being both a blessing and a curse, black-owned businesses especially benefited, largely because in many cases, black people were denied services and shut out of white America. This dramatically limited the number of places where black people could spend their money. It's no wonder, then, that in 1935, Eugene Kinckle Jones, the head of the U. S. Department of Commerce's Division of Negro Affairs, estimated black Americans' purchasing power at two billion dollars, giving black business owners a ready-made billion-dollar customer base.

Despite all the money to be made, it was still difficult to get black business owners to invest in advertising. *Green Book* assistant editor Novera C. Dashiell noted Green's frustration with this, writing, "He regrets the shortsightedness of most of our business men to see the urgent need and value of advertising. 'If Negro-owned business is good' he says, 'it can be better with advertising.' His philosophy is that we can create our OWN 'name brands.' We should have the patience to build. Build for ourselves and the future of our children."

The executives at Esso agreed with Green's vision. His marketing executive James Jackson gave talks throughout the country to black entrepreneurs, and Esso hosted an event with forty business and marketing students from Howard University. The event made it into the 1956 edition of the *Green Book.*

By featuring the Esso marketing event, Green was hoping to inspire business owners, both young and old, and to teach the larger black community about the strength of black business. It was his astute business sense and his drive to sell more advertising space that made it possible for him to grow his own business to a point where he could move the *Green Book*'s office out of his home and into a space at 200 West 135th Street. Its new offices were now located down the hall from the National Association of Postal and Federal Employees, a group of mostly black union mailmen, and upstairs from Smalls Paradise, one of Harlem's most legendary nightclubs.

Founded in 1925, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, Smalls Paradise was listed in the *Green Book* for fourteen years between 1938 and

1967. Edwin Alexander Smalls ran it for more than thirty years, and in the 1920s it was one of the few integrated nightclubs run by a black man.

Smalls Paradise hosted some of the greatest names in entertainment. Rumor has it that Billie Holiday had her first audition there, and in the early 1940s, Malcolm X—his name was Malcolm Little at the time—worked there as a waiter, serving stars such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Tallulah Bankhead, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Ethel Waters, and Joe Louis.

Malcolm X stayed down the street from Smalls, at the YMCA, another *Green Book* site, on 135th Street in Harlem. Known as the "Living room of the Harlem Renaissance," the Harlem "Y" was famous for having hosted George Washington Carver, Richard Wright, Joe Louis, and Jesse Owens.

The eleven-story neo-Georgian building hasn't changed much since the 1930s. The rooms are the same size, with a bathroom down the hall. In 2016, a rare 1935 Works Progress Administration (WPA) mural was discovered there: *Evolution of the Negro Dance*, painted by Aaron Douglas. The mural depicts silhouetted figures spanning different periods, from slavery to the Harlem Renaissance. Today, their gentler forms contrast with artist Kara Walker's silhouetted figures.

Thankfully, the Harlem "Y" is safe from demolition, as it was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1976, and in 1988 it became a New York City Landmark. Unfortunately, Smalls Paradise has been replaced by an IHOP, and Victor Green's office upstairs is now part of the Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change, a program for children and teenagers in grades six through twelve.

There were thirty-five YMCAs listed in the *Green Book*s, but many YMCAs across the country barred black patrons. In 1935, the Harlem "Y" accepted a black physician named Dr. B. Hurst after he had been turned away from five Manhattan hotels. When Hurst's story caught the attention of the NAACP, it filed a lawsuit against all the hotels he'd visited and won four hundred dollars plus damages.

Winning the Hurst lawsuit didn't make finding accommodation in New York City or throughout the country any easier for black Americans. About six years later, journalist George Schuyler said, "Prior to 1945, the number of hotels, restaurants, motels and such establishments that welcomed Negro patronage outside the south was infinitesimal." By 1949, "Negro travelers were welcome in not more than 6 percent of the nation's better hotels and motels," and there were "probably fewer than twenty cities in the country

where Negroes are not completely barred from white-owned restaurants."

Thankfully, the 1939, 1940, and 1941 *Green Book*s were packed to the margins with restaurants, hotels, and a host of other services, all alphabetized by state, city, and type of business. Although collectively it was an impressive list, there were still parts of the country that had few options available. For instance, the *Green Book* listed only four tourist homes in the entire state of Wisconsin. New Mexico and South Dakota listed two tourist homes each, and there were only two hotels listed in Miami.

Despite the imperfections in the guide, Green must have found strength from the supporters who stopped in his office to congratulate him, some leaving orders for the next edition. He must have cherished letters such as the one he received from William Smith, a New Jersey resident, who wrote, "It is a great pleasure for me to give credit where credit is due. Many of my friends have joined me in admitting that 'The Negro Motorist Green Book' is a credit to the Negro Race. It is a book badly needed among our Race since the advance of the motor age. Realizing the only way we knew where and how to reach our pleasure resorts was in a way of speaking, by word of mouth, until the publication of the 'Negro Motorist Green Book' . . . We earnestly believe 'The Negro Motorist Green Book' will mean as much if not more to us as the A.A.A. means to the white race."

The *Green Book* was filling a critical need for black Americans, which was the key to its success. No official business records from Green's office survive today, so there is no way to know how many copies were sold. Some reports have estimated that approximately fifteen thousand were sold each year, and another estimate has more than two million copies circulated in 1962 alone.

As with most travel guides, it's assumed that the *Green Book* didn't charge businesses to be included, and given that the early *Green Book*s cost only a quarter, we can also assume that this wasn't a money-making venture for Victor Green. In fact, in 1940, Green reported an income of 2,100 dollars, which was the average pay for a letter carrier at the time, so it's likely that he broke even on the *Green Book*, at best. Yet Green was so committed to helping black business owners that he offered to promote them even if they didn't pay for advertising. He encouraged subscribers to "drop us a line and send us some of your business cards and other printed matter you may have for distribution and we will endeavor to do our best to boost your business." This also might have helped to fill in sections of the *Green Book* covering

certain areas of the country with fewer accommodations.

Green seems to have made a comfortable living as a postal worker, as he clearly wasn't producing the *Green Book* to make money. He continued to work at the post office full time after starting the *Green Book* venture. After retiring from the post office in 1952, he worked full time on the guide until his death in 1960. While he didn't get rich off the *Green Book*, his reward was much more valuable than money, because for every business he listed, he may have saved a life. ♦

Evolution of the Negro Dance, 1933, by Aaron Douglas. Mural at the YMCA, a *Green Book* site in Harlem, New York.

Slaughter of the Innocents (They Might Be Guilty of Something), 2016, by Kara Walker. Cut paper and acrylic on linen. 79 x 220 inches (200.7 x 558.8 cm).

3
THE FIGHT
1946 – 47 Editions

Members of the Tuskegee Airmen, location unknown, circa May 1942 to August 1943

World War II immobilized leisure travel and temporarily shut down the production of the *Green Book*. Everything changed in the travel industry. President Franklin D. Roosevelt banned pleasure driving, and the rubber shortage was so severe that any American who happened to have more than five tires was forced to turn the extras over to the government. Gas rationing required thirty million motorists to display windshield stickers in a three-tiered alphabetical system that assigned how much gas was allotted based on a driver's needs. With the exception of truck drivers, taxi drivers, and physicians who made house calls, most Americans were limited to driving a maximum of eight and a half miles a day.

1947

GREEN-BOOK

ESTABLISHED 1936

A Classified

MOTORIST'S & TOURIST'S GUIDE

Covering the United States

Carry your Green Book with you
. . . you may need it . . .

PRICE
75c

Green Book cover, 1947

As a result of the war rations, the *Green Book* took a four-year hiatus starting in 1942. The 1946 and 1947 editions hit the stands with a fresh makeover, a new cover design, and a bold new typeface. The 1946 edition depicts an illustration of a cityscape, and the 1947 cover has a photograph of a simple tree-lined road winding through the Maine countryside. No people—just road, earth, and sky. The photograph, courtesy of the Maine Development Commission, was the first to grace the cover of a *Green Book*. From this year forward, each subsequent edition had a photograph or illustration on the front.

The 1946 and 1947 editions were much larger than the earlier *Green Book*s. They listed more than three thousand businesses in every state (except North Dakota) and were packed with feature articles. The price reflected the expansion, jumping from twenty-five to seventy-five cents. On the cover, the subtitle *A Classified Motorist's and Tourist's Guide Covering the United States* emerged with a new tagline: "Carry Your Green Book with you . . . you may need it . . ."

These two editions opened with a serious article about black soldiers returning home from the war and their need for educational services. When African Americans joined to fight in World War II, it was with the intention of achieving a "Double V"—victory over the fascism they were fighting abroad and victory over the racism they were fighting at home. Legions of the 1.2 million black men who enlisted in the U.S. military hoped their service would prove they shared a common purpose with their countrymen and would ultimately humanize them in the eyes of white Americans. Unfortunately, the vast majority of black men who returned to the States after having fought for freedom came home to a country that still dehumanized them. Langston Hughes saw this coming before the war ended, when he wrote his poem "Beaumont to Detroit: 1943," a reference to the bloody race riots that tore apart Beaumont, Texas, and Detroit, Michigan, that summer:

Looky here, America
What you done done—
Let things drift
Until the riots come.

Now your policemen
Let your mobs run free.
I reckon you don't care
Nothing about me.

You tell me that hitler
Is a mighty bad man.
I guess he took lessons
From the ku klux klan.

You tell me mussolini's
Got an evil heart.
Well, it mus-a been in Beaumont
That he had his start—

Cause everything that hitler
And mussolini do,
Negroes get the same
Treatment from you.

You jim crowed me
Before hitler rose to power—
And you're STILL jim crowing me
Right now, this very hour.

Yet you say we're fighting
For democracy.
Then why don't democracy
Include me?

I ask you this question
Cause I want to know
How long I got to fight
BOTH HITLER—AND JIM CROW.

Black soldiers returning from the war were likely just as disgusted as Langston Hughes was when he wrote this poem, but they probably weren't surprised to find that not much had changed. Before they left for war, their training regimen hadn't met the same standards as that of their white brethren. This was evident in 1942, after twelve hundred U.S. Army troops had found a temporary training facility in Flagstaff, Arizona. Leo Weaver, the secretary of the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, told Arizona governor Sidney Osborn that Flagstaff didn't want black troops in their town, so the troops had to find somewhere else to train.

Once black soldiers were stationed, they were often denied services outside the training camps. For instance, black soldiers stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, near Rolla, Missouri, on Route 66, were shut out of local restaurants and nightclubs, and had to drive eighty miles to Graham's Rib Station, in Springfield, Missouri, for food, fun, and entertainment. This landmark restaurant and nightclub was opened in 1932 by an African American couple, James and Zelma Graham. It wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but the on-site motel, built during the war, offered lodging to black soldiers, giving them a safe place to stay so they wouldn't have to make the long drive back to their barracks at night. Graham's was the hot spot for entertainers; Little Richard and Pearl Bailey stayed there. The restaurant was demolished when Route 66 was widened, and the only remnant is a tourist cabin, which today serves as a storage shed for a law firm.

Graham's filled some of the needs of black soldiers, but segregated restaurants and entertainment venues were a minor injustice compared to the military's commitment to keeping blacks and whites separated even at the nation's blood banks.

Blood donation was a powerful symbol of patriotism, but in 1941, black Americans were turned away when they tried to donate blood for the cause. The U.S. Army and Navy told the Red Cross they would accept blood only from white donors. The American Medical Association spoke out against the ban, and the director of the Red Cross blood banks resigned in protest, to no avail.

The army was so opposed to integration that it organized segregated redistribution centers, or what the *Chicago Defender* called "Jim Crow Centers," which were developed for returning soldiers to rest before they headed back into combat. Forty-nine hotels were selected throughout the country for white soldiers to swim and play golf, tennis, and shuffleboard.

For black soldiers, the army planned to seize Harlem's Hotel Theresa and the Pershing Hotel, located on Chicago's South Side, both of which had no spaces for recreational activities.

The Pershing Hotel was the largest black hotel in Chicago, with two hundred rooms, a beauty shop, a barbershop, a ballroom, and valet service. It was listed in the *Green Book* from 1947 to 1950. The Theresa was Harlem's most glamorous hotel, and it was considered the "Waldorf Astoria of Harlem." It was listed in the *Green Book* in 1940 and then in every subsequent edition until 1967.

The army decided to take over these hotels during the height of their popularity. The Theresa, built in 1913, didn't always serve black people, but by 1947 the three-hundred-room hotel, which was located right down the street from the Apollo Theater, predominantly hosted black movie stars, musicians, politicians, and athletes. The boxer Joe Louis lived at the Theresa, and he held his victory parties there while thousands of onlookers gathered outside, hoping to get a glimpse of him. Everyone who was anyone, from Louis Armstrong to Dorothy Dandridge, mingled at the fifty-one-foot J-shaped bar on the street level. Stores on the mezzanine of the Theresa sold fabulous clothes to Ella Fitzgerald and Lena Horne. Dwight Eisenhower dined there, and Fidel Castro visited in 1960 and met Malcolm X.

Graham's Rib Station in the 1930s, on Springfield's north side

Only remaining tourist cabin at Graham's, Springfield, Missouri

In addition to the celebrities, the Theresa was teeming with showgirls, wealthy tourists, socialites, and even gangsters, who played the numbers in the basement. It was a vibrant, exciting hub of black culture that was called the "social headquarters of Negro America" by John H. Johnson, the founder of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. The place was such a source of inspiration that Johnson conceived of his magazines while staying at the Theresa.

When the U.S. Army set out to revoke reservations that had been made months in advance and to evict current guests from the Theresa and the Pershing, the NAACP, the Urban League, the YMCA, and black newspapers throughout the country vehemently protested, demanding that President Roosevelt reverse the army's decision. On September 30, 1944, four days after the army announced its plans, the *Philadelphia Tribune* published a scathing article, asking, "What kind of people do the officials who run the United States Army think Negroes are anyhow? Do those who control the Army, those who make the rules and regulations, think that Negroes are a bunch of ignorant notwits [*sic*] who possess none of those human attributes which place men above dumb-driven animals? . . . They make rules and regulations which embarrass, insult and humiliate every colored person . . . In other words, the United States Army enforces anti-racial laws in America while seeking to destroy them abroad. This incident proves conclusively that the Army has the power to abolish segregation within its own ranks. The fact that it does not do so proves that those in control do not want to do so; that they consider Negroes as less than men."

Hotel Theresa, Harlem, New York, 1915

Within a month of the publication of the *Philadelphia Tribune* article, the Roosevelt administration pressured the army to revise its plan to segregate returning soldiers. The army relinquished possession of the Theresa and Pershing Hotels and agreed to integrate the redistribution centers. Many black Americans feared that black soldiers funneled into southern camps would still be segregated, but at least they knew the northern redistribution centers at Lake Placid and Atlantic City would be integrated.

There were so few lodging options for black travelers at the time that the army saved face by telling the public it had reversed its decision to take over the Pershing and Theresa Hotels. In the end, it was a notable victory for the black resistance and a triumph against the armed forces in the struggle for racial equality.

Black Americans may have won the battle with the army, but when they returned from Europe, they were still fighting a war for racial equality. These men who had sacrificed life and limb wanted the same respect and admiration their white comrades received when they returned home. But black soldiers quickly learned that being trained in combat, tactical operations, and weaponry had made them even more feared and hated.

Some white Americans didn't react well to black soldiers returning from war feeling entitled to fair and equal treatment. This sentiment wasn't new. In 1917, Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi stated on the Senate floor that allowing black men to serve in the armed forces was a mistake that would "inevitably lead to disaster," because once you "impress the Negro with the fact that he is defending the flag" and "inflate his untutored soul with military airs," he would demand that "his political rights must be respected."

Once black soldiers returned home from World War II, Vardaman's nightmare came true: These veterans expected change. When a black marine named Timothy Hood snatched down a Jim Crow sign from a streetcar in Bessemer, Alabama, the conductor, William Weeks, shot him five times. Hood, still alive, stumbled off the train and was promptly arrested by the chief of police, G. B. Fant, who delivered a fatal shot to his head. Fant, who claimed Hood had been reaching for a gun in his pocket, was never prosecuted for the murder. The bitter irony and hypocrisy of fighting for a country that rested its morals on freedom and equality abroad and yet retained its own shameful discriminatory practices at home weighed heavily on black soldiers. For them, only a single "V" had been achieved.

Some white veterans who witnessed the horrible treatment of their black brethren made valiant attempts to defend their honor. U.S. ambassador to Barbados and Grenada, Theodore Roosevelt Britton served in World War II as one of the first black marines. He was trained in a segregated camp and remembered a time when one of his fellow soldiers, a black man who lived in Chicago, was waiting to go home to Louisiana. Britton said, "A tall white marine came up and said, 'Why aren't you getting on the bus?' He said, 'Because they load all the whites first and they take blacks afterward, but the last two buses were loaded with whites and there was no room.' The white marine said, 'Are you ready to go?' He said, 'Yes.' The white marine called the station manager over. He pulled out his .45 pistol and said, 'The next bus that comes in here I want to see that man in one of those seats or I'm going to see your brains on this floor.' My friend was on the next bus. He was sitting in the back, but he was on his way to Louisiana."

About a quarter century after the World War II soldiers returned to the States, my stepdad, Ron, came home from Vietnam. After graduating from special training, he had been deployed to Da Nang with the Special Operations Group. He served in the Second Battalion, Third Marine Division, and was awarded a Purple Heart, a Good Conduct Medal, a National Defense Service Medal, a Vietnam Service Medal, a Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was honorably discharged in 1968 with full honors and with the rank of corporal. Although race wasn't as much of an issue surrounding the soldiers' return, the civil rights movement was in full swing and the country was split for political reasons, with some antiwar protesters calling Vietnam veterans "baby killers." Ron took it in stride. He was a proud, disciplined marine.

President Truman had signed an executive order to integrate the armed forces in 1948, so Ron didn't have to serve in a segregated military, but his injuries from having been raised during the Jim Crow era were still painful and hurt even more than being labeled a "baby killer." And he probably wasn't prepared for the host of diseases that came from his exposure to Agent Orange and other carcinogens during his service. After he died, I found a recent letter addressed to him from the U.S. government telling him that the water at the base camp where he had trained in Lejeune, North Carolina, had been contaminated with a dangerous chemical that could lead to cancer and diabetes—which was what, I believe, ultimately took his life.

As a teenager, I couldn't understand why Ron risked his life defending

values and rights that were never freely given to him. As I got older, I realized that he had joined the marines as a ticket out of the Jim Crow South and because he had wanted to get an education. War was his ticket out.

Getting an education and being in the service facilitated a better future for Ron. He received his Bachelor of Science in psychology and obtained a master's in correctional administration. A college education had also been promised to World War II veterans, with the help of the GI Bill (formally the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944), but this didn't help black World War II veterans, as most of them were denied entry into white colleges.

Victor Green recognized that this was a problem and consequently featured a list of 106 Negro colleges at the beginning of the 1946 and 1947 editions of the *Green Book*. These schools specialized in agriculture, mechanics, social work, theology, and teaching. Today, forty-three of these colleges listed in the *Green Book* are still operating, the most notable being Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, Georgia, and Howard University, in Washington, D.C.

This comprehensive list of colleges elevated the *Green Book* from a travel guide to a political weapon. An educated black person was an enduring threat to white supremacy—it's no wonder it had been a crime for black slaves to learn to read. Still, even with slavery long in the past, educational opportunities continued to elude African Americans. Books were kept out of arm's reach, and black tax-paying citizens were denied entrance into public, tax-funded libraries. The seven-page list of black colleges in the *Green Book* was a powerful affront to that reality.

An article reprinted from the *New York Times* entitled "Money for Negro Colleges" preceded the list of schools in the *Green Book*. Rockefeller (the CEO of Esso) was the chairman of the advisory committee at the United Negro College Fund, which he founded in 1944. The article featured his campaign to raise 1.3 million dollars for black colleges and stated, "The need for full subscription is more pressing this year because of the unusual burden thrown on all educational facilities by the returning veteran. The Negro played an important and often heroic part in the war. He shared the mud, the danger, the sweat, and the tears. Now he has the right to continue his interrupted education if he wants to do so. Many college doors will be closed to him, and to others regardless of race, color, or creed, simply because there are too many returning veterans to be cared for at once in the colleges of their choice. But we cannot allow these thirty-three Negro private colleges to turn

away any applicant because they lack funds or to curtail their programs because of it."

The article reminded readers that educating black citizens would uplift all Americans when it stated, "The educated Negro was once a rarity. His numbers are increasing year by year, and his contributions to the arts, sciences, and education steadily gain a wider and just recognition for his abilities. From these, we all gain, regardless of color. And, as we mutually put a proper, unprejudiced estimate on the contributions of all races to the common good, we move surely closer to the goal of living together in harmony."

In addition to educational services, the GI Bill also offered housing and employment to World War II veterans. From 1944 to 1971, the U.S. government spent nearly one hundred billion dollars on this project. It was the most comprehensive initiative set forth by the government and is often credited with creating the white middle class. Unfortunately, again, most black World War II veterans didn't benefit from these services. Although there was no language explicitly denying them access, they rarely had the opportunities that were so freely given to whites because the government left the allocation of funds up to the states. For example, only two black men were recipients of the 3,229 Veterans Administration loans distributed over thirteen Mississippi cities in 1947.

MONEY FOR NEGRO COLLEGES

This year more than ever we must see to it that our colleges are prepared to carry a maximum load of work, and ready to do it well. One group of colleges deserves special attention in this respect: the institutions that devote themselves to education of the Negro. Under the leadership of the United Negro College Fund thirty-three of these private colleges are beginning a campaign for $1,300,000. John D. Rockefeller Jr. is chairman of the advisory committee for this third annual fund drive, and a number of other prominent men and women have interested themselves in the cause.

The need for full subscription is more pressing this year because of the unusual burden thrown on all educational facilities by the returning veteran. The Negro played an important and often heroic part in the war. He shared the mud, the danger, the sweat and the tears. Now he has the right to continue his interrupted education if he wants to do so. Many college doors will be closed to him, and to others regardless of race, color or creed, simply because there are too many returning veterans to be cared for at once in the colleges of their choice. But we cannot allow these thirty-three Negro private colleges to turn away any applicant because they lack funds, or to curtail their programs because of it.

The educated Negro was once a rarity. His numbers are increasing year by year, and his contributions to the arts, science and education steadily gain a wider and juster recognition for his abilities. From these we all gain, regardless of color. And, as we mutually put a proper, unprejudiced estimate on the contributions of all races to the common good, we move surely closer to the goal of living together in harmony.

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IN PATRONIZING THESE PLACES

"Negro Schools and Colleges in the United States"

ALABAMA

Birmingham
Miles Memorial College

Huntsville
Oakwood College

Selma
Selma University

Montgomery
State Teachers College

Tuscaloosa
Stillman Institute

Talladega
Talladega College

Tuskegee
Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute

ARKANSAS

Pine Bluff
Agricultural Mechanical, and Normal College

Little Rock
Arkansas Baptist College
Dunbar Junior College
Philander Smith College

North Little Rock
Shorter College

DELAWARE

Dover
State College for Colored Students

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington
Howard University
Miner Teachers College

FLORIDA

Daytona Beach
Bethune-Cookman College

Jacksonville
Edward Waters College

St. Augustine
Florida Normal and Industrial Institute

Tallahassee
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Atlanta School of Social Work
Atlanta University
Morehouse College
Spelman College
Clark University
Gammon Theological Seminary
Morris Brown University

Albany
Georgia Normal and Agricultural College

Augusta
Paine College

Fort Valley
Fort Valley Normal and Industrial School

Industrial College
Georgia State College

KENTUCKY

Frankfort
Kentucky State Industrial College

Louisville
Louisville Municipal College for Negroes

LOUISIANA

New Orleans
Dillard University
Xavier University

Baker
Leland College

Grambling
Louisiana Normal and Industrial Institute

Scotlandville
Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

“Money for Negro Colleges” and “Negro Schools and Colleges in the United States,” *Green Book*, 1947

Additionally, Title III of the GI Bill gave veterans low-interest home loans, requiring no down payment, but few black men benefited from this because they needed a bank to approve the loan, and banks were notorious for routinely denying loans to black men.

There were three banks listed in all the *Green Book*s over the life of the guide: the New Age Federal Savings and Loan Association in St. Louis, Missouri, and two branches of the Carver Federal Savings and Loan Association in New York City, one in Brooklyn and one in Harlem. Although they were listed, these banks didn't advertise in the *Green Book* until 1959, so unfortunately, they were not known to most black World War II veterans who should have profited from the GI Bill in the late 1940s.

Not having access to bank loans hurt black veterans also because they couldn't take advantage of the portion of the GI Bill that gave World War II veterans lower-interest mortgages. Pulling predominately white Americans out of poverty and getting them into homes they couldn't otherwise afford is an entitlement program that never seems to be mentioned when people talk about welfare. These homes became a long-term investment that generated wealth for generations to come. Today, many of the homes that were bought with the help of the GI Bill are worth ten times their purchase price and have provided financial security, retirement, and college tuition for three generations of the same family. Black GIs being denied access to this entitlement program is partially why today the average white American family has nearly ten times the net worth of the average black American family.

Although the 1946 and 1947 *Green Book* editions tackled serious topics such as war and education, Green lightened the tone with a series of articles dedicated to classic American cars. Cars were, after all, at the heart of the *Green Book*, and he featured all the popular makes, including Chevrolet, Pontiac, Buick, Oldsmobile, and Cadillac.

The section goes on for thirteen pages and is replete with details about armrests, ashtrays, and engines. Pontiac is called out for its cars' smart design, and the latest Chevy's new valve-in-head Thrift Master engine and vacuum cylinder are described as making shifting "so easy that you can move it with your forefinger without taking your hand off the steering wheel." Readers learned that the clutch pedal was eliminated entirely in the Oldsmobile "98" and that the Custom 8 Cruiser was a beast with a 127-inch wheelbase and a 110-horsepower engine. The ride was so smooth that the car

felt as though it levitated over the asphalt.

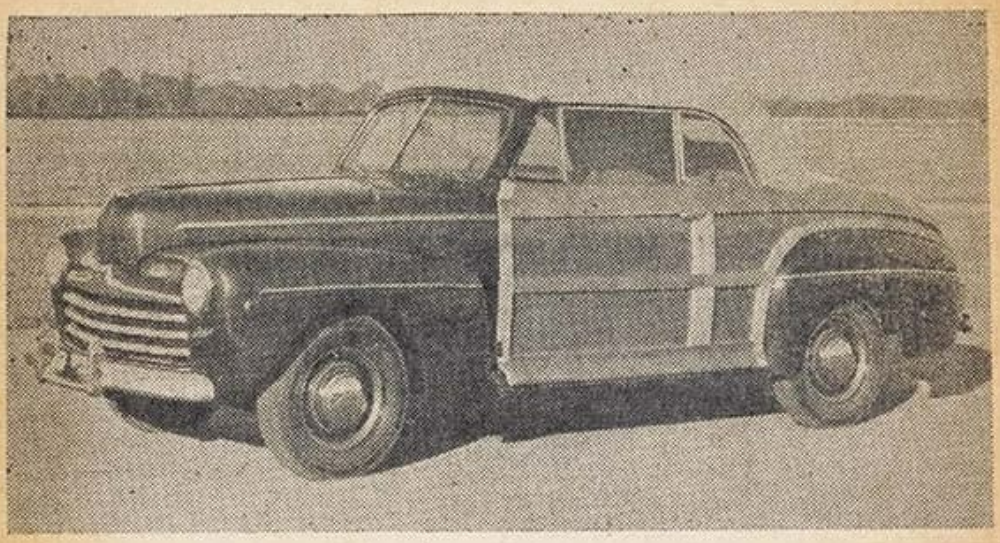
Carver Federal Savings Bank, a former *Green Book* site, Harlem, New York

The new Ford Sportsman’s convertible with wood side panels made it look more like a clunky station wagon than a free-spirited convertible, and the Super Deluxe Fordor had a cool, low-rider vibe with a newly designed radiator grill, suicide doors, and three windows along each side.

Green had such an extensive car section in these editions because he believed the car was the one thing black people could control regarding their freedom; if they had a car, they wouldn’t be subjected to the insults and dangers of segregated travel.

THE FORD CAR

At the time our guide went to press the 1947 Ford Motors Cars had not been announced.



Ford's New Sportsman's Convertible

Seven reasons why the Ford Motor Company's new Sportsman's Convertible combines custom craftsmanship with production cost are shown here.

Outstanding feature of the Sportsman's convertible is the use of wood panels on a steel frame, combining strength with station wagon appeal.

Examining the new model at Dearborn are seven of the nation's outstanding custom automobile designers, all of whom have recently joined Ford's expanded styling department. They are, left to right:

John F. Dobben, formerly with J. B. Judkins Company, Merrimac, Mass., builders of custom bodies for Lincoln, Pierce-Arrow, Packard, Deusenberg, and other luxury cars. He designed special bodies for Tom Mix, W. C. Fields and other screen notables.

Tom Hibbard, formerly of Hibbard and Darrin, Paris France. Hibbard's firm built custom bodies for Rolls Royce, Packard, Lincoln, Mercedes, Renault, Hispano Suiza, Pierce-Arrow, Isotta-Frachinni and othr famed con- Deusenberg for ex-King Alphonso of tinental makes. He designed a special Spain.

Martin Regitko, formerly with the Willoughby Company of Utica, N. Y., custom body builders for Lincoln, Rolls Royce, Deusenberg and others. He helped design special cars for presidents including Coolidge and Hoover. All were built on Lincoln chassis.

George Tasman, designer for Locke & Company, and J. S. Inkskip, both of New York. The latter was agent for Rolls Royce and Bentley. He has designed scores of custom bodies.

"The Ford Car," *Green Book*, 1947

Having a car would have saved a woman by the name of Irene Morgan a lot of grief and heartache. Nine years before Rosa Parks famously refused to give up her seat to a white passenger in Birmingham, Alabama, Morgan, who worked in a factory that built World War II bombers, was traveling on a bus, returning home from visiting her mother in Gloucester County, Virginia. She wasn't feeling well that day because she had recently suffered a miscarriage, so when the bus driver instructed her to give up her seat to a white person when they reached Saluda, Virginia, she refused. After the police arrived, Morgan stood her ground. When the officer tried to grab her, she kicked him, clawed at him, and tore his clothes. "He was blue and purple and turned all colors," she remembered. "I started to bite him, but he looked dirty."

Morgan was arrested and thrown in jail. She pled guilty to resisting arrest but not guilty to violating the Virginia segregation law. Thurgood Marshall argued her case. It was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, and she won. The *Irene Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* decision made segregation on interstate transportation vehicles illegal, and one year later, sixteen civil rights activists tested the law, riding buses and trains south in the first "Freedom Ride." Regardless of the ruling, there were several arrests, and segregation was still widely practiced. However, the Morgan case was critical because it called attention to the atrocities of segregated travel and was a key predecessor to the Freedom Rides.

The Morgan case led to symbolic strides in Washington, but travel by bus or train was still a degrading and perilous experience for black people. Even the baseball legend Jackie Robinson suffered humiliating acts of discrimination after he was chosen as the first African American to play in the Major Leagues since Moses Fleetwood Walker in 1884. Robinson couldn't speak publicly about the unfair treatment he often encountered because he had signed a contract agreeing to look the other way when he was racially victimized, something that happened often when he was traveling.

Jackie Robinson with his wife, Rachel

There is no evidence that Robinson used the *Green Book*, though it would have been useful when he and his teammates from the Brooklyn Dodgers were refused service at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The hotel manager told the team's traveling secretary, Harold Parrott, "Don't bring your team back here while you have any Nigras with you!" Ironically, the same Benjamin Franklin Hotel was listed in the *Green Book* about five years later, in the 1952 edition.

One of Robinson's most difficult trips began at the New Orleans airport in 1946, when he and his new bride were bumped from a connecting flight and replaced with two white passengers. While waiting for the next flight, they were refused service in the airport's restaurants, so they decided to abandon plane travel altogether and take a Greyhound bus to Florida. Robinson later wrote about the demoralizing experience:

> The bus was empty when we boarded, and we had taken seats in the middle of the bus. I fell fast asleep. At the first stop, a crowd of passengers got on. The bus driver gestured to us, indicating that we were to move to the back of the bus. The seats at the back were reserved seats —reserved for Negroes—and they were straight-backed. No little button to push. No reclining seats. I had a few bad seconds, deciding whether I could continue to endure this humiliation. After we had been bumped a second time at the Pensacola [Florida] Airport, I had been ready to explode with rage, but I knew that the result would be newspaper headlines about an ugly racial incident and possible arrest not only for me but also for Rae. By giving in to my feelings then, I could have blown the whole major league bit. I had swallowed my pride and choked back my anger.

When I read this, I thought about Ron, my stepdad, and wondered how many times he had "choked back his anger," but as I got older, I realized that he knew the system was stacked against him. When he went to war, he wasn't fighting for a system that oppressed him. He was fighting for the ideals that had been promised to him. This is why he was so proud of his Purple Heart, but he paid the ultimate price: his life. I saw the mental and physical toll the war took on him. Before the illnesses and gout set in, Ron

seemed almost indestructible. But his obsessive, neurotic cleaning habits, triggered from the trauma of not being able to bathe for months on the battlefield, and his buttoned-up, lacquered demeanor revealed a deeper turmoil, vulnerability, and need for protection. To most of the world, he was a strong, stoic, authoritative man with enough alpha energy to intimidate nearly every boyfriend I had and to easily train Max, his beloved 120-pound Rottweiler-Labrador mix. However, to me, he was a deeply wounded man.

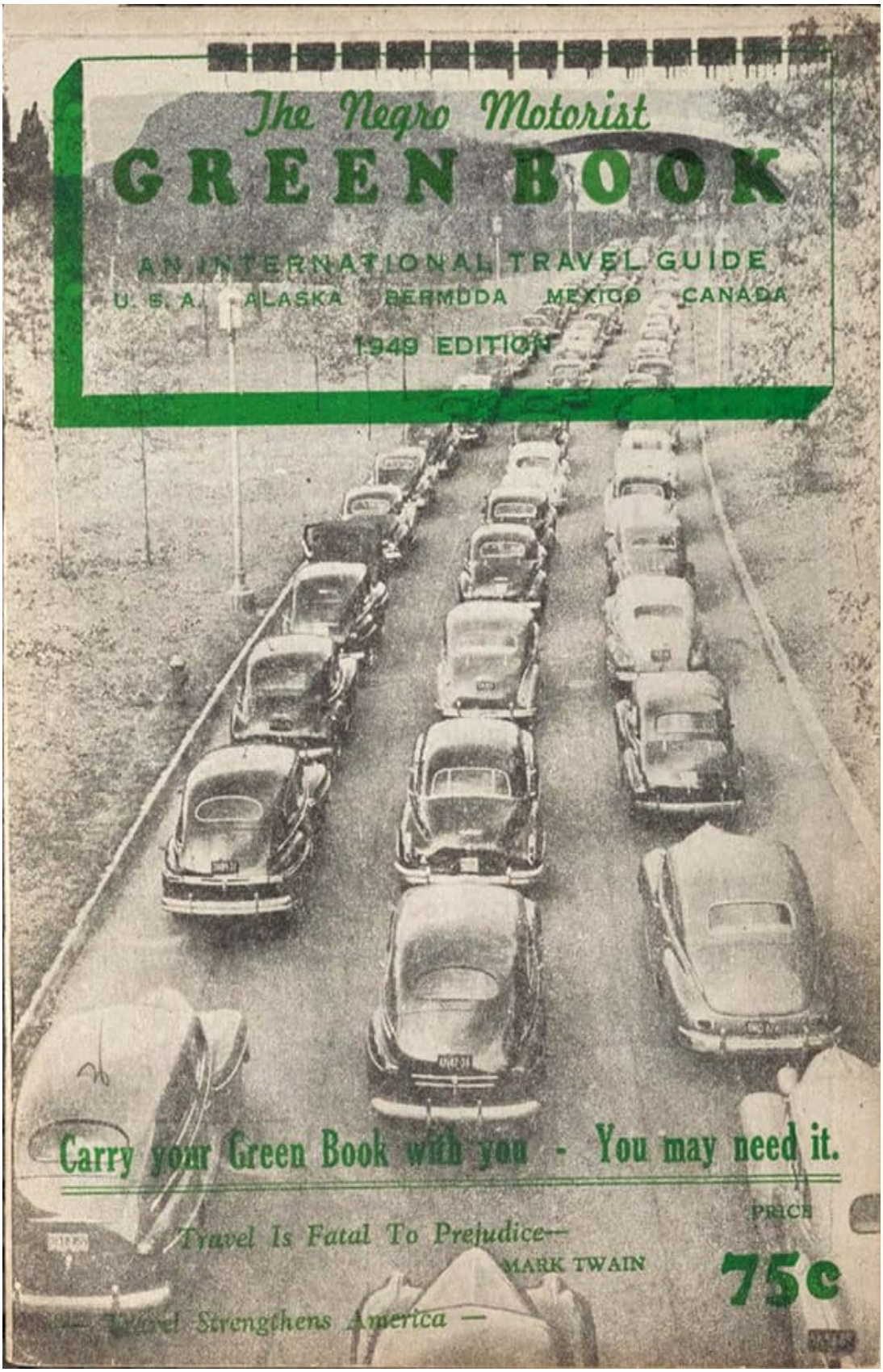
The Benjamin Franklin, a former *Green Book* hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Ron’s beautiful, rich umber skin tone and his imposing size inadvertently challenged people who didn’t know him as I did. He was tough and guarded. It took decades for me to crack his armor and peel back the calluses he had built up from living under Jim Crow, only to find a gentle, quiet soul with a soft caramel center. But even at home, when he was relaxing watching Ohio State football and eating barbecue (his favorite thing to do), he never completely let his guard down. He radiated a cautious, low-boil aura, as if he were ready, at a moment’s notice, to defend his honor, his body, his home, and his family.

Ron, during the Vietnam War

After Ron passed, we found nine guns hidden throughout the house. Until I started writing this book, I thought he was paranoid. I wondered who he was fighting and why. But I realized that, as Langston Hughes wrote in the poem cited earlier in this chapter, growing up in a segregated society with government policies that essentially put a target on Ron's back had made him feel as though he were under siege. His medals of honor are what he left as proof that whether it was the Vietnam War or surviving Jim Crow, he knew how to fight. ♦

4
A LICENSE TO LEAVE
1948 – 49 Editions


The Negro Motorist
GREEN BOOK
AN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL GUIDE
U. S. A. ALASKA BERMUDA MEXICO CANADA
1949 EDITION
Carry your Green Book with you - You may need it.
Travel Is Fatal To Prejudice—
MARK TWAIN
— Travel Strengthens America —
PRICE
75c

Green Book cover, 1949

“The KKK almost got my cousin. I don’t know what he did, but they were after him, and we had to get him out of town, quick. He headed north, and we never saw him again.” I was standing in my parents’ kitchen listening to Ron share another story from his childhood. I felt a tear in the corner of my eye, but I didn’t want to distract him from telling this story, so I looked down at the clean, white linoleum kitchen floor and took in a sharp, quick breath, blinked my eyes, and exhaled.

I’d heard many stories of the Ku Klux Klan terrorizing black families, but this was the first time I had learned about it happening to my own. For most black people of Ron’s generation, stories about white vigilante groups aren’t particularly shocking. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, at least one lynching took place every four days in the South. Most of these horrific, brutal massacres didn’t happen deep in the woods, hidden from sight. They were state-sanctioned events that took place in public squares and on courthouse lawns. Earl Ofari Hutchinson, a black man who left the South in the 1940s, recalls in his book *A Colored Man’s Journey Through 20th Century Segregated America*, “By the time I was ten-years-old more than one thousand blacks had been lynched. Lynch mobs riddled their colored victims with bullets, burned them at the stake, and hacked them to pieces. Often a whole town of whites would turn out to see a lynching . . . Some would pack picnic lunches, and politicians and some businesspersons would show up to make speeches. In some places, they put advertisements in local newspapers announcing the lynching.”

One particularly gruesome lynching was the murder of a nineteen-year-old pregnant woman named Mary Turner. In 1918, she was hanged upside down from a tree and set on fire. While she was still alive, the mob cut open her stomach, ripped her eight-month-old baby from her womb, and stepped on the crying baby’s head until it died. Turner’s body was then riddled with bullets. No one was charged for the crime.

Another infamous lynching was the murder of Rubin Stacy in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1936, the year the first *Green Book* was published. The lynching is memorialized in a photograph featuring Stacy’s bullet-ridden body and nine white onlookers: three men, two women, and four young girls in pristine white dresses. One child is smiling as she watches Stacy’s body hanging from the tree. One hundred thousand copies of the photograph were distributed and sold as postcards for twenty-five cents apiece.

Do not look at the Negro.

His earthly problems are ended.

Instead, look at the seven WHITE children who gaze at this gruesome spectacle.

Is it horror or gloating on the face of the neatly dressed seven-year-old girl on the right?

Is the tiny four-year-old on the left old enough, one wonders, to comprehend the barbarism her elders have perpetrated?

Rubin Stacy, the Negro, who was lynched at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on July 19, 1935, for "threatening and frightening a white woman," suffered PHYSICAL torture for a few short hours. But what psychological havoc is being wrought in the minds of the white children? Into what kinds of citizens

The lynching of tenant farmer Rubin Stacy (July 19, 1935) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Printed in a NAACP pamphlet. Postcards were regularly sold at lynchings to commemorate the events.

Between 1877 and 1968, the Ku Klux Klan and other white vigilante gangs casually massacred more than four thousand black people. Earl Hutchinson read the *Chicago Defender* to stay informed. If there was a lynching, he said, "the *Defender* would provide a detailed account of it." By the time the 1948 *Green Book* was published, nearly two hundred anti-lynching laws had been proposed to Congress. Given that none of them had passed, it was clear the federal government wasn't going to do anything to stop the terrorism, so black people fled the South in droves.

Considering that the majority of the lynchings were happening in the South, it's no wonder that black southerners sought refuge in the northern and western reaches of the country—and the *Green Book* was the perfect tool to facilitate this mass migration. It likely also gave black southerners the courage they needed to leave.

Over the thirty years the *Green Book* was in publication, more than five million black Americans headed north. Most history books say the Great Migration happened because black southerners were seeking better job opportunities, and although this was partially true, it's critical to remember that they were primarily fleeing white supremacy and racial terror.

Lynchings didn't scare only black Americans into leaving. An article written in the *Defender* in 1937 suggested that Charles Lindbergh left the United States because he was so disturbed by "the complacent [*sic*] with which America has accepted brutal lynchings of scores of Negroes annually." In that same issue, the *Defender* published a cartoon of the celebrated aviator leaving America on a boat headed to England. In the cartoon, Lindy, waving good-bye, says, "America is too lawless. We lived in constant terror and embarrassment." A well-dressed black family stands on the shore watching Lindbergh sail away, saying, "We can understand how you feel 'Lindy.'" As long as lynchings were happening and Jim Crow was the law of the land, there was no reason to stay in the South.

The term *Jim Crow* didn't start out as a set of laws to racially divide the South; it was initially the name for a stage character played by a white man named Thomas Dartmouth Rice. In the 1830s, Rice was known as "Daddy Rice" and was called the "father of black-face." Modeling his character after a physically disabled slave, Rice danced in tattered clothes, a disheveled hat, and ragged shoes while singing, "Every time I turn about I Jump Jim Crow." He wasn't the first white man to perform in black-face, but his imitation of a dim-witted, coal-colored slave became a national sensation that lasted well

into the 1940s. Karma came around later in his life, when Rice suffered from a progressive disease that limited his movement and speech and ultimately contributed to his death. He spent his last days alone, drinking in bars, and although the monstrous caricature he created had made him a fortune, he died penniless in 1860. There wasn't even enough money left to bury him.

Thomas Rice playing Jim Crow in blackface, New York City, 1833

Unfortunately, Jim Crow didn’t die with Rice. His legacy fueled harmful stereotypes that made life increasingly unbearable for black southerners. Starting in 1915, millions of black southerners gathered up everything they could carry and collected every ounce of courage they had—and left.

The Great Migration was the most massive internal resettlement of any group of people in the United States and, possibly, the world. It lasted from 1915 to 1970, happening in three waves, with migrants following three well-traveled routes. Southeastern black people from Florida, the Carolinas, and Virginia traveled north along the Atlantic coast to Pennsylvania and New England. The second lane of black southerners left from Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi to settle in St. Louis, Chicago, and Detroit. And the third group of migrants left Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas and headed west to Los Angeles, California.

Black migrants who migrated from the South to Chicago

Approximately 1.5 million black southerners migrated during the first wave of the Great Migration, which lasted from 1915 to 1929. Many traveled north during and after the First World War because the North was hiring cheap labor. Northern companies had previously hired European immigrants to do factory work, but once the migration from Europe slowed down, the North recruited southern blacks to fill the labor gap. When the southern counties realized that so many black residents were leaving the South, they weren't willing to give up their cheap labor without a fight, so they made it difficult for black southerners to leave. In some cases, those who tried to leave were arrested on train platforms, and when there were too many people to arrest, the train was waved through, prevented from even stopping at the station.

Those who made it onto a train had a difficult journey ahead of them. They were seated in the Jim Crow car, the first car, near the engine, the loudest, dirtiest, and most uncomfortable place to sit. By the end of the ride, the coal dust from the engine covered black passengers, ruining their clothes, while the white passengers, who had paid the same fare, were seated in cars farther back, where they could breathe fresh, clean air in the comfort of heated, reclining chairs with adjustable arm- and footrests. Not every train was segregated, but even integrated travel was stressful for black travelers. Earlean Lindsey, who migrated north, said that when there were white people on the train, "the conductor would tell us when you get to Kentucky, pull down the shades because if there were black and white folks sitting in the same motor coach people would throw bricks at the train window."

Ramona Green, Victor Green's sister-in-law, remembers, "My father worked at a railroad in Chicago, so we usually traveled by train during the summer months. From Chicago to St. Louis, we'd leave on a beautiful train; at St. Louis we'd get off onto these dilapidated cars . . . Everything was so different because we crossed the Mason-Dixon line."

Train travel was not comfortable for black people, so those who could afford it, drove. And many of them brought the *Green Book* along with them. As Hutchinson wrote, "The *Green Book* was the bible of every Negro highway traveler . . . You literally didn't dare leave home without it."

Although their primary reason for leaving the South was to live a life free from racial terror, black migrants were also seeking financial stability. During the 1940s, the average black family's annual income was approximately sixteen hundred dollars, about half the median income of white families.

Although roughly 1 percent of the black migrants were wealthy—mostly composed of physicians, dentists, lawyers, and entertainers earning an annual salary of at least four thousand dollars—most were poor. In fact, nearly 40 percent of black males in the South earned less than five hundred dollars a year that decade.

Still, leaving the South didn't guarantee financial success. In fact, only roughly 10 percent of the black families in the North were paid the same as whites. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, a prominent civil rights leader and labor activist, called on Eleanor Roosevelt to pressure her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to desegregate the defense industry. As a result, black migrants found stable manufacturing jobs in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York City. The lumber industry was also a solid employment option. Most black workers were guaranteed to make about one thousand dollars a month in the "Pine Belt," which spanned from eastern Texas to Pennsylvania.

Northern wages weren't automatically higher for all black workers. Some black engineers and carpenters had actually made more money in the South, but again, the terror of white supremacy was so relentless that the few black people who held these skilled jobs opted to trade money for dignity, deciding that they were better off working as a janitor in the North. John George Van Deusen, in his book *The Black Man in White America*, writes, "Despite social and political discrimination, it is a mistake to assume, as many people do, that the Negro is better off in the Northern than in the southern states. In the North the colored man may ride in the same streetcar and send his children to the same schools with white people; but he is always subject to economic restriction. He is no longer secure in industry. Generally speaking, he is permitted to work only in menial pursuits and ill-paid callings undesired by the whites. Such discrimination is the most drastic of all discrimination because it determines his income and permanently denies to himself and his family an opportunity to raise their cultural standards."

Like any group of people who leave their homeland, the driving force that propels them forward is the belief that their new life will be better than the one they left behind. And although most black southerners knew what they were running from, most of them had no idea what they were running to. After crossing the Mason-Dixon line, they quickly learned that Jim Crow had no borders. Yes, there were fewer Whites Only signs, but many of the towns they passed through held the same fearful and ignorant attitudes toward them

that were prevalent in the South. Also, they found they couldn't eat, sleep, or get gas in many white-owned businesses, so all the ice coolers, portable toilets, bedding, and gas cans they had used to travel around the South were still needed.

Although the *Green Book* offered peace of mind, it wasn't a cure-all. Several areas of the country weren't represented, and renting a room at a random roadside motel was not easy. Hutchinson remembers, "[If] I spotted a vacancy sign at a motel not listed in the *Green Book* and there were few cars in the motel lot, I would try to get a room. In most cases, the clerk had an arsenal of excuses ready: 'Sorry, forgot to change the sign,' 'The last room was just rented,' 'We're expecting a large group to check in later.'"

The western United States had the least number of *Green Book* accommodations compared to other parts of the country, and Victor Green did everything he could to expand the guide. It was harder to secure listings in the West mostly because there were simply fewer black business owners there. Until 1940, only about 10 percent of black migrants made the trip west, but after 1940, that number increased twofold. As more black people moved west, Green sent letters to hotel and restaurant owners in several western cities asking if they would advertise in his guide.

North Dakota was the only state that had no listings at all in the 1948 *Green Book*. Green reprinted a letter he'd received from a man in Dickinson, North Dakota, attempting to explain why Green was having such a hard time finding businesses to advertise in the guide. "There are two reasons why I hesitate on your correspondence," the man wrote. "One is that if I list one place of business I would be discriminating against another. Another is that several places of business, while they are glad to provide for Negro customers, do not care to advertise for Negro trade. The attitude of the majority of those I contacted was that, while they themselves had no color prejudices, some of their regular customers did have. This was the impression I gained from hotel operators, barbers, and others contacted." He continued: "Ignorance is the root of prejudice. There is a special type of ignorance in this section regarding Negroes. There are so few Negroes living in North Dakota that a colored person is still a curiosity. Some of the prejudice here is merely unfamiliarity with any of the races. It is a general thing, and not specific. When talking about Negroes, abstractly, they feel differently than if a colored person, in person, asks them for services."

When Victor Green contacted merchants in Montana, a writer from

Shelby warned him about encouraging black motorists to come to the area, saying, “Our very limited families have been taxed to the limit the last couple of years in trying to give adequate service to the touring public. Upon consulting with some of them, who may well represent the rest, they believe Negro patrons have a right to fair consideration, but they would hesitate to place their names in your directory for fear of finding all touring Negroes near here over-crowding the facilities to the exclusion of old customers. A pretty reasonable attitude exists here, but we have had so few colored people in this area that I would hesitate to say to what extent many more would be at liberty to come and go without running into difficulty.”

Because the *Green Book* wasn’t as useful out west, black travelers had to build up a tough skin and stockpile a broad range of well-honed survival skills and techniques to handle any hostile situation they might encounter. One strategy was to learn as much as they could about the places they were driving through, by word of mouth or from reading the *Chicago Defender*.

Langston Hughes wrote in the *Chicago Defender* in 1946, “Since I travel about the country a great deal, people are always asking me if I notice any improvement in race relations, if things are better or worse. To tell the truth, I really do not know if they have improved or not. Race relations look like a see-saw to me—up on one end and down on the other, up here and down there, up and down. If one community reports better race relations than before the war, another reports worse.” It was a time when the pendulum of progress was swinging both ways.

No matter where black migrants traveled, service wasn’t guaranteed. This was true even at Esso fueling stations. A WE DO NOT CATER TO COLORED sign was posted at one Esso station, near Joliet, Illinois. Although Esso generally supported black customers, since the stations were franchised, it was difficult to enforce its values of racial equality. When this racist sign came to the attention of Conger Reynolds, Esso’s director of public relations, he had it removed. However, just because the sign was changed, the people who put it there, didn't.

Joliet was a rural Illinois town on Route 66, and though black migrants hoped northern cities would be less racist, bigotry and intolerance were rampant there as well. Hutchinson said, “St. Louis suddenly began to look smaller and more provincial than ever to me. It was pretty much a deep southern town. Colored people still couldn’t work in stores or offices down-town, and could not eat in restaurants or go to clubs. They could not use any

of the libraries, swimming pools, or recreation facilities. Many Negroes still lived in overcrowded, wretched flats, with no running water or inside toilets."

Although many black migrants who traveled north had to live in slums, the knowledge that they were escaping the Ku Klux Klan kept millions more on the road. Unfortunately, what they didn't realize was that Klan membership had spread like typhoid in the 1920s, throughout the entire country. Reports during this time found that one-quarter of all white males in the state of Indiana were Klansmen.

Just northeast of Indiana, the Ku Klux Klan had a stronghold in Detroit, one of the top ten cities black migrants traveled to during the second wave of the Great Migration. Black southerners were attracted to the Motor City's plethora of manufacturing and automobile jobs there, and although many found employment, most had trouble getting housing. Detroit had undergone a major shift since the 1920s, when the city was 96 percent white and roughly 4 percent black. As the auto industry grew, producing solid, well-paying jobs, black people moved there in droves; by 1943, the black population had quadrupled. However, they weren't alone in taking advantage of the job opportunities: Poor white southerners also moved there—and brought their racist attitudes with them. Southern whites and bigoted locals alike refused to work alongside or live next to black people, which made it very difficult for black newcomers to find housing. As a result, black people were confined to living in a sixty-block stretch on the east side of town.

Mobs of white vigilantes harassed those who tried to settle outside this area; fights broke out, and crosses were burned in black residents' yards. In 1941, the city built a wall (six feet high, a foot thick, and a half-mile long) to keep blacks out of a neighborhood that had been zoned as an all-white subdivision—essentially making the area north of Eight Mile Road a sundown suburb. Detroit's racial tensions boiled under the surface for years, until 1943, when one of the worst race riots of the World War II era erupted. Six thousand army troops were called in to stop the violence, seven hundred people were injured, and thirty-four people died.

West of Detroit, Chicago was another one of the top ten cities where black southerners settled during the Great Migration. From the 1940s to the 1960s, its black population nearly tripled, from approximately 275,000 to more than 800,000. Also, as in Detroit, housing was an explosive issue that caused division and violence. The Chicago suburb of Cicero was notorious for its hostility toward black people, so it wasn't surprising when, in 1951, a

riot broke out there. After a black family rented an apartment in the neighborhood, a mob of roughly four thousand white people firebombed the building. The rioters were never charged. Even worse, the rental agent and the family's attorney were charged with conspiracy to lower property values.

We Want White Tenants, Detroit, Michigan, 1942

Conspiracy wasn’t considered an outlandish charge since discriminatory laws and a calculated federal system had long been in place to segregate housing in the North. The Federal Housing Administration graded communities based on their racial demographics and essentially “redlined” them, meaning the areas where black people lived were marked red and labeled “D,” a lower grade, indicating a “high-risk” community. A typical covenant statement read, “At no time shall said premises . . . be sold, occupied, let or leased . . . to anyone of any race other than the Caucasian, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.”

Children standing in front of a segregation wall in Detroit, Michigan, 1941

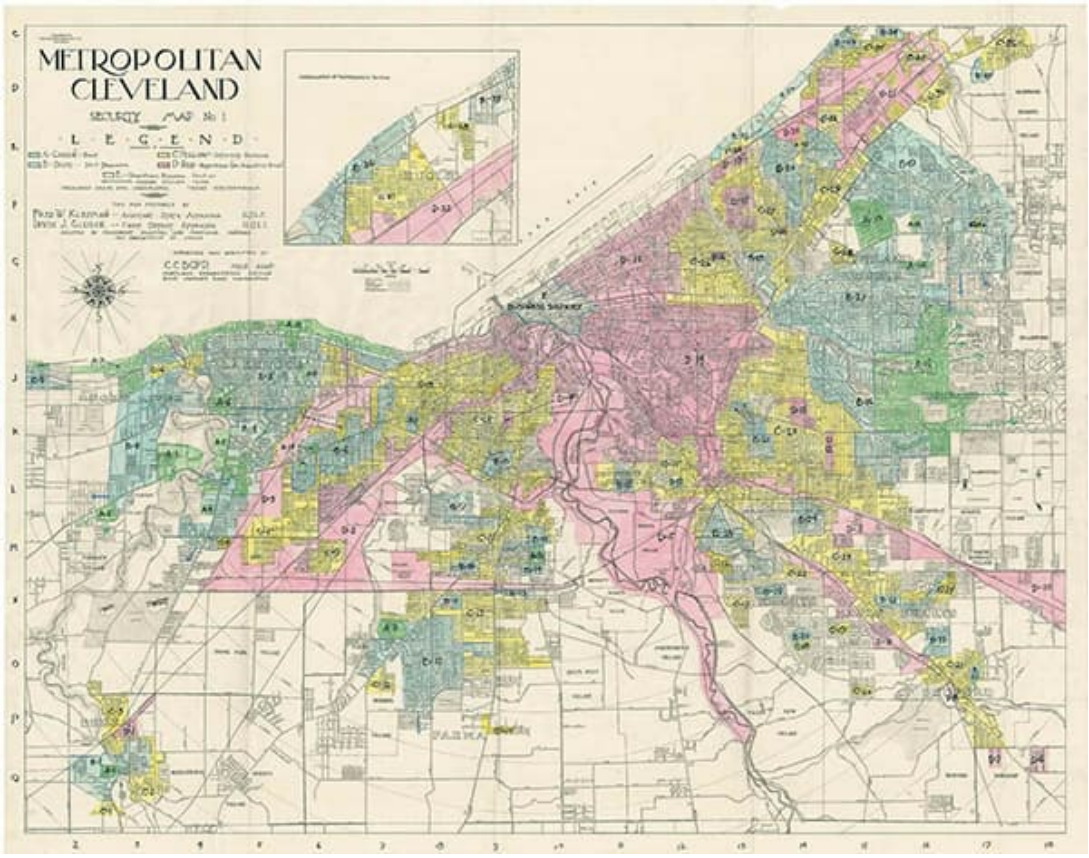
Thurgood Marshall had argued against racial housing covenants in the 1948 Supreme Court case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, in which the Court ruled that judicial enforcement of restrictive covenants in housing was unconstitutional. Though it was a big win for the Legal Defense Fund, the FHA had spent the prior decade redlining neighborhoods, so this discriminatory practice was already engrained in the country. Redlining had guaranteed bank loans to developers to build suburbs for white populations like the one in Detroit just mentioned. Other, more popular suburban subdivisions, such as the Levittowns that appeared in the northeastern United States, were built under the same restrictions. Because builders were told to state explicitly on the deeds that the homes they were building were never to be sold to blacks, the FHA's program that denied black people affordable housing made it accessible to whites.

Because FHA loans were off-limits to black people, those who did purchase a home could do so only through predatory housing loans, paying exorbitant interest rates essentially to lease their own properties. Although they had all the responsibilities that came with homeownership, if they missed *one* payment, they lost not only their home but their entire investment as well. They had no protection under the law—which was ironic, since this was one of the reasons they had left the South.

Housing was and continues to be the most egregious form of overt racial disparity in the nation. The Fair Housing Act was not passed until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Even white people who didn't consider themselves racist didn't want black neighbors. The bill finally passed in April 1968. It was the last of the critical pieces of civil rights legislation to be passed in the 1960s, six days after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

Black migrants who moved to Chicago were practically forced to live on either the West or the South Side of the city. Thankfully, the *Green Book* listed more than 180 businesses in Chicago, with nearly 80 percent of the listings in the Bronzeville District. This was a vibrant area. Three hundred fifty thousand black people lived, ate, shopped, and worked here. It was also a mecca for black manufacturing, and the black hair care, publishing, and banking industries. The 1949 *Green Book* featured a seven-page article spotlighting Bronzeville, with a full-page image of the South Center department store, which employed two hundred black workers; the Mutual Assurance Company; the Metropolitan Funeral Parlor; and the Supreme

Liberty Life Insurance building (at the time, Liberty Life was the third-largest black insurance company in America). Victor Green proudly called these places “monuments to Negro business.”



Cleveland redlining map, 1936

As long as there were no Colored or Whites Only signs, the northern states believed they were better than the Jim Crow South. However, racialized space was alive and well in Chicago. Once Earl Hutchinson arrived there, he said, “It didn’t take long for me to discover that Chicago was no promised land either. Regardless of their income or status, Negroes could only live on the Southside [*sic*] north of 43rd to 29th streets between Ellis Avenue on the east, and Wentworth Avenue on the west and in another area called the Westside . . . If a cop stopped you for anything, you had to shove a dollar in his hand. It was a racket, and everyone knew it, and went along with it.”

The celebrated author Richard Wright, who also migrated to Chicago, sensed that the North wasn’t a panacea to racism. “It was strange to pause by a newsstand and not have to wait before a white man was served and yet because everything was so new, I began to grow tense again,” he wrote. “I knew this machine-like city was governed by strange laws and I wondered if I would ever learn them.”

Earlean Lindsey, another Chicago migrant, started to learn some of the rules: “We could not go across Cottage Grove. It was off-limits. I worked at the University of Chicago . . . and we used to have to wear badges. People think this is a lie, but this is the truth: [We had] to show why we were in that area at a certain time of night.”

Bronzeville, Chicago, featured in the *Green Book*, 1949

Curtis Coleman, who migrated to Chicago in 1944, summed up his experience by saying, “Well, in the South you knew the law, they told you the truth. Chicago, they won’t tell you the truth. That’s the only difference.”

It didn’t take long for black southerners to realize that they were settling into an area governed by policies that had kept black Americans anchored in a caste system not too different from the one they left in the South. And this wasn’t unique to Chicago. Every major American city that attracted black southerners had (and still has) hypersegregated neighborhoods, due primarily to heavy policing, predatory lending practices, and real estate redlining. Black migrants learned that most of the northern and western states didn’t need Whites Only signs because the government’s housing policies separated the races for them.

Harvard sociologist Robert Sampson, the author of *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, examined hypersegregated neighborhoods in Chicago from 2000 to 2005. While doing this research, Sampson found that even though white people used drugs at roughly the same rate as black people, Chicago’s black community had an imprisonment rate more than forty times higher than that for the surrounding white communities. Over a decade later, using mapping software, researchers from Columbia University’s Center for Spatial Research and the Justice Mapping Center of the National Institute of Corrections discovered that Brooklyn, Chicago, and New Orleans spent more than one million dollars in taxpayer money, *per city block*, to incarcerate its residents each year; the researchers called these “Million Dollar Blocks.” They are generally located in traditional black neighborhoods where *Green Book* sites had been clustered. In short, from 2005 to 2009, Chicago spent over a million dollars per block in 851 blocks imprisoning people.

After learning the history of redlining and the current practice of mass incarceration, it’s not surprising that these neighborhoods are still struggling. Over the last eighty years, Congress has passed housing legislation that made it easier for white families to purchase homes in suburbs; for whites, it cost less to own a home than to pay rent in public housing. In the meantime, redlined communities were stripped of resources, and educational services were funneled into white suburbs.

When asked why these black neighborhoods are fraught with problems, the typical answer politicians give is that there’s not enough money for education, housing, afterschool programs, libraries, parks, or grocery stores.

This argument is patently unreasonable, as somehow the government is able to spend approximately eighty billion dollars locking up black Americans for petty crimes and minor parole violations. In some states, it costs sixty thousand dollars a year to incarcerate one person. Imagine how much change we'd see if that money were redirected to support communities instead of tearing them down.

So, when we look at places such as Chicago and wonder why there is so much violence there, perhaps that is the wrong question. Given this history, why would we expect it to be any different? If you have two plants and you give one everything it needs (sunshine, food, and water) and barely water the other one, you won't expect the neglected plant to be as robust as the one that received nourishment, kindness, and attention. From this perspective, isn't it obvious that the flagrant neglect by state and federal governments bears significant responsibility for the dire condition of inner-city neighborhoods throughout America?

For black migrants who couldn't find adequate housing up north, or who wanted to avoid living in a Chicago ghetto, the 1949 edition of the *Green Book* was a welcome sight, publishing an article on Robbins, a semi-rural all-black town south of Chicago that was owned and operated by black people.

From Reconstruction up to World War I, there were at least sixty black towns in the United States. Once the second wave of the Great Migration hit, black towns weren't as plentiful, but Robbins, Illinois, was booming. The population rose from just under five hundred people in the 1920s to approximately thirteen thousand in the 1940s. And 90 percent of its residents were homeowners.

Robbins was a source of pride in the black community. The town opened the first U.S. airport to be owned and operated by blacks and housed the nation's only flight school for black people, which ultimately inspired the Tuskegee Airmen program.

Unfortunately, by the 1970s, due to massive layoffs at nearby factories, Robbins slid into decline, and it was nearly bankrupt by the late 1980s. What happened in Robbins was happening across the North. Industries that had attracted black migrants started moving to the suburbs and then overseas, to outsource their labor. By the mid-1980s, more than half a million black people left the North and returned to the South, where housing, taxes, and education were more affordable.

Still, before it met its end, Robbins was celebrated in the *Green Book* as a

place without prejudice and a viable alternative for black people who wanted to live in a vibrant, self-sustaining community. It was a glowing example of resiliency and empowerment, and a beacon of light for those traveling on the road to freedom. This is what black people were looking for when they left the South. They were seeking political asylum and protection under the law, and the *Green Book* became their passport. It was a license to leave. ♦

5
ALL ABOARD
1950 – 51 Editions

Green Book cover, 1950

On the cover of the 1950 *Green Book*, a fair-skinned, well-dressed black woman in a stylish feathered hat stands in New York City's Penn Station looking at train schedules. She appears to be heading west, because she's holding a pamphlet for a Pacific-bound train. Even at that time, in the tradition of Manifest Destiny, each mile west still symbolized an opportunity for a better life. In the mythology that gave us the American Dream, the West has always represented freedom. And once you reached the westernmost edge of the continent, there was California—there you could relax in the land of swaying palm trees framed by a cerulean blue ocean, while ripe fruit fell to the ground under a sunlit sky. It was the place where dreams could come true.

The Negro Motorist

GREEN BOOK

An International Travel Guide

Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need It.	*Railroad Edition* *1951*	**PRICE** **$1.00**

Green Book cover, 1951

It was easy to idolize the West because it was a faraway land where most black people didn't live. In the late 1940s, this began to change. More and more black people, especially those who lived in Texas and Arkansas, headed to California. By the 1950s, just like the West, the train became a symbol for progress for black Americans. If you could afford a ticket, you could change your life.

The train was also an intimate part of the black community, as the Pullman Company had long been the largest private employer of African Americans in the country. Those who didn't work for the railroad likely knew someone who did. Black men worked on trains as dining car chefs, busboys, and mechanics, but most of them were porters. Being a Pullman porter was considered an honorable job, one that symbolized success, as it provided a stable middle-class lifestyle.

The train was such an important part of the black community that Victor Green dedicated the entire 1951 edition to it, naming it the "Railroad Edition." He opens the 1951 issue with a six-page, fully illustrated article, "The American Road," featuring photographs of black porters standing at attention in a dining car and assisting white passengers sitting in plush velvet seats. Traveling throughout the country dressed in starched white shirts and black bowties had elevated the porter's status from servant to ambassador. By the 1950s, the porter had become an icon of American travel.

As porters traveled throughout the country, they spread the word about the latest news in black culture, passing out the *Chicago Defender* and the latest copies of the *Green Book*. They were also well versed in the latest trends in music, food, and politics from coast to coast.

When porters weren't on trains, a popular place for them to socialize was at the headquarters for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union in Boston. Images of trains lined the walls, and there were a few cots, some lockers, a desk, a typewriter, and a pool table.

The space was located right upstairs from Charlie's Sandwich Shoppe, a restaurant listed in the *Green Book* for fifteen years. Charlie Poulous and his hardworking Greek immigrant family started the restaurant in 1927, and it is still open today. During its eighty-plus years in business, it has had the same counter stools, tile floor, and cold storage unit. Charlie's was known for its corned beef hash, cabbage, pig knuckles, and broiled lamb heart with bacon. It was open twenty-four hours a day, but the hours between one and three AM were the busiest; that's when musicians would come to eat after their gigs.

In addition to musicians, Charlie's hosted people from all walks of life, from mobsters such as Whitey Bulger and the Winter Hill Gang to bricklayers and politicians. Some of its most notable customers have been Ted Kennedy, Al Gore, Joe Louis, Duke Ellington, Natalie Cole, and Ray Charles (who always ordered turkey). Sammy Davis Jr., who grew up one street over, tap-danced in the doorway for spare change before he was famous, and President Barack Obama stopped in for a burger while still in office.

Charlie's was an unusual *Green Book* site because it was white-owned and served black folks in the city's mostly white South End. Some white locals refused to eat at the restaurant because they didn't want to sit next to black people, but Charlie wouldn't let himself be bullied into being a bigot. By integrating the space, he set the tone, one of respect and tolerance. And if he lost business because he served black folks, he didn't care. His humanity wasn't for sale.

Individual reading lights may be beamed directly to each seat in Northern Pacific's new streamlined coaches now in service on the North Coast Limited.

about 3,700 new passenger-train cars have been installed, and these are improved in almost every way over those in use even a decade ago.

These cars, along with the other modern cars in service and those being continually installed, go a long way in making rail travel more comfortable and convenient than ever before. Whether the trip be in a coach or a sleeping car, every effort has been made to assure a more pleasant journey.

Fluorescent lighting bathes the interior of these new cars with glareless, even light, and many cars feature individually controlled lights. Careful attention has been given to interior decoration of cars, and they have restful color combinations such as blue, grey and ivory walls and ceilings and with rose upholstery and carpets.

Seating facilities in the new coaches offer all the comfort that improved design can give them. Reclining seats with adjustable footrests invite relaxation, and many seats can be swung around to provide a clear, unobstructed view of the countryside through wide windows.

Coach lounges are larger and more luxurious, and have comfortable chairs, large mirrors and additional wash basins. Electro-pneumatic devices cause doors to open at the touch of a finger and remain open until the traveler has passed.

Public address systems carry announcements, music and radio programs of interest through many trains.

Spaciousness is the keynote of new coaches. This greater space for each passenger is reflected in such things as more leg room between seats and

CLUB DINER "LA FIESTA" on Rock Island's streamliner The Golden State.

“The American Railroad” article in the *Green Book*, 1951

African American railroad porters at the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union headquarters, Harlem, New York

Charlie became friends with the porters upstairs, and the porters became regulars at Charlie's. After eating in the restaurant, they'd stand outside to play dice and socialize before heading back upstairs to the union headquarters. It wasn't long before Charlie was upstairs hanging out with them, the only nonblack person to become an unofficial member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union. He'd earned the right to play poker alongside the porters.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union was founded by A. Philip Randolph, the same civil rights and labor activist who had helped persuade President Roosevelt to desegregate the defense industry. Randolph fought hard for black train workers. This was especially critical because while employment as a porter was considered a good job, most porters were exploited for their labor. The average porter functioned on four hours of sleep, working four hundred hours a month in twenty-hour stints. The black maids who worked on trains weren't treated any better. Train maids helped white female passengers bathe, gave them manicures, did their hair, and looked after their children. Some even acted as nursemaids if a passenger became ill. Essentially, they were at white passengers' beck and call—not unlike Hattie McDaniel's character in *Gone With the Wind*. And let's not forget that she was a slave.

In some ways the trains became plantations on wheels, and this likely prompted Randolph to fight for the Pullman porters. Up to that point, no one had mustered the courage to push back against a big business to get fair treatment for black workers. In fact, Randolph's was the first black union to sign a collective bargaining agreement with a major corporation. He secured the most substantial wage increase the porters had ever received and made sure they were offered fair compensation for the hours between their shifts while they were still on the trains. As a result of his efforts, the porters' workload was reduced from 400 hours a month to 240.

Not all porters were bound to continue the railroad life; a porter named Leroy Smith was a music lover and eventually quit working as a porter to be a music promoter for James Brown, Count Basie, Fats Domino, and Nat King Cole. A resident of the Five Points neighborhood on the northeast side of Denver, Colorado, he opened the Rhythm Record Shop in 1939.

Denver was featured in the 1950 edition of the *Green Book*. Although the article lists tourist sites located downtown, most of the hotels downtown wouldn't serve black people. So 90 percent of Denver's eighty-seven *Green*

Book listings for that year are clustered in the Five Points neighborhood, where Leroy Smith lived.

Denver's Five Points district played an important role for black travelers heading west. In most western cities, black people comprised only about 3 percent of the population. This wasn't true for Five Points. In 1870, there were roughly two hundred black residents, but by 1920, after the first wave of the Great Migration, there were more than five thousand, making it one of the largest African American communities west of the Mississippi River. And because there were so few options for black people to stay in that area of the country, Five Points was a necessary stopping place for black migrants traveling west. Earl Hutchinson remembers how difficult it was to find accommodation when he was traveling through Kansas. "We ran into the same problem nearly every place we stopped until we reached Denver, Colorado," he said.

Five Points had more black-owned businesses than any neighborhood outside Harlem, which is why it was called the "Harlem of the West." Other neighborhoods in western cities were called the "Harlem of the West," but Five Points deserved the title. It featured three black-owned newspapers and scores of other black-owned businesses, including barbershops, grocery stores, tailors, movie theaters, restaurants, drugstores, jazz clubs, dressmakers, hotels, and real estate offices. Black doctors, lawyers, and musicians called Five Points home, but one of its most famous residents was probably businesswoman, philanthropist, and activist Madam C. J. Walker, who moved there in 1906 and became a millionaire with her black hair care products. The neighborhood was so popular that, in some circles, it was considered its own city. Letters addressed to "Five Points, Colorado" (instead of "Denver") were delivered with no problem.

The Rossonian, a *Green Book* hotel listed from 1939 to 1955, hosted a variety of celebrities, such as Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Charlie Parker. Out of all the *Green Book* sites listed in Five Points, the Rossonian is the only one still operating today.

A landmark hotel and jazz club, the Rossonian sat at the center of the five converging streets after which the neighborhood is named. The Beaux-Arts–style 13,500-square-foot building is visually stunning. Like the famous Flatiron Building in New York City, it's wedge-shaped, wide in the back and then narrowed down to a point at the front door. It opened as the Baxter Hotel in 1912 and was renamed the Rossonian in 1929. It was considered one of the

best jazz clubs between Kansas City and Los Angeles; musicians loved it. After playing downtown to white audiences, they'd head to the Rossonian, which became a regular stop for after-hours jam sessions.

BAXTER
ROSSONIAN

The Rossonian, a former *Green Book* hotel and nightclub in Denver, Colorado

In the late 1950s, when some of the racially restrictive housing covenants were lifted in Denver, the city became less segregated. But as African Americans with money left Five Points to live in more affluent neighborhoods in the city, and black celebrity tourists could now stay in downtown hotels, the neighborhood fell into decline.

By the 1960s, due to weak property management and delinquent taxes, the Rossonian had become a shell of what it once was. By the 1970s, the iconic building no longer welcomed the grand entertainers of the past and instead housed pigeons, vermin, and vagrants. The property has faced many obstacles over the last thirty years, most brought on by challenges in its infrastructure and a lack of adequate financing; thankfully, enough support has trickled in to keep it standing. Since 1986, 3.2 million dollars has been spent to renovate and preserve the property, and in 1995 it was designated a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Five Points neighborhood was itself designated the "Five Points Historic Cultural District" in 2012. Since then, however, Denver has been inundated with coastal elites seeking asylum from the high rents of New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Even though Five Points was the heart of the city's African American community—a plaque commemorating this history is displayed across the street from the Rossonian—most of the neighborhood's original residents have been pushed out, to be replaced by white urbanites. Nearly all of Five Points' black-owned *Green Book* businesses are now white-owned microbreweries, bakeries, coffee shops, or dog parks.

Though not much is left of its historic past, in its prime the city of Denver was a mecca for black travelers. It was the first major city that black migrants encountered in the West. Traveling farther west, however, wasn't easy. As the landscape became more desolate, and people found themselves driving on long, deserted roads, food and lodging options became scarce, even for white motorists. So, one of the safest ways to travel west (outside of flying) was to get there by train. Unlike the automobile, railroad cars wouldn't overheat in the middle of the Mojave Desert. And once passengers reached the Southwest, they could find quality food at one of the Harvey House lunchrooms conveniently located in train stations.

Fred Harvey was an ambitious entrepreneur from England. From the late 1800s to the 1960s, rail passengers could find his Harvey Houses in stations along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railway lines. When the trains

pulled into the station, passengers could step inside a Harvey House and be served a gourmet meal at reasonable prices. Harvey Houses weren't listed in the *Green Book*, but they were known for treating black travelers with dignity. Not only did black customers not have to use a back entrance or look for a "Colored" section, but they also received a warm welcome from the "Harvey Girls," the waitresses dubbed "the women who opened up the West." They were made popular in 1946 when the Judy Garland film *The Harvey Girls* was released. Compared to eating the roadside slop dished out of trailers in most small western towns at the time, dining at a Harvey House was like attending a royal feast—and best of all, black customers could eat oysters on the half shell right alongside everyone else.

Whether black train passengers were escaping Jim Crow or merely taking a vacation, if they were heading west, in many cases, Los Angeles, California, was their destination. This is probably why, just five pages after the railroad article in the 1951 edition, Green published a four-page article on Los Angeles.

The article, "The Wonder City: Los Angeles, Calif.," features sweeping images of the highway hugging the Pacific Ocean. It begins with a glowing statement about dreaming of a place with the "perfect climate" offering "beauty" and "wonder." Unfortunately, most black migrants looking for the American Dream in Los Angeles found the City of Angels even more segregated than the South. Peola Denham, who moved there from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, found the neighborhood of Watts, in southern Los Angeles (where riots famously took place in 1965 and 1992), far more segregated than her hometown. Since white merchants ran most of the places Denham had shopped at in Louisiana, she said she saw more white people in Baton Rouge than she did in Los Angeles, where she could live her entire life without ever seeing a white person. With segregation in place in Los Angeles, black people owned nearly all the stores in Denham's neighborhood. It was clear the city didn't need the formal segregation laws that existed in the Jim Crow South. Los Angeles's strict housing covenants were enough to keep the races divided.

Casa del Desierto Harvey House in Barstow, California

When Earl Hutchinson moved to Los Angeles, he got his real estate license and started working for a black real estate broker. This gave him a "firsthand look at the rampant racism in housing in Los Angeles. The black real estate brokers were refused membership in the Board of Realtors, which was a trade organization that was aligned with the real estate industry. They didn't give black [R]ealtors an official reason for denying membership." The "single biggest problem that confronted us," he said, "was the practice of redlining." Back then, Hutchinson wrote, "all the major banks such as the Bank of America, Chase Manhattan, American Savings, Union Bank, and many others across the U.S. engaged in the practice."

The Wonder City
Los Angeles, Calif.

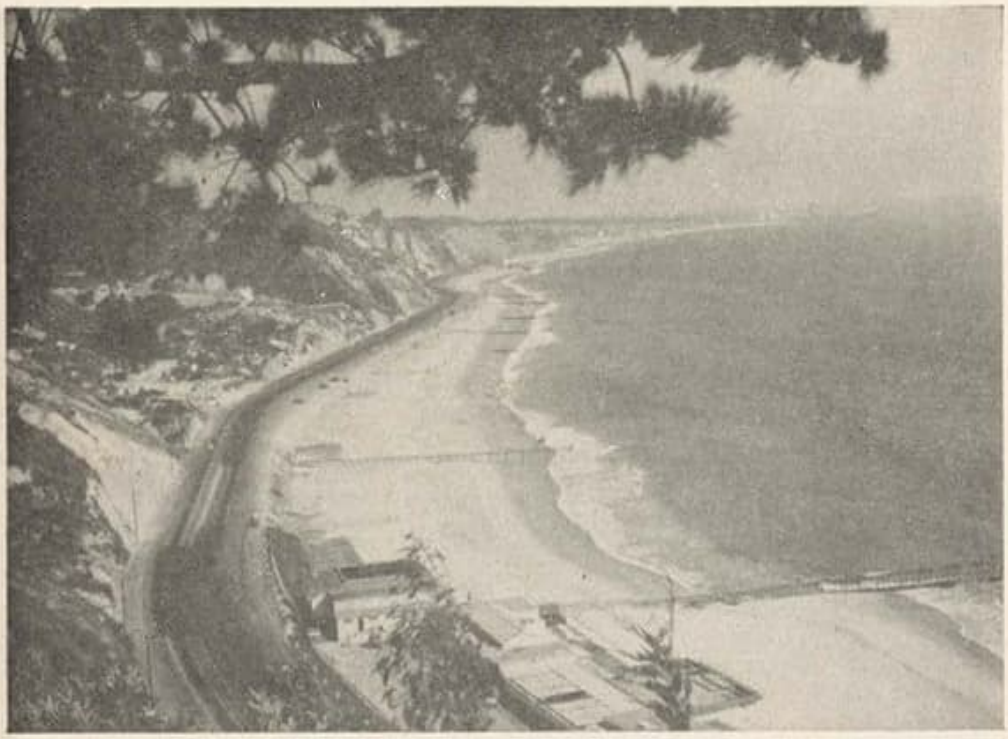
Sometime in everyone's life, there are dreams of traveling either to distant lands, or to see their own land. Some dream of travel by air, some by boat, railway or motor.

Today beautiful highways with conveniently situated stations, bus lines, air-lines and fast trains, make it possible to realize these dreams.

There is much to be seen and more to learn, of this our land which offers everything of beauty, wonder and history.

The city of interminable dimensions, covering some 452 square miles, sometimes alluded to as the "Coney Island of the Pacific," possibly because of its demise attractions, the most outstanding being, its almost perfect climate. It is said that under more than 300 days of sunshine here every year; anything will flourish and develop.

Emigrants to Los Angeles from every Mid-Western State has made it the largest western city of the United States, in fact it is to the west what



ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY skirts the Pacific Ocean and passes through the beach cities in Los Angeles county. this view taken from the palisades a few miles north of Santa Monica, shows one of the many fine stretches of beach which parallel the highway.

Los Angeles article featured in the *Green Book*, 1951

To help black migrants, the *Green Book* listed a handful of Realtors. Hutchinson wasn't listed, but from 1949 to 1955, Bernard C. Herndon's office was. It was located in the heart of South Central.

Like the Five Points district in Denver, Los Angeles's South Central neighborhood was where the majority of black people lived and played. South Central hosted more than 80 percent of Los Angeles's 220 *Green Book* accommodations, which were clustered within a three-mile radius. It didn't matter that South Central bordered Culver City, a sundown town. If black travelers could find their way to South Central, they didn't need to go anywhere else.

South Central in the 1950s was teeming with musicians, writers, politicians, and comics, planting the seeds for a new black identity in the United States. This vibrant black enclave influenced a cultural movement that permeated black fashion, music, and language and laid the groundwork for hip-hop culture. The street scene in South Central and the significant contributions being made to the community during these years birthed a midcentury Harlem Renaissance of the West.

Wealthy and middle-class black people who visited Los Angeles stayed at the Dunbar Hotel, in South Central, which was listed in the *Green Book* from 1939 to 1961. In the early 1950s, overnight rates averaged about two dollars and twenty-five cents a day. The adjoining beauty parlor and liquor store were also listed.

The Dunbar was built as the Somerville Hotel in 1928, by a black dentist named John Alexander, who, after being repeatedly denied service in white hotels, had decided to open his own. It was the first American hotel built expressly for black people; it cost two hundred fifty thousand dollars to build and stock and featured one hundred rooms and sixty private baths. In 1930, the Somerville was renamed the Dunbar, and it wasn't long before it became the cultural and social hub for the black intelligentsia. W. E. B. Du Bois, Billie Holiday, and Duke Ellington were regulars there. Also called "the Waldorf-Astoria of black America," it became the unofficial country club for the black elite. Tom Bradley, Los Angeles's first black mayor, said, "I remember from the days of my childhood, walking down the avenue just to get a look at some of those famous superstars who stayed at The Dunbar."

In 1930, ownership of the hotel passed on to Lucius Lomax and he renamed it the Dunbar, after the African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar. (Eighteen other *Green Book* sites were also named after the poet.)

Chicago businessman Jimmy Nelson bought the Dunbar in 1936 for 87,500 dollars in cash.

Dunbar Hotel lobby, a former *Green Book* hotel in Los Angeles, California

Nelson's great-nephew Celes King III, who solidified his place in the civil rights movement when he became a bail bondsman to civil rights leaders and protesters, was a regular at the Dunbar. Former president of the LA branch of the NAACP and state chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Nelson said, "[C]ivil rights issues were discussed openly every night at the Dunbar."

The Dunbar closed in 1974 because it didn't meet the fire codes, and by 1987 it had deteriorated into a graffiti-scarred ruin. It fell into decline during the civil rights movement partially due to integration and likely due to the fallout from the 1965 Watts riots. In the 1980s, the Community Development Department and the Community Redevelopment Agency of the city of Los Angeles spent 2.9 million dollars renovating the hotel. Today the Dunbar provides seventy-two units of low-income housing for seniors and is safe from demolition because it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Although South Central was the primary hub for *Green Book* businesses in Los Angeles, there were also *Green Book* sites located downtown and in Hollywood. For instance, the Mark Twain Motel was well known as a Hollywood flophouse for struggling artists. When Joe Barbera, the animator for Hanna-Barbera (the animation studio that created the likes of Tom and Jerry, the Flintstones, and Yogi Bear), stayed at the Mark Twain in 1937, he described it as an "enlightened penitentiary." Throughout the time it was listed in the *Green Book*, it maintained its reputation as a low-rent motel for struggling actors, but during the 1940s and '50s, it offered relatively safe boarding for black people, who had few options in the area.

Among all the major cities with fifty or more *Green Book* sites, New York City and Los Angeles have the largest number still in operation. About 10 percent of the Los Angeles sites were located downtown, the most prominent ones being Clifton's Cafeteria, and the Regal and Norbo hotels.

When the Regal Hotel opened in 1939, it was called "the Finest Negro Hotel on the Coast." Simmons innerspring mattresses, new tile baths, an elevator, bellhops, and maid service were just some of the special amenities. Rates were one dollar per day and five dollars and fifty cents per week. If you wanted a bath, you paid an additional quarter. A fabulous gala announced the opening of this "ultra-modern" hotel decorated in "restful" colors and catering to the "highest type of Negro clientele."

The black community rallied around the Regal, and local businesses set

up shop inside. In suite 101, Zerita Dress Salon showed an exclusive line of women's suits, gowns, coats, and sportswear. And when the NAACP came to town, the Regal took out an ad in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* to welcome the organization.

Right down the street from the Regal, on the weekends, the Norbo cocktail lounge was jumping twenty-four hours a day. In 1954, the Norbo launched "Jam at Dawn," which started at six AM, and the cocktail lounge hosted nightly jam sessions with recording artists and Cee Pee Johnson, a sensational bongo player.

Norbo Hotel, a former *Green Book* site in Los Angeles, California

In the 1970s, Norbo Hotel fell into decline and became a low-income rooming house, with rooms costing about fourteen dollars a week. By the 1980s, harmful policies enacted by the Reagan administration, including the defunding of mental institutions, created a staggering level of homelessness from which our country has never recovered. The indigent and mentally ill of Los Angeles who qualified for welfare were allowed temporary two-week stays at the Norbo while their applications were being processed. But after they received their welfare benefits, they were ejected from the Norbo and put on the streets.

In 1984, Los Angeles County was sued over the filthy conditions at the Norbo. Kathleen Paris, a forty-two-year-old homeless woman, said she preferred to stay outside rather than live in the Norbo: “It was frightening. You can’t get any sleep because the bugs are biting you and rats are running all over. The windows were broken, and there’s no heat. It’s just so disgusting.”

Unfortunately, the effects of Reagan’s policies are still with us today. In 2016, *PBS NewsHour* asked me to do an interview in front of the Norbo. I warned them that we would likely be chased away by the locals, mostly people struggling with mental illness. Within five minutes of setup time, I was lunged at by a mentally ill woman and then called a “bitch” and a “porch nigger” by a man riding by on a bike.

The *PBS NewsHour* producer was shocked, and asked, “What did you say to him to call you that?” I hadn’t said anything to him. I hadn’t even made eye contact with him. The producer may have assumed that as a black person, I would be accepted there because most of the people in the area were black. But class was the real issue here. To the bike rider, I was an entitled black woman who had brought in a white camera crew to exploit black pain and poverty. He probably didn’t know or even care about the *Green Book*. He was just angry, and I don’t blame him. He had every right to be.

Just a few blocks away, downtown Los Angeles was being aggressively gentrified, and the police were corralling hundreds of homeless people, pushing them into a five-block area near the Norbo, just out of view of the new million-dollar condos and lofts close by. Tents lined the streets near the Norbo, and people medicated from heavy doses of lithium and heroin wandered into traffic, oblivious to their surroundings. I was living in Los Angeles in 2016, and this area of Skid Row was one of the most horrific displays of abject poverty, drug abuse, and mental illness I had ever seen. It

reminded me of “Hamsterdam,” the fictional neighborhood David Simon created on his HBO television show *The Wire*.

After we left, the *PBS NewsHour* cameraman drove us back to the parking garage, less than a mile away, to pick up our cars in the gentrified section of downtown. After driving past another colorful line of tents perched end to end down the sidewalk, we miraculously entered an area with practically no trace of poverty—just hipsters walking out of their pseudo lofts wearing man buns and beards that were more disheveled than those on the homeless I had just seen. It was painful to witness this economic disparity. How could a city with so many resources allocated to beautifying its streets, parks, and golf courses allow this level of wealth and that level of destitution to coexist within the same square mile?

Of course, this is not happening just in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, this callous form of gentrification is playing out to some degree in nearly every American city. But seeing it on that day, in front of these historic hotels that had once represented pride in the black community, was heart-wrenching. And then seeing so much “progress” just a mile away was like living in a parallel universe.

The practice of herding people of color into a corner of downtown brought me back to when black travelers were corralled into segregated Jim Crow trains. When people wrote about train travel in the Jim Crow era, they reported these train cars as “unwholesome, inhuman, repulsive and medieval . . . nothing in all America condoned by law can be worse than the southern railroads and their treatment of Negroes . . . [T]he James Raven Special [Jim Crow train car] was never meant to serve colored people but rather to humiliate them.”

Victor Green lived in the North, so it’s very possible he never experienced travel on Jim Crow trains, since the trains north of the Mason-Dixon line provided the same seating to all passengers regardless of race. However, even if he did know about these trains, the hardships of segregated travel are not displayed in his railroad article, which presents a glorious account of train travel, telling readers that railway cars were “more comfortable and convenient than ever before” with “reclining seats with adjustable foot rests, controlled lights . . . restful color combinations such as . . . rose upholstery and carpets” and that “every effort has been made to assure a more pleasant journey.” In fact, knowing what we know about the realities of black train travel, today’s readers might find his article a tone-

deaf, insensitive depiction.

Having read horrific migration stories makes it hard to understand Green's intention in publishing the *Green Book* train article, and I wondered what the black migrants who'd ridden the trains felt after reading it. Since the article was produced in partnership with the Association of American Railroads, it's likely that it was initially written for a white audience and that Green, who wouldn't have had the resources to develop an article on black train travel all on his own, had simply reprinted this one for his readers.

It's possible that reading stories about the subhuman conditions many black people endured on trains makes it easy to paint black train travel with a broad brush and assume it was the same for all black people. But just like now, middle- and upper-class black people had a completely different experience living in America—and in downtown Los Angeles, for that matter. And eighty years from now, it's possible that people will look back on 2016 in horror and not understand how America had a black president during a time when nearly a third of the black male population aged 16 to 34 was incarcerated. Perhaps we are living in a similar parallel universe to the one experienced by black people during the Jim Crow era.

"Patronize The Green Book Advertisers"

Green Book back cover, 1957

There is so little information about who Victor Green was that it's impossible to know what his motives were. Up to this point, none of the previous *Green Book* editions addressed racial discrimination directly, with the exception of the 1947 edition, featuring Rockefeller's letter of support for returning black soldiers. It is important to remember that leisure travel was an aspirational act for people of any race, but especially for the African American consumer market Green was trying to reach. For the most part, anyone able to take a train was someone who could afford the time and expense to travel. Regardless, as an author, it was still hard for me to make sense of Green's choice to include this article, and I had to keep reminding myself that the mere creation of the *Green Book* in the first place was an audacious, brave, and political act on his part. Encouraging black people to leave everything that was familiar and venture into white American spaces was a radical idea. And although the language of the *Green Book* was sometimes tempered or even silent when it came to matters of race, it's possible that Green's mild, nonthreatening approach was strategic. For the most part, the *Green Book* was tailored not to offend, incite, or inflame racial tensions. Ultimately, I think Victor Green made a conscious decision to ignore race when he could because his guide was a powerful tool that offered one solution to a problem that everyone already knew existed. ♦

6
VACATION
1952 – 53 Editions

Women vacationing at Carr's Beach, 1956

In 1952, the *Green Book* underwent a seismic paradigm shift, changing its name from the *Negro Motorist Green Book* to the *Negro Travelers' Green Book*. Victor Green said he changed the name because it was "confusing and a good many people thought it was intended for the motorist only, but is used for any mode of travel."

Although this edition had a new title, much of the guide had stayed the same. The layout, design, and the types of businesses listed were consistent with previous editions, and the graphic of the well-dressed couple from the cover of the 1948 edition was stamped on the cover as a kind of logo. The cover tagline "Carry Your Green Book with You—You May Need it" remained, and inside, there were still no listings for North Dakota. Changing the name signaled that Green was expanding the concept of travel and vacation for black Americans.

In 1949, Green launched his "Reservation Bureau," teaming up with Maher Travel Bureau in New York City to book trips to the West Indies, Bermuda, Europe, South America, and Africa. The new enterprise was advertised in every *Green Book* from 1949 to 1957, and there was an entire *Green Book* vacation guide published in addition to the annual 1949 edition. The Reservation Bureau advertised Saturday office hours and was open as late as ten PM during the week. It's unknown how much Green's readers used this service, but it offered to help customers obtain passports and visas along with booking their airline, railroad, and steamship journeys. In 1953, the *Green Book* facilitated international travel with its "Airline Edition." With all these changes, travel for users of the *Green Book* no longer meant only taking a drive to the nearest city; it now also meant expanding one's horizons and crossing an ocean.

Green presented flying as the "miracle of modern travel," and it was the perfect mode of travel for those who could afford it. The seven-page article "Air Transportation" that opens the 1953 edition shows planes sitting on the tarmac at New York's LaGuardia Airport and people boarding and deplaning from aircraft right on the runway, as was done in the 1950s.

This was the "golden age" of travel. American Airlines carried approximately nine million passengers to seventy-two cities every day. And because airline fares were becoming more affordable, cross-continental and international travel was within reach for middle-income Americans. Flying was a luxury that people looked forward to. Unlike today, they didn't feel like chattel waiting in security lines, juggling bags, removing their shoes,

getting radiated by machines, and squeezing into a tin can with no leg or elbow room. In those days, passengers actually *wanted* to get on an airplane. They dressed in their best clothes, and they only needed to show up thirty minutes before their flight. And they enjoyed gourmet in-flight meals on real glassware served by flight attendents wearing tailored suits, white gloves, and pillbox hats.

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LEONIA, N. J.

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Everywhere In The United States

CRUISES — TOURS — TICKETS

WEST INDIES CALIFORNIA MEXICO

BERMUDA EUROPE CANADA

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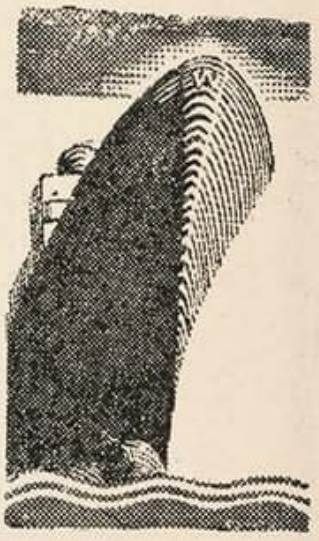
NO SERVICE CHARGE



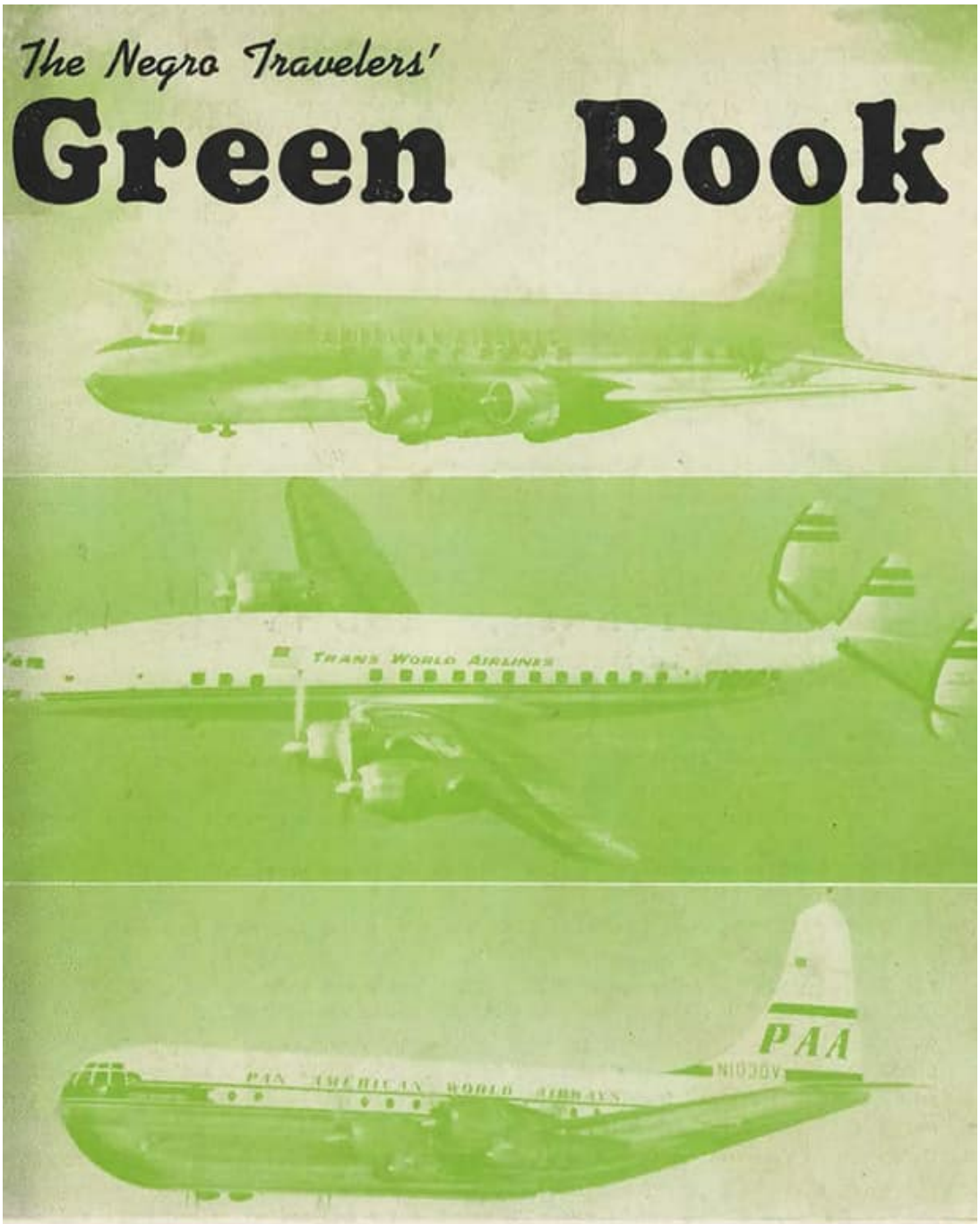
VICTOR H. GREEN & CO.

LEONIA, N. J.

Victor Green’s Reservation Bureau advertisement, 1949

The Negro Travelers'

Green Book



Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need it.

Airline Edition

1953

PRICE

$1.25

Green Book cover, 1953

Victor Green had envisioned broadening the scope of the guide when he told readers in the 1948 *Green Book* to "Watch for the addition of Bermuda to our listings for the 1949 edition." And he delivered on his promise. The two-page article describes Bermuda as a gentle place "of coveted ease, unhurried charm, and relaxed living." Traveling to Bermuda was easy, as it was only a three-hour flight from New York, and no passports or visas were required for vacation travel there. The *Green Book* suggested that its readers pack cotton dresses, lightweight suits, Bermuda shorts, white dinner jackets, and tweed or flannel suits. Bermuda was one of the most regularly promoted countries in the *Green Book* and made an appearance in nearly every subsequent edition.

In the 1950s, international travel was becoming more popular in the black community. *Ebony* magazine referred to black jet-setters as "dignified American Negroes." They were featured in black newspapers throughout the country, and an article published in *Ebony* showed black beauticians taking a trip to Europe in 1954 and praised everything from their "mink capes to their good conduct, both of which apparently surprised some Europeans."

One year before the *Ebony* article, Langston Hughes wrote about how differently black entertainers were treated overseas. "A major difference between the treatment accorded Negro entertainers at home and abroad is that American audiences will loudly applaud performers who they like inside the theater, outside the theater the Negro artist cannot buy a cup of coffee or find a place to sleep . . . Abroad, colored performers live normally as human beings . . ." Jazz age entertainer Josephine Baker, for example, was snubbed in America but beloved in Europe.

Perhaps black entertainers were treated better overseas, but there was no guarantee that they would be treated fairly on their journey there. On July 19, 1954, Ella Fitzgerald, along with her manager, pianist, and secretary, left San Francisco on a first-class Pan American flight headed to Australia. When they arrived in Honolulu for a temporary stopover, they were refused boarding for the second leg of the trip because they were black. The flight attendant wouldn't even allow them back on the plane to retrieve their belongings from first class. They were stranded in Honolulu for two days before they could find another flight to Australia. They were so humiliated and embarrassed that Fitzgerald sued Pan Am for violating the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938. When the case was dismissed, she appealed and won an out-of-court settlement.

Passengers deplaning at LaGuardia, 1950s

Despite the challenges, articles like the ones in *Ebony* and by Langston Hughes likely inspired black Americans to consider international travel. But for regular people in the black community, especially down south, the logistics of traveling abroad were daunting. After all, if they were flying out of a southern airport, they still faced segregated restrooms, waiting areas, and restaurants.

Charles C. Diggs Jr., the first black senator from Michigan, wrote this letter in 1953 to the president of Continental Airlines, asking him to desegregate U.S. airports:

Dear Mr. Six:

Sometime ago during the earlier stages of air transportation, I was heartened to find through personal experience that this newer mode of conveyance was not falling into the older pattern of segregation and discrimination established by railroads and businesses. A recent trip to the South, however, revealed widespread undemocratic practices. Waiting rooms marked "for white only," separate toilet facilities and water fountains, refusal of limousines and taxies to carry Negroes into the nearest community (and I assume from the nearest community to the airport), and discrimination and/or segregation against Negroes in certain airport restaurants—all of these incidents I witnessed with my own eyes.

At the airport servicing Chattanooga, I experienced the strange paradox of permitting Negroes to eat in the restaurant without restrictions, but prohibiting them from using the same toilet facilities as white people. It appears that we can consume food and beverages in the same place, but we must eliminate same in separate facilities. I understand this is also true at the airport servicing Jacksonville, Florida.

In view of the foregoing circumstances, consider this a formal complaint against these practices and a strong, urgent request that through the influence of your agency and the airlines their cessation be immediately demanded.

Trusting you will handle this matter with dispatch and vigor, I remain Very truly yours,

CHARLES C. DIGGS JR.

International plane trips were challenging also because the average black traveler didn't know where he would be welcome, what immunizations were necessary, or how and when to exchange currency. These were things only elite professionals and celebrities knew. Victor Green's Reservation Bureau helped black travelers with some of these logistics, but it was the Henderson Travel Agency that specialized in assisting black Americans who wanted to travel internationally. It was opened in 1954 by a black woman named Freddye Henderson, and it was the first fully accredited black travel agency in America.

Henderson was the first black person to receive a master's degree in fashion merchandising from New York University, and she went on to teach fashion and textiles at Spelman College. While attending a fashion show in Europe in 1954, she got the idea that if black people knew how much better they were treated abroad, they would travel overseas. So when she returned to the States, she started the Henderson Travel Service with her husband, Jacob.

The Hendersons' daughter, Shirley Coleman, remembers that her parents "eventually took thousands of people across the world." During the early 1950s, travel to Africa wasn't easy, and Henderson's was one of only a handful of agencies that offered services there. Pan Am was the only U.S. air carrier that offered regular service to that continent, but most of these flights served white American game hunters and those taking safaris in East Africa. Henderson chartered planes to West Africa, an area of the continent where there were no commercial flights.

Coleman continues: "When my parents first started, white people were going [to Africa] for hunting or safari. Nobody was going for the culture. Nobody valued the culture. They didn't even know about the culture. It was a 'Dark Continent,' and so my parents, through their agency, helped to show people it's not just dark . . . [T]he people are colorful, the culture is rich."

Henderson also wrote a syndicated weekly column, "Travel by Freddye," which ran in the *Pittsburgh Courier* from 1957 to 1963. She was very popular, and it wasn't long before she was planning Martin Luther King Jr.'s trip to Oslo to accept his Nobel Peace Prize. But Henderson didn't only plan the journey; she accompanied King to Norway to accept the prize!

Victor Green's Reservation Bureau also organized itineraries to Africa,

but the *Green Book* didn't have listings in that continent until the 1963–64 edition, which featured thirty African countries, including Algeria, Cameroun, Chad, the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda.

Green's affinity for Africa was evident when he published a full-page ad, on the inside cover of the 1952 edition, for African artifacts, including hand-carved Nigerian ebony shoehorns, knives, animal figurines, and native headpieces. Having this advertisement be the first thing his readers saw spoke volumes about Green's desire to broaden the definition of travel for them.

At the end of the 1952 and 1953 editions, Green published a "Vacation" section, listing resorts, beaches, lodges, and farmhouses. Placed after the regular state-by-state listings, it was brief, at only six pages long. Some states had just one or two listings, and not all the states were covered. The section highlighted seasonal businesses serving summer travelers in remote coastal areas and on islands and peninsulas, and included Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and beaches along the Atlantic coast.

Green had listed Jones Beach, in Long Island, and a handful of others in the late 1930s, but it wasn't until 1950 that any other beaches made it into the *Green Book*. Most beaches were staunchly segregated, and over the life of the guide, only seven were included. Two of the most popular were Carr's and Sparrow's Beach, both on the Chesapeake Bay, near Annapolis, Maryland, just thirty-three miles from Washington, D.C. In 1959, this part of Maryland was still segregated, but these beaches were integrated. Carr's was originally purchased by Frederick Carr, a former slave, but eventually both it and Sparrow's Beach were run by his daughters, Elizabeth Carr Smith and Florence Carr Sparrow. Florence had inherited the land and turned it into a beach resort in the early 1930s. She also developed Sparrow's Beach nearby, and built cabins for guests. The resorts hosted summer camps, church picnics, beauty contests, and dances. Also on site were baseball fields, a Ferris wheel, concessions, and a pavilion for private parties. Sensational musical artists such as Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Dinah Washington, James Brown, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Etta James, Ray Charles, and Aretha Franklin drew crowds of more than ten thousand people.

The few predominately white beaches that tolerated black people didn't offer a pleasant, relaxing experience. In many cases, black sunbathers weren't

allowed to use the lockers, so they would have to either arrive in their swimsuits or change on the beach while family members held up towels for privacy. And if the whole family wanted to go into the water, they would have to leave their clothes on their blankets, all too often only to return to find that everything had been stolen.

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Nigerian Ebony Paper Knife (Hand Carved)

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Victor Green’s advertisement of African artifacts, 1952

Places such as South Carolina's Atlantic Beach served both black and white people, but it was by no means integrated. The black section of the beach, called the "Black Pearl," was founded by George W. Tyson, a black businessman who had paid two thousand dollars for forty-seven acres of oceanfront land in 1934. He sold parcels to black vacationers until 1957. The Gullah Geechee community, made up of descendants of slaves, had lived along the South Carolina coastline for centuries and regularly visited this beach. In the 1940s and '50s, Atlantic Beach grew in popularity and became a major tourist destination.

White property owners along the northern and southern borders of Atlantic Beach made sure that black beachgoers didn't cross over onto the white section by putting up signs, fences, walls, and brightly colored ropes. Dino Thompson remembers, "Atlantic Beach had a rope from the land across to the ocean . . . It was an orange rope, I think. And it went out about two hundred yards, so the blacks were supposed to stop swimming at the rope."

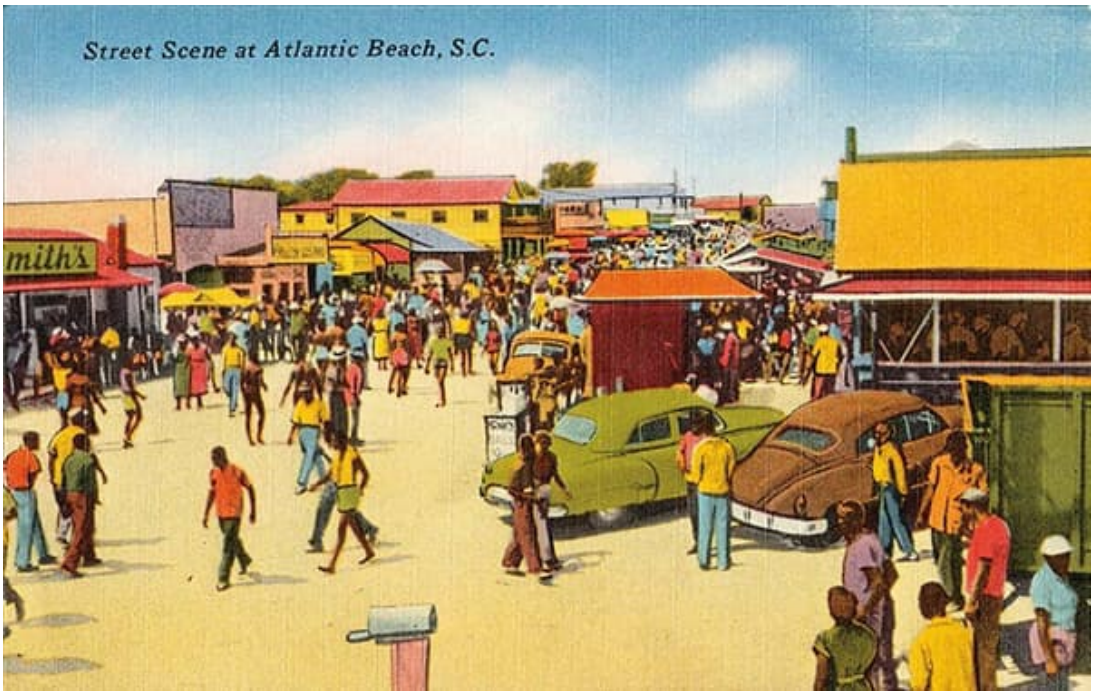
Unlike the clear demarcation of "Colored" or "White" for water fountains, segregating a body of water was an imprecise procedure and must have been frustrating and sometimes terrifying for black vacationers just trying to have fun. Staying on the right side of the rope at segregated public beaches was critical, and there were consequences for those who didn't follow the rules.

As late as the early 1970s, Herbert Sulaiman remembers, "If a black person was walking down there [Myrtle Beach,] and [if] they didn't have a card saying they worked at such-and-such, they could be arrested. They would be harassed. If you didn't have the *Green Book* and if a black person is going up to Atlantic Beach and they got a little bit confused and went to the wrong place, they could have gotten hurt. You ran into a lot of problems. And that's the way it was."

Hoppy Adams and performers at Carr's Beach

Maintaining racialized recreational spaces was an ongoing issue throughout the country. When seventeen-year-old Eugene Williams drifted into the unofficial “White” section of Lake Michigan, he was stoned by whites and drowned. This happened during the so-called “Red Summer” of 1919, when race riots broke out in more than three dozen cities. Williams’s drowning incited the Chicago race riots that year, spawning a weeklong period of bloodshed. The *Chicago Tribune* called it the “deadliest episode of racial violence in Chicago history.”

It was nearly twenty years after Williams’s drowning that Jones, Rosedale, and Sparrow’s Beaches were featured in the *Green Book*, and Carr’s Beach wasn’t listed until a decade after that. Still, this was a significant stride for the black community, who finally were able to take a vacation and not worry about their safety.



Street scene at Atlantic Beach, South Carolina

Another popular black resort that offered swimming, relaxation, and even an amusement park was in Idlewild, Michigan, one of the most legendary black lakeside resorts in America. Located in a secluded rural area in northwestern Michigan about sixty miles from Grand Rapids, this "Black Eden," as it was called, was popular with black celebrities of all kinds. W. E. B. Du Bois, Cab Calloway, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Madam C. J. Walker went there to frolic, fish, swim, camp, roller-skate, and ride horses. Before they made it to Motown, the Four Tops swam there during the day and then performed at night. In 1952, Idlewild had a record-breaking opening. With its carnival-themed atmosphere, skating rink, clubhouse, and amusement park, this Borscht Belt for the black community became a favorite place for affluent black families to play.

Idlewild had been purchased in 1912 by four white land developers, but it was marketed exclusively to black people, making it one of the few places where they could buy a vacation home. Within a few years, a black surgeon named Dr. Daniel Hale Williams purchased a property there, which inspired other prominent black professionals and celebrities to follow suit. Properties and land plots were sold for the next fifty years. In 1952, you could buy two twenty-five-by-one-hundred-foot lots for one hundred thirty dollars. And if you couldn't pay for it all at once, financing the land was very affordable. All that was needed was five dollars down and a payment of only five dollars a month.

Idlewild was the largest resort of its kind, spanning nearly three thousand acres. During its heyday, more than twenty-five thousand people patronized its more than three hundred black-owned businesses. Ten of them were listed in the *Green Book* from 1938 to 1967. The mother of Loretta Long, an African American voice artist most famous for playing Susan on *Sesame Street*, ran the Hickory Inn, which was listed in the *Green Book*. Tourists and residents could see Etta James, Dinah Washington, and Aretha Franklin perform at Idlewild's Paradise Club, another *Green Book* listing. After that, partygoers could head over to Club El Morocco, a *Green Book* site that didn't even open until two AM and stayed in operation until the wee hours of the morning.

Another popular *Green Book* vacation site was Shearer Cottage, in Oak Bluffs, on Martha's Vineyard, a family-owned business that opened in 1903. The owner, Charles Shearer, who was born a slave, turned this cottage into the first inn for black vacationers on the Vineyard. Like Idlewild, Shearer

Cottage has a long, storied history, and it attracted the black elite and intelligentsia. Artists, judges, lawyers, and celebrities such as Paul Robeson, Ethel Waters, and the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Sr. all vacationed there; more recently, Lionel Richie and the Commodores were its famous guests.

Most *Green Book* vacation resorts were located along the northern lakes and on the Eastern Seaboard. There were very few in the West, but the two most popular in California were Val Verde and Lake Elsinore. Val Verde offered horseback riding, hiking, swimming, and dancing. As for Lake Elsinore, located about ninety miles from Los Angeles, it was one of the most popular integrated vacation resorts at that time, offering stunning views of the Santa Ana Mountains, natural hot springs to soak in, and plenty of amenities, including a hotel, cabins, an auto court, and a ranch owned by Dr. N. Curtis King and Mr. Clarence Muse. Six Lake Elsinore sites were included in the *Green Book*, including the Lake Elsinore Hotel, the largest hotel in the resort, complete with cottages, campgrounds, a croquet area, and a tennis court.

Vacationing at Idlewild, Michigan, 1938

In addition to including its “Vacation” section, the 1952 *Green Book* had a long list of National Parks supplied by the Department of the Interior. It was unusual to see National Parks marketed to black Americans. Although approximately fifty million vacationers visited National Parks in the early 1950s, more than 90 percent of them were white. Moreover, National Parks weren’t a sought-after tourist destination for most black people because the facilities were generally segregated, and “Colored” bathrooms were often poorly maintained and sometimes nonexistent.

Segregation had been an ongoing issue since the inception of the National Parks System. In 1922, a debate was held in Yosemite National Park to determine whether the National Parks could exclude black Americans. It was decided that “while colored people could not be openly discriminated against, they should be told that the parks have no facilities for taking care of them.”

Crater Lake Lodge, a former *Green Book* hotel located in Crater Lake National Park, Crater Lake, Oregon

There were twenty-seven National Parks listed in the 1952 edition of the *Green Book*, including, Bryce Canyon, Crater Lake, Mesa Verde, Grand Canyon, Sequoia, Zion, and Yellowstone. There are no photographs of the parks in this article, just a list, along with one or two options for accommodation. Some parks, such as Big Bend, in Texas, list only one tourist home; and the listing for Carlsbad Caverns simply states, "No overnight accommodations."

The Shenandoah National Park and the Great Smoky Mountains offered "Colored Campgrounds" with separate swimming and picnic areas. Park Service engineers and landscape architects had placed the Negro campgrounds on the outer boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains. While the park was being designed, more than four thousand men were hired to work as stewards, company clerks, and camp sergeants. When four black men applied for a job there, the locals said it would be a "serious mistake" and that the men would probably be run out of the area. As a result, only white men worked in the camps.

Vacationing with "good old boys" lurking in the mountains was not relaxing or fun for black Americans, and because most National Parks are located in isolated rural areas, it's not surprising that black people generally avoided these places federally designated as America's most scenic lands. It wasn't until the late 1950s that many of the National Parks listed in this 1952 *Green Book* article featured hotels. These included the Ahwahnee, in Yosemite; the Bryce Canyon Lodge, in Utah; and the Crater Lake Lodge, in Oregon.

The number of black people visiting National Parks is still low today. A survey of National Park visitors in 2008 revealed that only 7 percent of the attendees were black. And in 2009, Yosemite reported that only 1 percent of its visitors identified as African American.

Some black Americans avoid National Parks because the woods can trigger historical trauma that has followed some families for generations. When Nina Roberts, an associate professor of recreation, parks, and tourism at San Francisco State University, asked a nineteen-year-old woman in a focus group why she avoided National Parks, the woman said, "Why would I want to go? My granddaddy told me the KKK. hangs out up in the mountains."

Her story likely rang true with many black families, and it resonates with me. As I was driving through Tennessee's dense, thick forests, I shuddered at

the thought of Ron's cousin being chased through these woods by the Klan. The trees are so close together; it must have been hard to run without slamming into them, especially in the dark. Suddenly, this winding, tree-lined road didn't look relaxing or beautiful. Even during the day, the forests appeared dark, ominous, and terrifying.

For black travelers who wanted to avoid wooded areas as vacation spots, the 1953 *Green Book* included the San Cristóbal Ranch, a forty-acre ranch that celebrated diversity in a pastoral community north of Taos, New Mexico.

A white couple, Craig and Jenny Vincent, operated the ranch in the years it appeared in the *Green Book*. Jenny was born in Minnesota, raised in Chicago, and went to Vassar College. A political activist and folk singer who performed with Pete Seeger and Woodie Guthrie, she was inspired to buy the ranch with her first husband, Dan Wells, after visiting D. H. Lawrence's widow, Frieda Lawrence, at her ranch in 1937. The couple started a school on the ranch for grades five through twelve, in the 1940s, and it was also during this period that Jenny joined the Communist Party.

Jenny divorced Dan Wells and married Craig Vincent in 1949. Craig, a legislator, was dedicated to helping the underprivileged in Denver, Colorado. Soon after they married, the couple turned San Cristóbal into a guest ranch, where they served black travelers, supported Native American rights, and celebrated the rising Chicano movement.

Jenny and Craig were Communists at the worst time in American history. After Dwight Eisenhower's election in 1952, Republicans carried both the House and Senate, and Joseph McCarthy, a senator from Wisconsin, became the chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Convinced that Communists were infiltrating America, he unleashed a tyrannical "Red Scare" task force that put liberal Americans under siege for two years. As a result of his hearings and the "blacklists" they prompted, livelihoods were lost, friends turned on one another under pressure, and reputations were destroyed. No one, not even members of the government, the armed forces, or the Central Intelligence Agency, was spared from McCarthy's relentless witch hunt to uncover supposed Communists in America. From 1952 to 1954, more than six hundred witnesses were interrogated and subjected to unconstitutional scare tactics. The widely publicized hearings, based primarily on unsubstantiated charges, were cosigned by a culture and by government officials too afraid to stand up to McCarthy.

The San Cristóbal Ranch was a casualty of that crusade. An undercover

FBI informant stayed at the ranch for a week in 1950 and reported Jenny and Craig. Caught in McCarthy's crosshairs, Craig refused to share the ranch's guest list with the government. As a punishment, he was sentenced to five years in prison, which he ultimately never had to serve. Still, the damage had been done. The Vincents were forced to close the ranch in December 1953, ending its support for marginalized and persecuted communities. In a letter to the Taos Chamber of Commerce, Craig wrote that he "could no longer in all fairness to our guests and ourselves subject them to the overt danger of being framed in this way, to satisfy the evil political purposes of those who would subvert the Constitution." McCarthy's assault on American democracy continued to polarize the country and ruin lives until the Senate censured him in 1954.

The San Cristóbal Ranch, a former *Green Book* site in San Cristóbal, New Mexico

Jenny lived to be one hundred and three years old (Craig died thirty years before) and continued playing folk music every Tuesday in her retirement home in Taos, New Mexico. The story of their struggles to keep the ranch open during the McCarthy era has lived on in the Taos community. Toward the end of her life, when she was asked about the ranch's turbulent past, Jenny said, "My memory is not as good in that area as it is in remembering a song . . . I'm trying to forget."

It's unknown just how many black travelers vacationed at the San Cristóbal Ranch, but another rural *Green Book* site that we know was popular with the black community was the Marsalis Mansion, located on the outskirts of New Orleans. It was run by Ellis Marsalis Sr., Wynton and Branford Marsalis's grandfather. When Marsalis purchased the property, it was only a chicken coop surrounded by cows and mulberry trees, but he turned it into a forty-room hotel with plush-carpeted suites, color televisions, a restaurant, a lounge, and a pool. Curtis Graves, an avid photographer and the first black representative in the Texas State Legislature, remembers, "It was the first legitimate hotel in New Orleans for blacks." During the 1950s, the Marsalis Mansion became a landing spot for musical artists such as Dinah Washington (who preferred the honeymoon suite), Ray Charles, Ike and Tina Turner, and Etta James, and civil rights leaders Thurgood Marshall and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The 1952 edition features a seven-page article on New Orleans that highlights the city's architecture, cuisine, and music. There is also a section dedicated to "Catholic Negroes in New Orleans," and to Xavier University, the only black Catholic college in America.

Since the 1800s, the Crescent City had been notorious for hosting a motley crew of gamblers, drunks, shysters, and cotton speculators. Gin and absinthe flowed like water, and the city's mantra, "Live and let live," welcomed loose women, fortune-tellers, pimps, cockfighters, and assassins. It was, and still is, a tough, resilient city full of tourists and locals living on the edge of reality on an intoxicating concoction of liquor, food, music, and local culture. New Orleans is magical in its messiness. And given that the city is only one foot above sea level, the dead are not buried; they are put to rest aboveground. The entire city (even its dead) in all its bacchanalian glory floats on water, figuratively and literally. There was, and is, no place like it in America—which is why it was (and still is) the perfect place to go on vacation.

Since New Orleans was segregated by law, there were no *Green Book* listings for sites in its French Quarter. The city's neighborhoods were redlined, and in some areas, black people could enter the parks only on Wednesday, or "Negro Day." However, the black suburb of Pontchartrain Park featured two hundred acres and one thousand homes. Although the neighborhood bordered a sprawling golf course designed by African American architect Joseph Bartholomew (see chapter 1), black people weren't permitted to use it. Still, the neighborhood's rolling, pristine manicured lawns made Pontchartrain feel like a black version of the neighborhood in *Leave It to Beaver*.

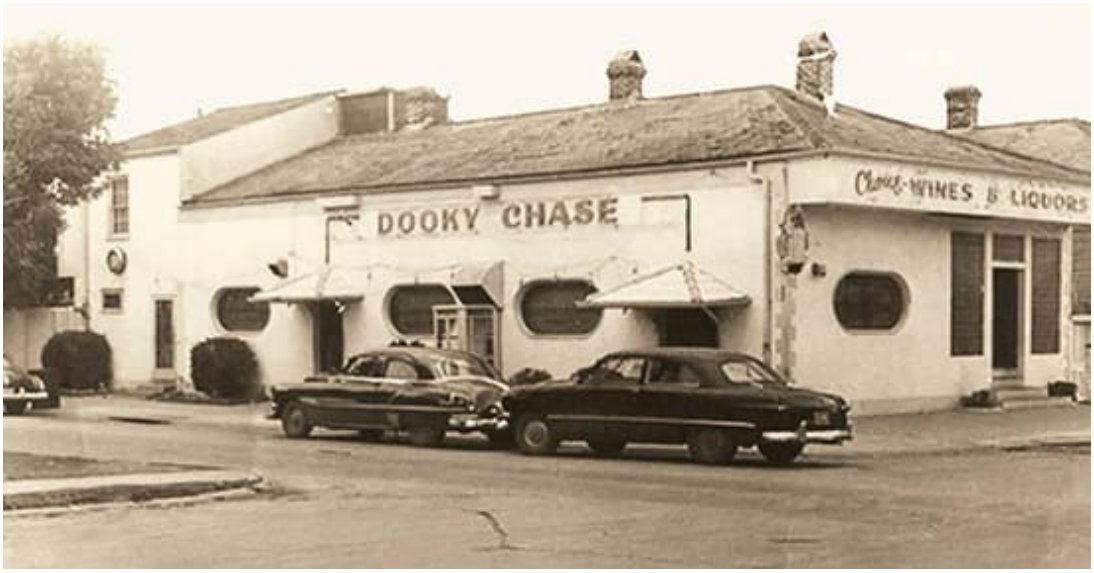
The *Green Book* article on New Orleans is unlike most travel articles. Some of the piece covers the beautiful wrought iron balconies and quaint courtyards that could be found in the French Quarter, but it also highlights the importance of the levees in a city surrounded by swamps and sandwiched between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. Since New Orleans received nearly sixty inches of rain a year and had the third-highest rainfall of any other large city in the country at that time, the river could quickly become a curse. To handle the inevitable risk of flooding, twenty-three-foot levees surrounded almost 40 percent of the city. The *Green Book* article notes that the levees were the only structures keeping the city from being washed away—a lesson learned from the historic flood of 1927, which had led to the construction of the Bonnet Carré Spillway to divert excess water into Lake Pontchartrain. The 1927 flood is mentioned in the article almost as a cautionary tale, but what happened after Katrina, when the city's levees were breached, is a chilling reminder of how we keep failing to learn from the past.

As long as the river wasn't flooding, it was a blessing, because the ports along the Mississippi provided stable employment for the city's residents. However, since there were no black-owned banks in New Orleans, black men who worked along the Mississippi couldn't easily find a place to cash their checks. To solve that problem, many lined up outside Dooky Chase's Restaurant on Friday nights to cash checks and grab a beer and a po' boy.

Dooky Chase's legendary restaurant opened in 1941, and was listed in the *Green Book* from 1947 to 1964. After Dooky's death, his wife, Leah Chase, ran the business for more than seventy years, until she passed away in 2019. It was her idea to transform Dooky Chase's from a bar and sandwich shop into a white tablecloth Creole restaurant, making it the first African American fine-dining establishment in the country.

Leah learned the craft of Creole cuisine working in restaurants in the French Quarter. Her shrimp Creole, stuffed chicken, sweet potato pies, and gumbo with smoked sausage and nine different kinds of greens rivaled any Creole food in America. In 2016, she became the first African American to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the James Beard Foundation. Her displays of African American art in the restaurant made it the first art gallery for black artists in New Orleans. And Leah's iconic status was confirmed when Disney modeled its first African American princess, Tiana, after her in the 2009 animated musical film *The Princess and the Frog*.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Ms. Chase in 2018. She was nearly ninety-six years old and still working. I was taken by her clear mind, bright eyes, open heart, and generous spirit. Meeting Leah was one of the highlights of all my years on the road documenting *Green Book* sites. Her food has influenced the way we value African American cuisine, art, and culture. For me, meeting her was like meeting royalty.



Dooky Chase's, a *Green Book* restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana. Courtesy of the Chase family

During the time Dooky's was listed in the *Green Book*, it had an adjoining bar that hosted some of the best blues and jazz musicians in the area. Ray Charles was a regular, and Dooky's supported his career by selling tickets to his gigs. Ray Charles loved the restaurant so much (especially the red beans) that he wrote about Dooky's in his song "Early in the Morning." He sings, "I went to Dooky Chase to get something to eat. / The waitress looked at me and said, 'Ray, you sure look beat.' / Now, it's early in the morning . . . / I ain't got nothin' but the blues."

Leah Chase in the kitchen at Dooky Chase's Restaurant in New Orleans, Louisiana

Dooky Chase's dining room, New Orleans, Louisiana

During the civil rights era, in a meeting room at Dooky's, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and members from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the NAACP ate Creole food and strategized the most effective ways to fight racism.

Dooky's survived the civil rights struggle, but Hurricane Katrina almost destroyed it. Not only did Katrina snatch away the sassafras tree the Chase family had planted outside to flavor the roux in their gumbo, but the restaurant had to close for renovations. Thankfully, due to Leah's steadfast determination and pure love for the place—she lived in a FEMA trailer and worked tirelessly on the renovations—less than two years after Katrina, she was able to reopen and serve her community again.

For more than seventy years, Dooky Chase's has fed locals, tourists, celebrities, political powerhouses, and literary giants, including James Baldwin, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and Quincy Jones. Leah watched Michael Jackson grow up at the restaurant and remembers how much he loved her pie. She also enjoyed serving President Barack Obama, but she admitted that when he tried to put hot sauce on her gumbo, she slapped his hand and reprimanded him just like she would have done to anyone else.

Leah Chase believed food is the healing balm that can bring us together, even in the most divisive times. "I don't care if you're the pope or the president," she said. "You have to eat. And I can cook for you . . . If I can get the people on both sides [of the political spectrum] to just sit down at my table, I think we can work this out."

. . . . . .

The year the New Orleans article was featured in the *Green Book* was the same year Victor Green retired from the post office after being a letter carrier for thirty-nine years. From then on, he was free to work on his guide full time, which he did until his death in 1960. Thankfully, Green didn't face much opposition producing the guide. And why would he? For the most part, the *Green Book* didn't challenge the status quo of segregation or suggest that its users break any current laws. And given that 90 percent of the early editions featured black-owned businesses, it was a win-win both for black travelers who wanted to feel welcome and for those who preferred to keep black people in black spaces.

Still, although the *Green Book* was not a direct challenge to the established practices of racism and segregation, it had a profound and subversive effect. Whether black people were swimming at Carr's Beach, partying at Idlewild, or flying abroad for an adventure on the other side of the world, the *Green Book* gave them the courage to throw caution to the wind and take a vacation like everyone else. ♦

7
MUSIC VENUES
1954 – 56 Editions

Jack’s Chicken Basket, a *Green Book* nightclub in Los Angeles, California

My stepfather grew up sitting on Howlin' Wolf's lap at his grandmother's juke joint in Memphis, Tennessee, while he belted out the blues. A number of blues artists came through the place, but the Wolf was Ron's favorite. Being exposed to music as a child shaped Ron's spirit and personality. There was almost always a blues song coursing through his head; sometimes he would latch on to a bass line and hum it all day. Other times, the melody would take over. His foot would start tapping, his head would match the beat, and he would let out a howl, just like the Wolf; add in a little B. B. King guitar riff; and finish it off with a James Brown "Oooowww! I got it!" And before you knew it, Ron was having a good time. And if you were near him, you were, too. That is what I loved about him the most.

Music was a staple in Ron's life, and this was true for many black people from his generation. Blues, jazz, and R&B were the salve that softened the scars of Jim Crow and made everything seem better. Victor Green knew how important music was to his community, which is why there were more than 330 nightclubs listed in the *Green Book*.

The *Green Book* was like a surrogate guide of chitlin circuit venues. The chitlin circuit was a string of dozens of nightclubs, restaurants, and theaters where black musicians knew they would be welcome while touring the United States. Some of the most famous musicians never hit the road without the *Green Book*. For instance, Ella Fitzgerald was a regular at *Green Book* listings, including the Jim Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas; the Broadview Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska; Carr's Beach, near Annapolis, Maryland; the Dunbar in Los Angeles; the Rossonian in Denver; the Sunset in Indianapolis; and several nightclubs in San Francisco's Fillmore District.

Duke Ellington also performed, slept, and dined at the Sunset, Carr's Beach, the Dunbar, and the Rossonian. He was a regular at other *Green Book* sites, including Ma Sutton's restaurant in Atlanta; Carioca Hall, in St. Louis, Missouri; the Idlewild resort in Michigan; Charlie's Place, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; the Hotel Theresa in Harlem; the Terrace Hall, in Pittsburgh's Hill District, the Hampton House, in Miami; and the Astor Motel in Jacksonville, Florida.

Some of the most famous nightclubs in the *Green Book* were in Harlem, New York. Club 845 was one of the most important venues for bebop. Thelonious Monk, Dexter Gordon, Charlie Parker, and Sonny Rollins all played there in the late forties and early fifties.

Live music was performed nightly in Harlem's Lenox Lounge, also listed

in the *Green Book*. At the Lenox, patrons sat in plush leather booths beneath zebra-print papered walls to hear swing, bebop, and the modern, profound, and transcendental artistry of John Coltrane and Miles Davis. James Baldwin and Langston Hughes were regulars, and one of the booths was reserved for Billie Holiday.

Lenox Lounge, a former *Green Book* site in Harlem, New York

Less than one mile north of the Lenox Lounge, the Savoy, a legendary *Green Book* nightclub, was always jumping with people dancing the Lindy hop, the Rhumboogie, the jitterbug, the Snake Hips, the shimmy, and the mambo. A huge space stretching an entire block, the Savoy, which opened in 1926, was one of the first integrated clubs in Harlem. Actress and pinup model Lana Turner called it the "Home of Happy Feet," and each year, nearly seven hundred thousand people danced in its ten-thousand-square-foot pink ballroom lined with mirrored walls. Two bandstands hosted the best performers at the height of their careers, including Benny Goodman, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Parker. The crowds just couldn't get enough, especially when Ella Fitzgerald hit the stage.

The Savoy, Harlem, New York

In addition to the Savoy, New York City had nearly sixty music venues listed in the *Green Book*. And the music didn't stop there. Not only did Victor Green celebrate live music venues, he also brought attention to radio disc jockeys when he published an article in the 1955 edition dedicated to popular radio personality "Big Joe," who deejayed on WMGM. Big Joe's radio program, *Happiness Exchange*, spread cheer from midnight to two AM. Although the show aired from New York City, people tuned in from as far north as Canada, as far south as Florida, and as far west as the Mississippi River.

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William's—2017 5th Ave.
George's—630 Lenox Ave.
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Hawkin's—308 West 125th St.
Apollo—303 West 125th St.
Baby Grand—319 West 125th St.
Al's—415 West 125th St.
Horseshoe—2474 - 7th Ave.
Lou's—1985 Amsterdam Ave.
Welcome Inn—2895 - 8th Ave.
Dick Wheaton's—7th Ave. & 137th St.
Blue Heaven—378 Lenox Ave.
Calvacade—2104 7th Ave.
Colonial—116 Bradhurst Ave.
Eddie's—714 St. Nicholas Ave.
Elk Scene—469 Lenox Ave.
Hot-Cha—2280 7th Ave.
La Mar Cheri—739 St. Nichollas Ave.
Logas—2496 7th Ave.
Monte Carlo—2247 7th Ave.
Murrain—635 Lenox Ave.
Orange Blossom—570 Lenox Ave.
Victoria—2418 7th Ave.
721 St. Nicholas Ave. Grill
Fat Man—St. Nicholas Ave. & 155th St.
Mayfair—773 St. Nicholas Ave.
C. L. D. Grill—1958-7th Ave.
Jimmie Daniels—114 W. 116th St.
Moon Glow—2461 7th Ave.
Palm Cafe—209 W. 125th St.
George Farrell's—2711 8th Ave.
Novelty Bar & Grill—1965 Amsterdam Ave.
Johnson's—614 Lenox Ave.
L-Bar—3601 Broadway
Chick's Bar & Grill—2501 7th Ave.
Sport's Inn—2308 8th Ave.

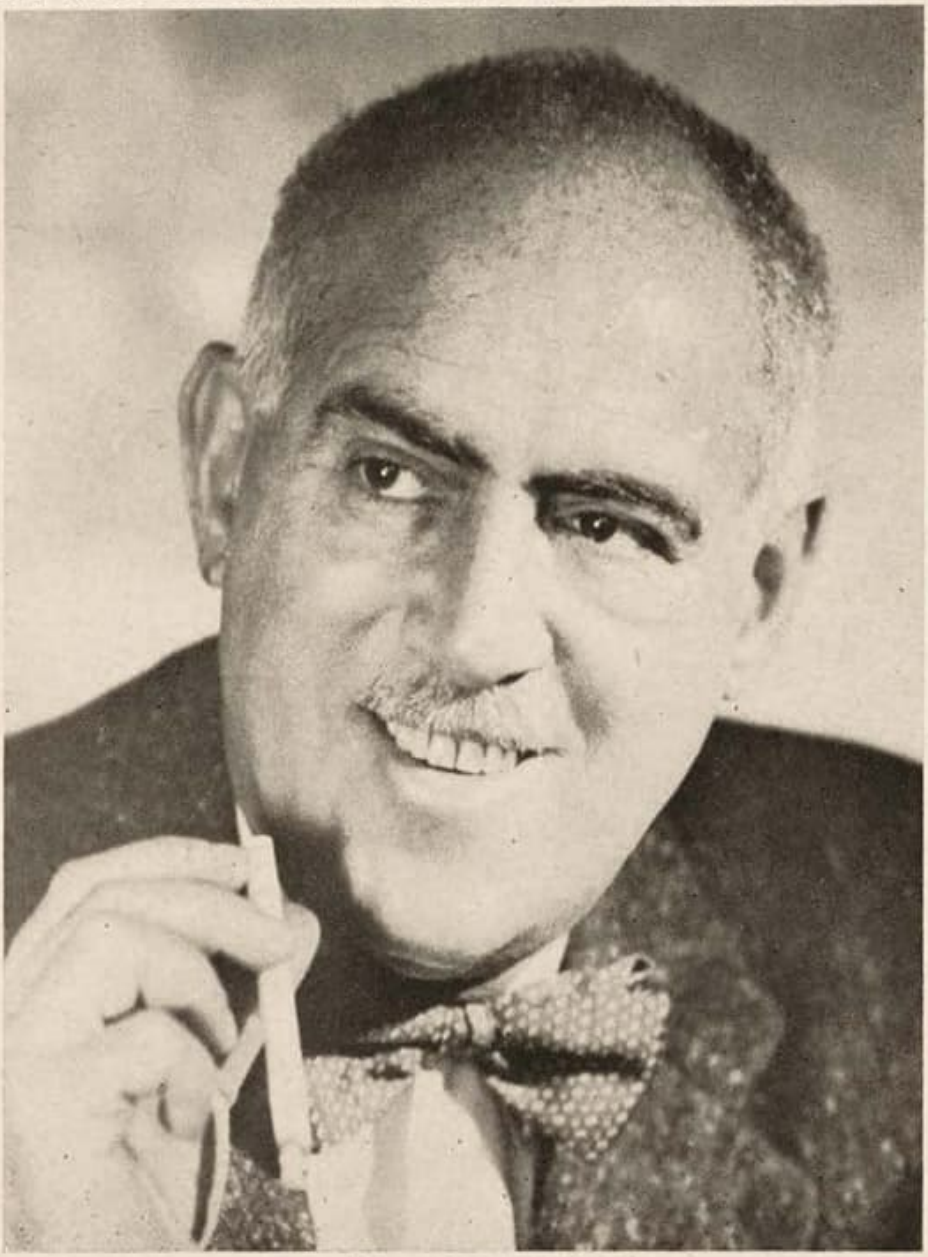
Lenox Lounge advertisement in the *Green Book*, 1948

Radio Personalities—On The Air

In order to assure our readers the maximum in after midnight radio programs, the pleasure is ours in inviting you to tune in Big Joe's Happiness Exchange, on W.M.G.M., New York, 1050 on the dial, or your local radio station, from midnight to 2 A.M., seven nights weekly.

"I don't wan to be rich . . .
I can't be good looking" . . .

"All I want to be is happy," says Big Joe; Because "Somebody Cares About You."



JOE ROSENFIELD, JR.
Executive Director and Treasurer, Big Joe's Happiness Exchange Foundation

Feature article about Big Joe in the *Green Book*, 1955

Big Joe, born Joe Rosenfield, was originally from New Orleans, where he first began to broadcast his clean, simple message that resonated with the vulnerable, marginalized, and addicted. He didn't aspire to be rich or good-looking, he said. "All I want to be is happy," and he assured his listeners, "Somebody cares about you." Rosenfield talked about the founding fathers and the right of every American to pursue happiness, but ultimately he attracted listeners because he was in tune with the struggles of life. He said he understood why some of us "pursue it [happiness] in a circle like a squirrel in a cage and we don't get anywhere."

Big Joe was a recovering alcoholic, and his story inspired his listeners and encouraged them to share their experiences on air. His program, which has been described as an impromptu twelve-step meeting on the radio, managed to capture that "pink cloud" of happiness that many addicts and alcoholics find in early recovery.

After Big Joe's move from New Orleans to New York, his show grew into something resembling a telethon. Volunteers answered calls and letters and aided Big Joe in his program to help the less fortunate get the resources they needed. It didn't matter how little you had; Big Joe made generosity something anyone could practice. For his "Samaritans" program, 1,584 people pledged just one penny a day to help others.

The *New York Times* dedicated four columns to Big Joe's life story and radio program. He was probably featured in the *Green Book* because he was so popular with black Americans. In 1949, on New Year's Day, a group of black businessmen made Rosenfield, who was Jewish, an "honorary member of the Negro race." When Rosenfield said he didn't think there was such a thing, they said, "We know, but we want to make you one, just the same."

Although most radio stations, like the one where Rosenfield worked, were white-owned, by 1955 "personality deejays" were wildly popular, and there were about six hundred black radio stations on the air. It wasn't just the music they played, but also their smooth voices and ad-libbed charm that drew listeners in.

Black-owned nightclubs, such as Jack's Basket Room (also known as Jack's Chicken Basket), a jazz club that opened in the heart of South Central Los Angeles in 1939, also found a place in the *Green Book*. Owned by Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight boxing champion, the Basket Room hosted the nation's top entertainers and served the black bourgeoisie. It was right down the street from the Dunbar, where celebrity musicians stayed, and

to relax, socialize, and have fun while they were in town, they went up the street to Jack's.

Jack's in-house radio station, KXLA, featured deejay King Perry, the "Pied Piper of Swingdom." He and his sextet were broadcast three nights a week starting at 11:45 PM. This was the first radio broadcasting station on Los Angeles's Eastside, and disc jockeys Bill Sampson and Nick Thomas spun vinyl in the radio booth until 3 AM.

Disc jockey Bill Sampson in the radio booth at Jack's Basket Room in Los Angeles, California, 1949

Jack's was known as "the place where everyone comes to play." Cab Calloway's lyrics "A chicken ain't nothin' but a bird" were painted on the outside of the building. Inside, chicken, steaks, ham, bacon, and barbecue were dished out until two AM, and the music lasted until dawn.

Being at Jack's was an all-night affair. A typical Monday night jam session featured Howard McGhee and Sammy Franklin and his Atomics. Female impersonators also entertained crowds with two floor shows between 12:30 AM and 3:15 AM. Night owls would stay for the breakfast dance at 6 AM.

Jack's Basket Room also hosted Sunday afternoon matinees, and held an annual Christmas dinner for underprivileged children, serving up to a thousand free turkey dinners with all the trimmings and ice cream for dessert.

Los Angeles had seventeen nightclubs listed in the *Green Book*, but black people who traveled as far west as the Pacific Ocean could also find a thriving and phenomenal jazz scene in San Francisco's Fillmore District. Black people had been living in this multiethnic neighborhood since the turn of the twentieth century, and it was a mecca for black musicians. The Fillmore became a primarily black neighborhood after approximately five thousand of its Japanese residents were rounded up and forced to live in internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. During the war, black people migrated to the district to work for the defense industry in the Bay Area. By the time the 1954 *Green Book* was published, San Francisco's black population had risen from just under five thousand before World War II to nearly forty-five thousand people.

The city of San Francisco made the cover of the 1954 edition, and it was the first and only identifiable city to grace a *Green Book* cover. The image of a signature cable car climbing a hill in Chinatown made it clear what city was being featured. Inside, an eight-page article presented San Francisco as a "carefree" place with a "wise and tolerant" attitude. The article was illustrated with full-page photographs of Fisherman's Wharf, the crimson-hued Golden Gate Bridge, and the double-decker Bay Bridge. To prepare visitors, the author recommended that readers pack a "top coat," even in the summer, to combat the "strange" cold and foggy weather. A coat was critical, especially if visitors decided to take a ferry to Oakland, which was noted for having the largest black population on the Pacific coast.

Racism wasn't as flagrant in San Francisco as it was in the surrounding sundown towns of Burlingame and San Leandro. Although the *Green Book*

piece celebrated neighboring Berkeley for its “casual acceptance of people regardless of their race, creed, or color,” it also admitted that about 35 percent of San Francisco’s black residents were unemployed, and that “comfortable housing” and “business opportunities” for them were limited.

While the appeal for black people was finding work in the area’s defense industry, by the 1950s, many of those jobs were gone. And when black residents witnessed discrimination in the taxicab industry, the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC), which was founded in Detroit, tried to increase job opportunities for them. The NNLC distributed a poster boycotting the San Francisco Yellow Cab company, telling patrons to say, WE WON’T RIDE IF NEGROES CAN’T DRIVE.

Jack’s Basket Room, a former *Green Book* nightclub in Los Angeles, California

Driving a taxi provided reliable income for the black community. Nearly twenty years earlier, Benj. J. Thomas wrote in his article “The Automobile and What It Has Done for the Negro” that black Americans operated a large percentage of the taxicabs in New York City. And this wasn’t happening only in New York. In 1936, about one-third of the 381 taxis licensed to operate in St. Louis, Missouri, were black-owned.

There were ninety-four cab companies listed during the time the *Green Book* was published, but out of the forty-two *Green Book* entries for San Francisco, none of them was a taxicab company. Despite the taxi boycott and black people’s struggle to find employment, the San Francisco *Green Book* article was so hopeful about the Bay Area’s liberal leanings that it said San Francisco would become the “focal point of the Negro future.” Unfortunately, this didn't happen; San Francisco’s black population has plummeted since the 1950s. In 1959, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency was formed, and facilitated an aggressive urban renewal program. Using the legal argument of eminent domain (i.e., the right of the government to expropriate private property), the agency removed black people from their homes, decimating the culture and community of the Fillmore District.

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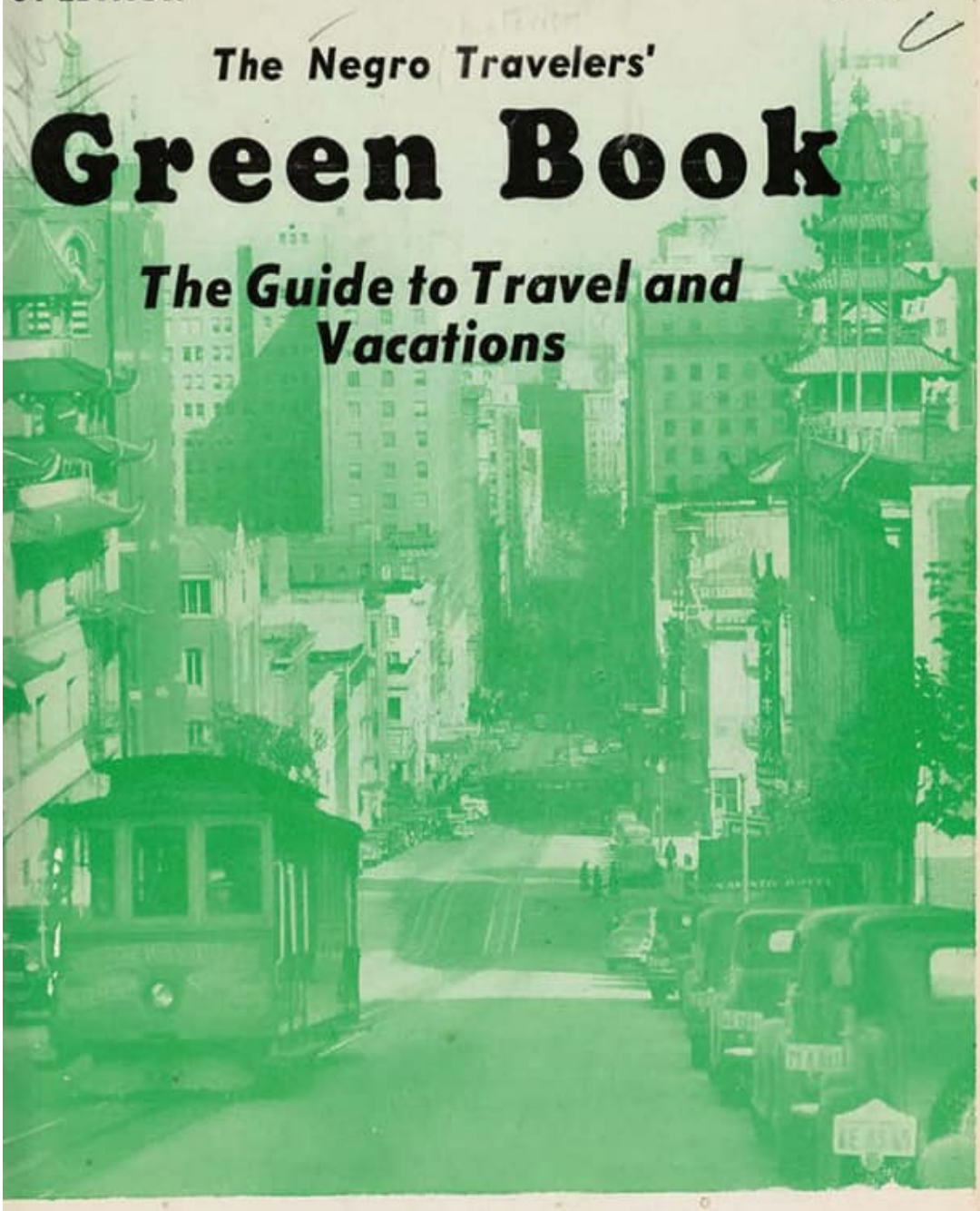
Green Book

The Guide to Travel and Vacations



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Carry your GREEN Book with you — you may need it.

Green Book cover, 1954

The more recent decline in San Francisco's black population since the turn of the twenty-first century is due mostly to the ruthless tech industry, which has had a disastrous effect on housing prices. An influx of tech employees with high incomes has made it increasingly impossible for working- and middle-class residents to find affordable housing. And given that only about 1 percent of tech industry employees are black, the majority of San Francisco's negligible 5.4 percent black population now lives in public housing.

As a result, San Francisco's Fillmore District, where most of the *Green Book* music venues were located, is now predominately white—a stark contrast to the 1950s. Surprisingly, one of the neighborhood's most iconic music theaters, the Fillmore (formerly the Majestic Ballroom), wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but other seminal music sites were, such as Club Alabam, the Town Club, and Jack's Tavern, the first club in the area to cater to black people. R&B singer Sugar Pie DeSanto remembers when she and her cousin Etta James would go to the clubs in the Fillmore District. "It was like a little Vegas . . . Thelonious Monk, Nancy Wilson, any famous person could walk in and get up on stage and jam . . . Everyone would get dressed up in those days . . . and there were no fights. The crowd was mixed, and for a while, the police didn't like it. They hassled us for a little while, but . . . we told the cops to leave us alone. We didn't care about color. We cared about music."

Music brought black and white communities together in the South as well. Dino Thompson, who grew up in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, remembers a legendary *Green Book* nightclub, Charlie's Place (also listed as "Fitzgerald's"). Some of the greatest stars performed there, including Etta James, Fats Domino, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and James Brown. Dino, a white man, started going to Charlie's Place when he was just a teenager. He loved to dance, and the music at Charlie's was unlike anything he had ever heard. "They had something that we didn't have," he remembers. "The greatest black music on earth, and it was something we all wanted."

Dino was raised busing tables and washing dishes at his parents' diner, the Kozy Korner. Charlie's Place was about six blocks away. When he was just a kid, Dino met its owner, Charlie Fitzgerald, a black man. Dino's father showed Dino a *Green Book*, and said to Charlie, "Tell Dino what this magazine is." Charlie said, "Well, I'm in it.' " Dino was impressed. "You're in it? Is there a picture of you?" Charlie answered, "No," and pointed to his listing. "This is my place. It tells people it's a safe place." Dino turned to his

dad, a Greek man who owned a restaurant where anyone was welcome, and asked, “Why aren’t we in it?” His dad laughed and said, “Yeah, we probably ought to be.’”

People went to Charlie’s Place to dance to beats white people in the area had never heard. As Dino said, Charlie’s Place featured music that was “not allowed to be played on your jukebox or on your radio in Tennessee, West Virginia, or Ohio . . . It was essentially the forbidden Negro music. But you could go to Charlie’s Place [or] Atlantic Beach, and it was wafting out of every patio.”

The music played at Charlie’s was called “beach music.” It was so popular that once record executives learned about it, they wanted in on the craze. Jerry Wexler, the president of Atlantic Records, put out six or seven beach music songs every three weeks and marketed them to the black community. When he noticed that white teenagers were ordering these records by the thousands, he couldn’t understand it, as they hadn’t been the target market. So, he sent songwriter Jesse Stone (who had written “Shake Rattle and Roll” under the pseudonym “Charles E. Calhoun”) to see what was going on in Myrtle Beach. Stone reported back that the locals were doing the jitterbug and a dance called “the shag,” and that they’d buy anything that, unlike white music, had a danceable backbeat. Stone told Wexler, “They’re dancing all over the place down there.”

Kozy Korner, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

When Dino heard that Little Richard was going to perform at Charlie's Place, he was beside himself. At the time, Little Richard was one of the biggest acts in the world. As Dino remembers, "The place was packed. [Charlie] put me at the end of the stage, and Little Richard's dancing all over me. I remember he had blue suede shoes with metal buckles, metal fronts, and metal backs; I'd never seen a pair of shoes like that. He did his thing, 'Tutti Frutti,' 'Long Tall Sally' . . . Afterward, Charlie had somebody walk me back to my dad's diner. It's like twelve thirty AM now. I told Dad I'd seen Little Richard, and he was playing the piano with his head and his elbows and his feet, and my dad blew smoke up in the air and said, 'What's the matter with the man? He's got no hands?' I didn't bother to explain. I just said, 'Well, you shoulda seen it.'"

Charlie registered to vote, in 1948, becoming one of the first African Americans in Myrtle Beach to do so since Reconstruction. He was also a bootlegger with several cash businesses. He owned a twenty-two-unit motel called the Whispering Pines, an adjoining restaurant, and a cab company. Charlie had stature and power, economic power, and that meant something in Myrtle Beach.

Herbert Sulaiman, a longtime resident of Myrtle Beach, is leading a community-wide effort to save and restore Charlie's Place. "I've been told by some of the old-timers around here that Charlie put a lot of money into the first movie theater in Myrtle Beach . . .," Sulaiman said. "[A]nd he had a lot of money into the first hospital . . . Our cleaners downtown, although a white guy ran it and a white guy owned it, they say Charlie's money was behind that."

Dancers at Charlie’s Place, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Charlie's success entitled him to respect, and for the most part, no one bothered him. Fifteen years before the Greensboro sit-ins, in which young African Americans famously segregated a Woolworth lunch counter, Charlie went where he wanted, ate next to white people at Dino's parents' Kozy Korner diner, and sat in the white section of the Broadway Theater. The local black kids, who were told to stay away from the white section of town, would run up to the Kozy Korner anyhow and peek through the window just to look at Charlie sitting there, big as day, eating with white people. To them, he was like a rock star.

But Charlie was prepared if someone caused trouble. Dino recalls that he always saw him wearing a coat or a suit that concealed a pearl-handled revolver. He called it "my just-in-case."

Dino says, "Charlie, for some reason, didn't allow himself to be discriminated against." Dino remembers walking by a "Colored" water fountain with Charlie. "I asked, 'Mr. Charlie, do you drink out of that "Colored" water fountain?' Charlie said nonchalantly, 'Never noticed it.'" Charlie also registered to vote, in 1948, becoming one of the first African Americans in Myrtle Beach to register since Reconstruction.

That was the kind of man Charlie was. Cool, calm, and confident. To him, Jim Crow signs were merely a suggestion. But a black man with this much capital and social power did not sit well with the Ku Klux Klan. And on August 26, 1950, everything changed.

It was a Saturday night, and Charlie's Place was hopping. There were probably close to a hundred people jitterbugging and dancing the shag. Down the street, Dino's mother cried as she stood in the window of the Kozy Korner and watched a caravan of sixteen or seventeen (some people reported seeing twenty-six) carfuls of hooded Ku Klux Klan members driving down Carver Street displaying shoulder rifles. The "grand dragon" of the Klan led the procession in a Continental with a siren and a four-foot-tall iron cross lit up with red lightbulbs welded to the front bumper. The Klan members got out of their cars and walked up Carver Street to Charlie's Place and then continued onto Atlantic Beach. Their mere presence terrorized the community.

After seeing the Klan pass his nightclub, Charlie called the sheriff and predicted that if the Klan came back to his place, there might be trouble. Somehow the story got back to the Klan, and they took it as a dare. They turned around and drove back to Charlie's Place. A short, heavy Klansman

with a banner around his neck got out of the lead car and yelled to about sixty of his brethren, “Get your guns ready, and everybody get in line!” They stood outside Charlie’s Place and, at point-blank range, pummeled about four hundred rounds of ammunition into it.

Herbert Sulaiman standing in front of Charlie’s Place, a former *Green Book* site in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

The shooting happened just before midnight. Black and white patrons of Charlie's bolted out the back. Several were injured, but by some miracle, the only person who was killed was a Klansman, James D. Johnson, an off-duty police officer from the neighboring town of Conway, South Carolina. And when they found his body, he was wearing his sheriff's uniform underneath his Klan robe.

Charlie remained at the scene. He recognized the large man about six feet tall and 220 pounds as the owner of the Shell gas station, and he told the group, "This is Charlie; he's the one we want." Before he could turn around, Charlie was knocked out cold. They took his gun, threw him in the trunk of a car, drove around for an hour and a half, and then took him deep into the woods, where they tied him to a tree and tortured him. The FBI report noted that the grand dragon of the KKK said they cut his earlobes to "mark him, so we'll know him."

Somehow, Charlie escaped and was rescued on Highway 544. Sheriff C. Ernest Sasser put him in three jails over a two-week period to "protect" him from the Klan. After that, Charlie disappeared for a while.

Dino remembers, years later, seeing Charlie come into the Kozy Korner; he had no earlobes. Dino said, "[T]hey sat down—a couple of Greeks, a couple of Jews, an Italian, Charlie, and my dad. Had a beer. Life went on. And they never spoke about it again."

Ultimately, Charlie left Myrtle Beach, but thanks to the efforts of Herbert Sulaiman, the legacy of Charlie and Charlie's Place will live on. His nightclub will be forever memorialized in the *Green Book* and in the memories of Dino Thompson.

. . . . . .

In 1956, six years after Charlie's Place was shot up by the Klan, the *Green Book* published a spring and a fall edition to commemorate its twenty-year anniversary. The spring edition hit the stands with a brand-new layout and design. The most noticeable change was that the standard two columns had been replaced with a single-column format. Accommodations were still listed alphabetically by state and city, but the types of listings were limited to lodging and restaurants. From 1938 to 1955, the *Green Book*s had been filled with juke joints and nightclubs that hosted some of the best jazz and blues

players of the twentieth century. Now, with the 1956 edition, the music venues (along with gas stations, drugstores, tailors, hair salons, liquor stores, sanitariums, and haberdashers) were all gone. Some nightclubs reappeared in the last two editions, but they were no longer a regular category listed under each major city.

This new version of the *Green Book* functioned more like an AAA guide, with the number of listings from the previous editions slashed in half. The 1955 and the 1956 editions were roughly eighty pages and averaged sixty-five sites per page, but the layout in the 1956 edition had only about thirty listings on each page.

This radical redesign of the *Green Book* happened right after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in which 755 school districts were under an immediate, mandatory order to desegregate. Things didn't go smoothly, and there was an enormous backlash, but the fact that the law had changed must have contributed to Victor Green's feelings regarding the state of integration and racial progress in America.

By necessity, earlier *Green Book* editions had listed businesses outside what would typically have been found in traditional travel guides because black Americans were legally shut out of nearly every segment of society. It's unknown why the change was made, but by no longer including barbershops, drugstores, service stations, and taverns, it's possible that Green felt the tide of racial segregation was subsiding–still, this radical shift in listings was a significant loss.

Regardless of the change, the *Green Book* still saved lives and helped preserve the dignity of black Americans. Dino Thompson summed it up when he said of the *Green Book*, "[it] didn't tell you if a place had a good steak, or good seafood, or had a soft bed . . . it told you where you would be safe; it told you where you'd be welcome and not made to go around the kitchen and order something to go . . . The rest [of the guide books out there] are just fluff . . . To my mind, it's still the only necessary travel guide that's ever been printed." ♦

Harlem, 85 W. 128th St.
Inez Gumbs, 347 W. 120th St.
C. D. Kings, 2087 Madison Ave.
Padam's, 1963 Amsterdam Ave.
Chas. Arshen, 2501 8th Ave.
Forbes, 272 W. 154th St.
Hamilton Place, 150 Hamilton Pl.
H & R, 273 W. 121st St.
Roy Campanella, 7th Ave. & 134 St.
Goldman's, 483 W. 155th St.

DRUG STORES
M. Boutte, 1028 St. Nicholas Ave.

GARAGES
Colonial Park, 310 W. 144th St.
Polo Grounds, 155th St. & St. Nicholas Ave.
Dumas, 226 W. 135th St.
Park Lane, 1890 Park Ave.

TAILORS
Robert Lewis, 1980 7th Ave.
Globe, 2894 8th Ave.
7th Ave., 2051 7th Ave.
Little Alpha, 200 W. 136th St.
Dig-By, 300 W. 111th St.
La Fontaine, 470 Convent Ave.
Hill Side, 513 W. 145th St.
Dillette's, 101 ..dgecombe Ave.

SERVICE STATIONS
Park Lane, 1890 Park Ave.

DANCE HALLS
Savoy, Lenox Ave. & 140th St.
Golden Gate, Lenox Ave. & 142th

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Pleasant Manor, 218 Gates Ave.
Garfield, 160 Reid Ave.
Lincoln Terrace, 1483 Pacific St.
Y.M.C.A., 405 Carlton Ave.
Burma, 145 Gates Ave.
Lefferts, 127 Lefferts Place
Garfield, 160 Reid Ave.

RESTAURANTS
Commodore, 486 Thompkins Ave.
Continental, 706 Nostrand Ave.
Jackson's, 1558 Fulton St.
Dew Drop, 363 Halsey St.
Little Roxy, 490A Summer Ave.
Spick & Span, 70 Kingston Ave.
G & H, 382 Summers Ave.
Caravan, 377 Hancock St.

CHINESE RESTAURANTS
Chung King, 1139 Fulton St.
New Shanghai, 361 Nostrand Ave.
Fulton Palace, 1139 Fulton St.

BEAUTY PARLORS
Bartley's, 1125 Fulton St.
Katherine's, 345 Sumner Ave.
Ideal, 285A Sumner Ave.
Mariett's, 451 Nostrand Ave.
Edith's, 389 Tompkins Ave.
LaRoberts, 322 Macon St.

BEAUTY CULTURE SCHOOLS
Theresa, 304 Livonia Ave.

TAVERNS
Riviera, Bedford & Brevoort Pl.
Brownie's, 714 St. Marks Pl.
Flamingo, 259 A Kingston Ave.
Topside, 537 Marcy Ave.
Palm Gardens, 491 Summer Ave.
Royal, 1073 Fulton St.
Parkside, 759 Gates Ave.
Decatur Bar & Grill,, 301 Reid Ave.
Kingston Tavern, 1496 Fulton St.
Arlington Inn, 1253 Fulton St.
Disler's, 759 Gates Ave.
Veorna Leafe, 1330 Fulton St.
K & C Tavern, 588 Gates Ave.
Smitty's, 286 Patchen Ave.
Casablanca, 300 Reid Ave.
Country Cottage, 375 Franklin Ave.
Bombay, 377 Christopher St.
Capitol, 1550 Fulton St.
Traveler's, Inn, 5A Hull St.
Ward's, 480 Halsey St.
Tip Top, 1750 Fulton St.
Topside, 537 Marcy Ave.
Berry Bros., 1714 Fulton St.
Logan's, 1165 Bradford Ave.
Bar 688, 688 Halsey St.
Brooklyn Fraternal, 1068 Fulton St.
Jefferson, 397 Tompkins Ave.
Bushwick, 375 Bushwick Ave.
Lorene's, 373 Nostrand Ave.
Turbo Village, 249 Reid Ave.
Elmo, 243 Reid Ave.
Summer, 693 Gates Ave.
New Durkin, 1285 Fulton St.
Esquire, Atlantic & Kingston Aves.
Frank's Caravan, 377 Hancock St.
Hollywood, Cor. Gates & Nostrand Aves.
Cross Roads, Cor. Bedford & Fulton Sts.
Laredo Bar, 1624 Fulton St.

NIGHT CLUBS
Ebony, 1330 Fulton St.
Baby Grand, 1274 Fulton St.

DRUG STORES
Provident, 1265 Bedford Ave.
Bancroft, Franklin & Bergen St.

WINE & LIQUOR STORES
Yak, 1361 Fulton St.
Lincoln, 401 Tompkins Ave.
York, 1361 Fulton St.
Stuyvesant, 1551 Fulton St.
Allen Rose, 106 Kingston Ave.

Brooklyn

Pleasant Manor Hotel	218 Gates Ave.
Garfield Hotel	160 Reid Ave.
Lincoln Terrace Hotel	1483 Pacific St.
Y.M.C.A.	405 Carlton Ave.
Burma Hotel	145 Gates Ave.
Lefferts Hotel	127 Lefferts Place
Commodore Restaurant	486 Tompkins Ave.
Continental Restaurant	706 Nostrand Ave.
Jackson's Restaurant	1558 Fulton St.
Dew Drop Restaurant	363 Halsey St.
Little Roxy Restaurant	490A Summer Ave.
Spick & Span Restaurant	70 Kingston Ave.
G & H Restaurant	382 Sumner Ave.
Caravan Restaurant	377 Hancock St.

Bronx

Guest House Hotel	744 Kelly St.
Carver Hotel	980 Prospect Ave.
Crotona Hotel	695 E. 170th St.
Daniel's Restaurant	1107 Prospect Ave.

Mt. Vernon

Mrs. Lloyd King Tourist Home	343 So. 10th Ave.
Friendship Restaurant	50 W. 3rd St.

New Rochelle

Huguenot Hotel	242 Huguenot St.
Harris Restaurant	29 Morris St.
Week's Restaurant	68 Winyah Ave.

White Plains

Del Rio Hotel	160 Lafayette Ave.
Walnard's Restaurant	79 Martine Ave.
Waldorf Restaurant	102 Grove St.
Tarks Restaurant	372 Central Ave.
Field's Restaurant	338 Tarrytown Rd.

NEVADA

Hotels — Motels — Tourist Homes — Restaurants

Reno

Hawthorne Tourist Home	542 Valley Rd.
Floyd Garner Tourist Home	857 E. 2nd St.

Las Vagas

Harrison Tourist Home	1001 No. 8th St.
Shaw Apt. Tourist Home	619 Van Buren St.

Elko

★LOUIS MOTEL	**Hwy. 40 2 miles West of Elko**

In 1956, the *Green Book* changed its format from a two-column (previous image) to a single-column (above) layout. Suddenly, the nightclubs, taverns, drug stores, tailors, and garages were gone.

8
THE ROOTS OF ROUTE 66
1957 – 58 Editions

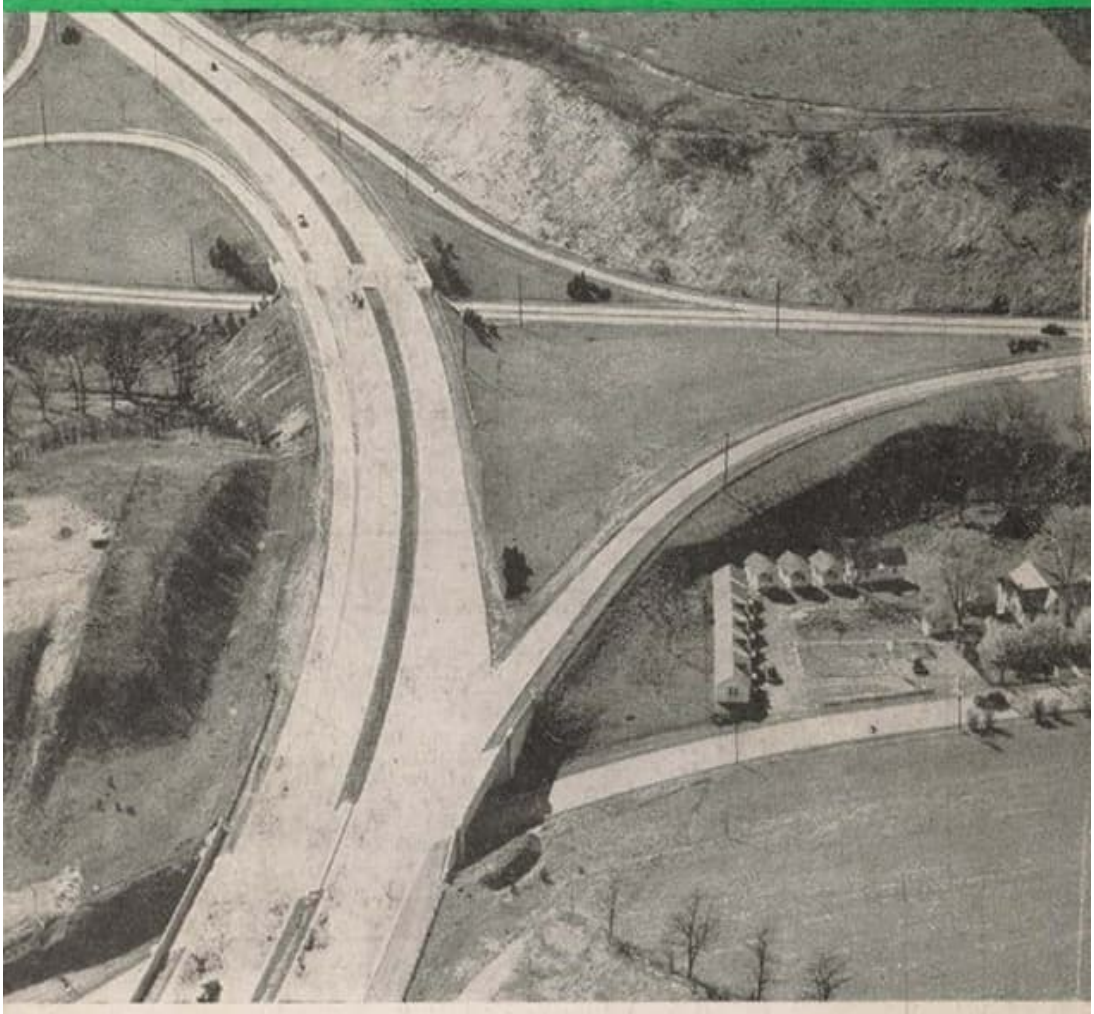
Why Black People Aren’t Nostalgic About the Nation’s Favorite Highway

1957 Edition

$1.25

The Negro Travelers'

Green Book



THE GUIDE FOR TRAVEL AND VACATIONS

20 Years of Service to the Negro Traveler

Carry your GREEN BOOK with you—you may need it.

Green Book cover, 1957

The freeway on-ramp that graces the cover of the 1957 *Green Book* is not particularly interesting, but it's significant because the Federal Aid Highway Act had recently been signed into law by President Eisenhower. Twenty-six billion dollars was spent to construct a 41,000mile network of interstate highways to make U.S. travel safer and more efficient. They were also built as escape routes in the event of a nuclear attack.

In the late 1950s, Americans both black and white loved their cars, and automobile ownership increased throughout the country. *Ebony* magazine estimated that 20 percent of black households intended to buy a new car in 1958. Freeways offered a new and exciting driving experience. These smoothly curved ribbons of concrete etched into the landscape made Americans want to drive even more. Before the Highway Act, taking a road trip involved driving on county and farm roads, and motorists had to pass through small towns on Main Streets across America, often a stop-and-go operation. The freeways transformed the entire experience. Drivers could now bypass Stop signs, traffic signals, and railroad crossings.

Coasting on a freeway was a powerful experience. As the road soared into the distance, it seemed to go on forever, with no obstacles, and no pockmarked surfaces. The size, scale, and shape of buildings changed faster than they ever had, because motorists were driving faster than they ever could on side streets. Earth and sky fused into a monochromatic backdrop of urban and rural roadscapes, and as each moment ran into the next, the predictability of the panoramic landscape collapsed and time expanded. With passengers engaged in a song or a story, the hours flew by, and all the while, the beauty of the land, the sky, and the road were framed in the window as chrome-finned cars sliced through the wind like rockets. When drowsiness set in, the minutes moved like molasses and each eyelash felt weighted with lead, so if the driver was exhausted, distracted, or impaired, the car could just as quickly turn into a bullet. But, ultimately, freeways made the rhythm of the road feel like a moving meditation or a visual mantra that quieted the soul and awakened the mind. There was, and still is, nothing quite like a road trip.

This was the experience most Americans wanted, and millions of them chose Route 66 to have it. No other road trip so thoroughly symbolized freedom, prosperity, and the pursuit of the American Dream as a trip along Route 66. Like an artery, the "Mother Road" nurtured communities and serviced millions.

The 2,440-mile road connecting urban and rural America from Chicago to

Los Angeles crossed eight states and three time zones and passed through practically every type of landscape the country had to offer—from the gritty metropolis of downtown Chicago; past Missouri trailer parks and churches; and on to Texas's towering grain silos and stockyards. It bisected the Texas Panhandle to Oklahoma's windswept plains, passed New Mexico's ancient pueblos, soared around hairpin curves hugging Arizona's Black Mountain, and descended into California's Mojave Desert, where it then headed dead west through the Inland Empire and on to the traffic-choked streets of downtown Los Angeles.

Gas stations, motels, and diners dished out hospitality to Route 66 motorists trying to escape poverty caused by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. With few resources, Americans motored west on this "road of dreams," which symbolized a pathway to easier times. It was one of the few U.S. highways laid out diagonally, and it sliced across the country like a shortcut to freedom.

Whether you were driving west to escape poverty or just on vacation, the experience of driving Route 66 was not the same for everyone. When the *Green Book* was first published, roughly half of the eighty-nine counties on Route 66 were sundown counties. By the 1950s, about 35 percent of the counties on Route 66 didn't allow black motorists after six PM. And although the road was open to black travelers, it was unknown where they could find a meal or a place to rest because six of the eight states that lined the Mother Road as far west as Arizona had segregation laws.

Since every county enforced its segregation laws differently, black motorists had no idea what to expect as they drove on Route 66. Missouri and Illinois were the worst states, with the highest percentage of sundown towns. Even California, a state that had the lowest number of sundown towns and no formal segregation laws on the books, segregated its beaches. Moreover, Los Angeles was surrounded by the sundown suburbs of Burbank, Glendale, and Culver City.

Construction on Route 66 began in 1926, a decade before the *Green Book* was first published, and during the life of the guide, the road underwent three major realignments. Sometimes the decision to move the route was political. For example, a commissioner in a small town would reroute it to pass in front of favored local businesses. Some cities that were on the original alignment, such as Santa Fe, were bypassed altogether. Even the ending point was moved, from downtown Los Angeles to the Santa Monica Pier, which dead-

ends into the Pacific Ocean. Much of the original 1926 alignment was built alongside the Santa Fe railroad tracks. In some states, such as New Mexico, the road moved in an entirely different direction, hundreds of miles from the original route; in other places, it moved less than one-eighth of a mile away. The first realignment happened in 1937, one year after the *Green Book* was first published. After the 1945 realignment, some of the original 1926 route was taken over by weeds, and parts still had pavement that just abruptly stopped. These realignments made it easy for motorists to get lost, and even harder for them to find safe places to sleep or eat along the way.

The most insidious reality black motorists had to accept when traveling along Route 66 was that there was virtually no way for them to know what was coming up around the bend. And there was no such thing as a list of sundown towns to assist them in planning their itinerary. We know about sundown towns today only because of Harvard sociologist James Loewen's recent research and scholarship (see chapter 1). Loewen identified these all-white communities in retrospect by analyzing U.S. Census records. Before his work, the only warnings about places for black motorists to avoid usually came from family members and friends.

When Earl Hutchinson left Chicago in the late 1950s and headed west on Route 66, it was the third time he'd left his home "in search of a promised land free of the burden of discrimination." It was clear his experience would be different from white motorists. "You knew that you couldn't eat in a roadside café or stay overnight at the roadside motel . . . [but we] grabbed *Green Book*."

Just a few miles from Chicago were the sundown suburbs of Cicero, Berwyn, and Oak Park. Black motorists had to drive nearly two hundred miles to Springfield, Illinois, to find *Green Book* accommodation. On their way there, they had to travel about thirty miles southwest of Cicero to Joliet, which was overwhelmingly white and home to the second-largest steel mill in the United States. About forty miles from Joliet was the sundown town of Dwight, and another forty miles west from there was Lexington, another sundown town.

The town of Pontiac sat between Dwight and Lexington. It was a quaint Illinois town straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting that was filled with eighteenth-century brick buildings, beautiful parks, and tree-lined streets. Pontiac wasn't a sundown town, but the local movie theater was segregated, and black people weren't allowed in the lobbies of the Imperial and Pontiac

Hotels unless they were there to clean them.

Normal, Illinois, about thirty-five miles from Pontiac, had segregated and whites-only barbershops. When Charles Burton, the vice president of the NAACP chapter at the Illinois State University at Normal, went into a local barbershop, the barber told him he didn't have the tools to cut his hair.

In 1947, black and white Americans picketed the Pilgrim Café, located near the Illinois State University campus in Normal, and they were eventually successful at desegregating the restaurant, but segregation was still enforced in other places. Robert Gaston remembers, "I can tell you that back in the fifties and sixties . . . you couldn't eat in a restaurant out there anywhere. You could get . . . a sandwich in a sack and walk down the street with it. But you couldn't eat out there anywhere."

The next major city, Springfield, Illinois, sits about sixty miles from Normal. Thankfully, it had twenty-six accommodations listed in the *Green Book*, including fourteen tourist homes (one operated by a black doctor), three beauty parlors, one barbershop, two service stations, a drugstore, a hotel, and four taverns, including Cansler's Lounge, on Washington Street. This was a welcome sight to travelers who had gone through miles of inhospitable highway to reach it.

The next Route 66 state, Missouri, had a centuries-long history of overt racism entrenched in its social and legal practices. There were at least two hundred sundown towns in the state, and in 1943, the state legislature killed a bill that would have allowed black people to go to its theaters and restaurants.

Joe Sonderman remembers, "Man, those rural areas [of Missouri] were just hell, [for blacks] . . . They knew they had better pack lunch and bring a spare tire. A lot of the gasoline chains didn't serve African Americans, Esso was one of the only ones who went out of their way to help them. In rural areas every time you stopped, it was a chance for an encounter with a local that wouldn't go well. And even in parts of Missouri today [in 2015], there's a tremendous amount of that. I see it. There are places in St. Louis that you don't go if you are black. And I'm not sure if we will ever be colorblind."

For black travelers, it was best to get through Missouri as quickly as possible, without going over the speed limit, of course. Black motorists on Route 66 entered Missouri in St. Louis, which thankfully hosted plenty of *Green Book* accommodations.

Route 66 passed just a couple of miles north of Ferguson, the St. Louis

suburb that made headlines in 2014 when Michael Brown lay dead in the street for four hours after being shot by police there. Some who watched Brown bleed out onto the pavement called the event a modern-day lynching.

Ferguson was a sundown town until the mid-1960s, so perhaps the events that led up to Brown's murder are not surprising. During the 1960s, the only black people welcome in

Ferguson were domestics and nannies, but because it was a sundown town, they were not allowed to stay in Ferguson overnight. Over the following fifty years, Ferguson's black population steadily grew to nearly 70 percent. One year after Brown was killed, the U.S. Department of Justice "found pervasive racial bias in Ferguson's policing and municipal court practices." Now there was proof that black motorists were being targeted, overpoliced, and harassed. The study also revealed that black drivers in Ferguson were 75 percent more likely than whites to be stopped and searched. The statistics throughout the state of Missouri were consistent with what was happening in Ferguson. A year after the study was released, things weren't any better in Missouri, and in 2017 the NAACP issued a black travel advisory for the entire state.

Seventy miles west of Ferguson, Route 66 motorists had to be careful in the sundown town of Sullivan, Missouri. Today, Sullivan has approximately seven thousand residents and is believed to be a modern-day sundown town. It isn't 100 percent white, but it has held on to its white supremacist roots. Stefan Wehmeyer, a mixed-race man, went to high school in Sullivan and is one of a handful of black people who still live there. In an article published in the *Guardian* in 2018, Wehmeyer spoke about what it's like to live in Sullivan. His next-door neighbor told Stefan's mother, "If your son ever goes on my property I'll kill him . . . I don't like niggers on my property." At school, Stefan's classmates dressed up in blackface and talked about going "coon hunting." And when he was called a "stupid nigger" at school, his teacher assured him that the N-word was a "term of endearment." How Wehmeyer learned in such a hostile environment is a mystery. He couldn't even find a safe place to sit in school. When he sat next to a white classmate, he was told, "You need to move seats—if my dad finds me sitting with a nigger he'll beat us both up." Given that Wehmeyer was experiencing this in 2010, we can assume black motorists in the 1950s didn't stop in Sullivan.

The Imperial Hotel in Pontiac, Illinois

Once black motorists passed through Sullivan they had to drive another one hundred and fifty miles to Springfield, Missouri, to find services listed in the *Green Book*. One of the most memorable was Alberta's Hotel, listed in the *Green Book* from 1954 to 1967.

Shortly after World War II, with the help of her family members, Alberta Ellis purchased a defunct hospital at auction for ten thousand dollars. (The hospital was supposed to have gone to a wealthy white man, but no one expected Alberta to show up to the auction with cash.) She turned the hospital into a hotel, beauty salon, barbershop, and a nightclub called the Rumpus Room. One year before Alberta's appeared in the *Green Book*, Ellis purchased ten acres of land just west of the city to grow produce for the hotel's restaurant. A bed-and-breakfast on site provided additional lodging when the hotel was fully booked.

Alberta's was a family-run operation that served everyone, from Route 66 motorists to celebrities passing through. The Drifters, a teenage Stevie Wonder, the Imperials, and the Harlem Globetrotters could be spotted there any day of the week. Alberta's sisters cooked, managed room service, and took care of the laundry while her husband watched over the place. Alberta's grandson, Irv Logan, remembers seeing his grandfather on several Friday nights standing on the front porch with a shotgun before a white mob. "They'd turn up drunk with the bright idea of getting themselves some black girls. Grandpa didn't take kindly to that kind of thing—they'd see he was serious when they saw his shotgun."

Elizabeth Logan Calvin, Alberta's other grandchild, said in a 2018 interview that she no longer drives on the highway at night, especially in light of what we've seen in the Trump era. She said, "I don't feel comfortable." Like his grandfather, Irv Logan carries a firearm for protection. "My ancestors taught me: hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Now I'm always prepared for the worst."

It's likely black Missouri residents weren't surprised by 2017's NAACP-led Missouri travel ban. This was no doubt especially true for those who live near the Ozarks, in the southern part of the state. Driving through the Ozarks has never been safe for black people, and when the *Green Book* was published, the threat of physical violence and even lynching was real. With no Internet or Black Twitter, black motorists on Route 66 had no way of knowing that they should avoid a tourist site called Fantastic Caverns, in Springfield. It was advertised as a fun, kitschy drive-through cave, but it was

run by the Ku Klux Klan, and they held their cross burnings inside the cave. Fantastic Caverns is still open today, but the Klan no longer runs it.

It was places such as Fantastic Caverns that made every mile of Route 66 feel less like a fun adventure and more like a minefield. Also, since the route crossed two-thirds of the continent, motorists were bound to run into any kind of weather. Chicago has the most brutal, bitterly cold winters in the country, and in the fall, Oklahoma can be windier and colder than Chicago. Summer in Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas can be oppressively humid, and temperatures can reach over a hundred degrees in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California's Mojave Desert.

From Springfield, Missouri, it was another fifty miles along Route 66 to find the nearest *Green Book* hotel, in the town of Carthage, Missouri. And there was only one option: Hap's. But thankfully, fifteen miles away, the town of Joplin had a hotel and five tourist homes.

Once black motorists left Carthage, they drove thirteen miles along Route 66 through the southeastern corner of Kansas and then dipped into Oklahoma, which was notorious for Klan activity. Approximately seventy miles west of the Oklahoma border, black motorists likely avoided the Grand Café in Claremore, with its EAT NIGGER CHICKEN sign displayed on the turnpike outside Vinita, Oklahoma.

From Joplin, it was about one hundred miles to Tulsa, which had forty-two *Green Book* sites listed over the life of the guide. The majority of these were in Tulsa's Greenwood District, a vibrant black community that happened to also be the site of one of the most devastating acts of terrorism on U.S. soil.

Between the turn of the twentieth century and 1921, the Greenwood District was a wealthy black neighborhood with more than six hundred black businesses. It was home to black physicians, surgeons, lawyers, oil barons, and entrepreneurs, and black residents could patronize thirty restaurants and forty-one grocery stores. Greenwood also had black libraries, parks, churches, hospitals, schools, construction companies, six real estate offices, and a black bus line. Some black residents were millionaires, and some owned private airplanes. Even the bellhops and young shoeshines could count on receiving about ten dollars a day in tips. This was significant, as their salaries were only about five dollars a week. There was so much wealth in the community, and the neighborhood was so prosperous, that Booker T. Washington gave Greenwood District the nickname "Black Wall Street."

Everything changed for the Greenwood District in 1921, when a riot broke out. It started as most race riots do: A young black man was wrongly accused of assaulting a white woman. Once the word spread, a white mob crossed the railroad tracks into Greenwood and looted the businesses there. In less than twenty-four hours, three hundred people were dead and thirty-five square blocks of black homes and black businesses had been burned to the ground, leaving ten thousand black residents homeless. Today, the damage would be estimated at over twenty-six million dollars.

It's no question that long-held resentment from whites fueled the hatred. Amid the smoking embers, the message was loud and clear that if black people achieved too much success, white people would find a way to destroy it.

The Greenwood District was rebuilt, but it never fully recovered from the events of that June day in 1921. The riot predated the *Green Book*, but out of the forty-two *Green Book* listings in Tulsa, the majority of them were in Greenwood.

In the 1950s, Greenwood was still a major tourist destination for black travelers, and one they were proud to visit. The Small Hotel, a *Green Book* site, hosted Louis Armstrong and the swing bandleader Walter Barnes. "I stopped with my entire orchestra at the modern and exclusive Small Hotel in Tulsa," Barnes said, "one of the best equipped in the country having newest electrical fixtures, telephone in each room, bath in every room and modernistic furniture."

Klan meeting at Fantastic Caverns, Springfield, Missouri, 1920s

About seventy-five miles west of Tulsa, black motorists could fuel up at the Threatt Filling Station, in Luther, Oklahoma, before passing through the sundown town of Edmond, Oklahoma. Threatt wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but this black family-owned gas station served Route 66 motorists from 1915 to the 1950s. The family homesteaded 160 acres of land and had built the gas station from the quarried sandstone on their property.

The station is no longer in operation, but the family still owns the sandstone bungalow there. Thankfully, the National Park Service has listed the Threatt Filling Station on its National Register of Historic Places, and the family hopes to reopen the station as a historic tourist site.

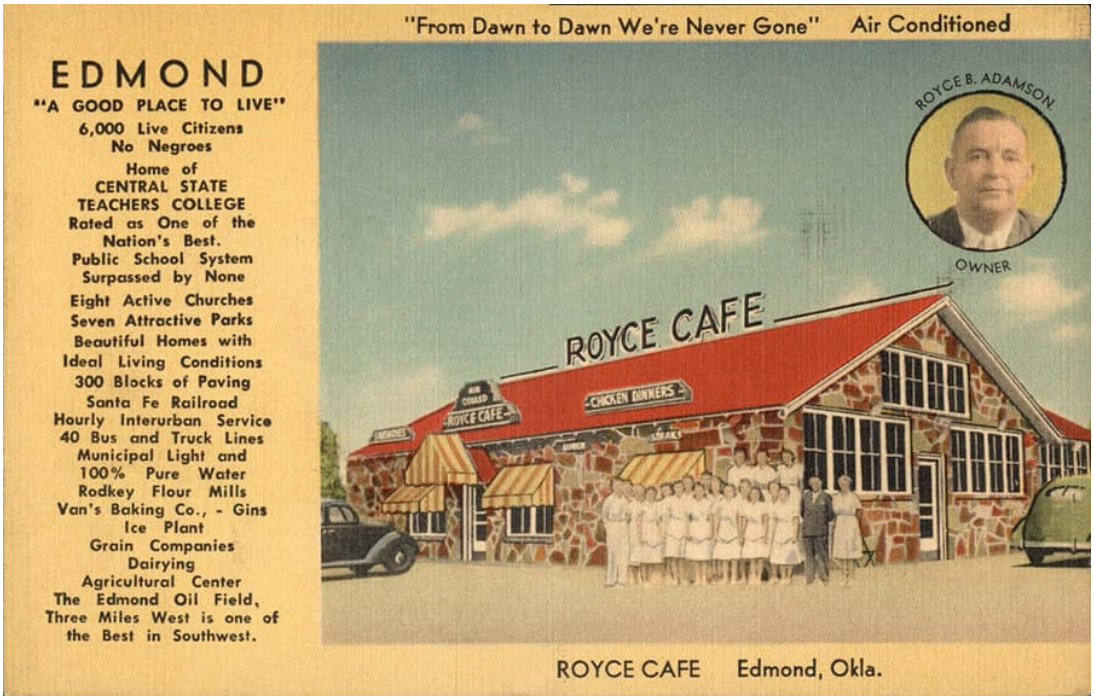
Threatt Filling Station, Luther, Oklahoma

Alan Threatt Sr.’s son, Edmond, remembers having to deal with a litany of restrictions due to his race. Ironically, he was named after a neighboring sundown town, which didn’t hide its hatred for black people. A sign there read, DON’T LET THE SUNSET ON YOU IN THIS TOWN, and the town’s Royce Café proudly announced on its postcards that Edmond was “A Good Place to Live. 6,000 Live Citizens. No Negroes.”

About twenty miles west of Edmond, Oklahoma City was the next major Route 66 stop, with thirty-eight *Green Book* listings. In 1958 it was so segregated that a black teacher of history, Clara Luper, led a sit-in at Katz Drug Store that lasted several weeks—eighteen months before the famous Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins. Luper was arrested twenty-six times, but the sit-ins were so effective that over the following six years they led to the desegregation of nearly every restaurant in Oklahoma City.

Threatt Filling Station, Luther, Oklahoma

Threatt Filling Station, Luther, Oklahoma



“A Good Place to Live . . . No Negroes.” Royce café in Edmond, Oklahoma

Leaving Oklahoma, the farther west black motorists drove on Route 66, the farther apart the cities with *Green Book* listings grew. For instance, from Oklahoma City, Route 66 motorists had to drive 260 miles, to Amarillo, Texas, where they would find thirty *Green Book* businesses. After leaving Amarillo, there were no *Green Book* sites on Route 66 for another 110 miles, not until Tucumcari, New Mexico.

Once black motorists crossed into New Mexico, there were only three cities over a three-hundred-fifty-mile stretch that had *Green Book* accommodations. Once they reached Albuquerque, only six out of the more than one hundred hotels that lined Central Avenue would rent a room to them. Folks who didn't have a *Green Book* would have had no idea which six motels those were. Many travelers were so exhausted by the time they reached Albuquerque that they were getting into accidents. As reported in an *Albuquerque Tribune* article in August 1955, the state police chief determined that one accident that took six lives had been caused by "speed and fatigue." Edward L. Boyd, an NAACP official, said he wasn't surprised that six black people had died due to fatigue. "They could not have found a welcome [sign] at any of the [motor] courts on Route 66 from the Texas border to Albuquerque," and the motels are "consistent in their refusal to accommodate Negroes."

The De Anza Motor Lodge, on Central Avenue in Albuquerque, wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but it did serve black travelers. Built in 1939 and run by a prominent Zuni trader, the Spanish Colonial–Pueblo Revival building featured a conference room with seven twenty-foot murals painted by a Zuni artist. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the building was slated for demolition to make way for an Albertsons grocery store, until the city of Albuquerque purchased it in 2003. The property sat abandoned for another decade, until it was used as a film site in the television drama *Breaking Bad*. (It appears in the scene where Walter White throws out his spare tire to hide cash from a drug deal while his wife is in the hospital delivering their daughter.)

Leaving Albuquerque, black motorists traveling Route 66 could next find rest 130 miles away, in Gallup, New Mexico. There were three lodging options in Gallup: a tourist home run by Mrs. Sonnie Lewis, the Casa Linda Motel, and the El Navajo Hotel.

De Anza Motor Lodge in Albuquerque, New Mexico

From Gallup, black motorists had to drive 185 miles, to Flagstaff, to find the next *Green Book* sites. (Some black travelers may have known that Harvey Houses served black people, so they could have stopped at La Posada Hotel, in Winslow, Arizona, about 130 miles from Gallup.) Flagstaff didn't have any *Green Book* listings until 1957, but when it finally did, there were four lodging options. The Mountain Villa Motel in Kingman, Arizona (147 miles west of Flagstaff), was listed in the 1957 *Green Book*, and the White Rock Court appeared in the 1956 edition. These were the only listings for Kingman, but considering its status as a former sundown town, they were a blessing. After leaving Kingman, Route 66 climbed deep into the Black Hills, with dangerous, nail-biting curves, and then descended into the Mojave Desert.

White Rock Court, a former *Green Book* motel in Kingman, Arizona

Driving in the southwestern United States was especially challenging for black motorists because they had to travel through triple-digit desert heat, and the threat of car trouble was always looming. If the car overheated, it was unlikely they would find help, as most of the towns didn't offer tow service for black people. If they found themselves stranded on the side of the road, they had to pray that someone would give them a ride. It was also doubtful that they would find assistance from other black people, as the black residents constituted only 4 percent of the population, after whites, Mexicans, and Native Americans.

It's a mystery how black travelers made the trip through this region before the mid-1950s; there was only one Gallup tourist home listed in the 1939 *Green Book*, for example. And it wasn't until 1947 that the *Green Book* had listings for Albuquerque, which was more than six hundred miles from the next *Green Book* site, in Victorville, California, on the western edge of the Mojave Desert.

We can assume that most black families survived because they were prepared, traveling with ample food and camping along the way. Still, it's unlikely they knew how treacherous the trip would be once they reached the Black Hills. Even when I traveled this stretch of Route 66, I was surprised at how narrow the two-lane road was and how sharp the hairpin curves hugging the mountain on the south side, with sheer cliffs dropping off just a few feet from the edge of my tires to the north. Every time a car appeared head-on around a blind curve, I would brake in anticipation, to make sure the other driver hadn't crossed the dividing line and ventured into my lane. Driving through the Black Hills even during the day was a little nerve-wracking, but this was nothing when I imagined what a harrowing trip this would have been for black motorists in the 1950s, especially if it was night and they were tired. There was nowhere to pull over to rest on the hairpin turns, and once they made it to the Mojave Desert, camping was a life-threatening ordeal. The desert brought searing daytime heat, and the temperature could drop to freezing at night. They also had to worry about sidewinders, scorpions, rattlesnakes, and black widow spiders crawling into their camp. The safest option was to just keep going.

The first *Green Book* site a black motorist could find in California was Murray's Dude Ranch, near Victorville, a forty-acre property on the edge of the Mojave Desert. Victorville was a sundown town, but black homesteaders who settled near Bell Mountain, which bordered Victorville, had been there

since the early twentieth century. Murray's was billed as "The Only Negro Dude Ranch in the World"—and it very likely was, since black people were banned from most dude ranches. Thankfully, Murray's offered black Route 66 travelers much-needed lodging, food, and some good old-fashioned Western recreation.

Murray's was owned by a black couple, Nolie and Lela Murray. Nolie was a businessman who owned a cigar store on Ninth Street in Los Angeles, and Lela was a registered nurse. In 1922, they bought the property from a man named Arthur Cook, who attended church with Lela. She wanted to move to the desert to find relief from her respiratory issues, and Cook offered the land to her free of charge, though she paid him one hundred dollars in cash to prevent any future tax, property, or inheritance complications.

Lela dreamed of opening the property to troubled youth. She knew that the solitude and peace of the desert would not only heal her own body, but also provide comfort to inner-city children, who suffered from fear, stress, and poverty. Some children were sent to the ranch by the courts, some came to heal their asthma, and others came to relax, swim, and learn how to ride horses. By 1937, the Murrays had turned the property into a dude ranch, offering black travelers a rare and unusual opportunity to experience the Old West. One man wrote to the Murrays, "I am a bachelor. I like to ride horseback very much. I have always wanted to spend a few weeks on a dude ranch. Being colored, I doubted that I would ever have the chance."

In 1937, *Life* published a feature article introducing the dude ranch to the world. This helped put the Murrays on solid financial ground. By the end of the 1930s, the property had twenty buildings and offered lodging, dining, horseback riding, and swimming. There was also a fenced-in baseball diamond and a tennis court. Two black Westerns, 1939's *Harlem Rides the Range* and *The Bronze Buckaroo*, were filmed there.

Over the next decade, Murray's gained in popularity with celebrities such as Lena Horne and Hedda Hopper, and it wasn't long before it made the cover of *Ebony* magazine. Joe Louis trained here in the 1940s, which caught the attention of *Life* magazine photographers who were in town to work on another story.

Paul Williams, a black architect, also vacationed at Murray's. Williams was well known among Hollywood stars, having designed homes for Frank Sinatra, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Tyrone Power, and Anthony Quinn, as well as a few hundred residences in Beverly Hills and Bel Air. In the 1940s Williams

designed elements of the Ambassador Hotel, a *Green Book* site that became infamous after Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated there; and in the 1960s he collaborated with designers to build the futuristic structures at the Los Angeles Airport.

Murray's was fully integrated, and was one of the first sites in this part of the country where white and black children played and swam together. After seeing black and white children together, a white woman staying at a nearby ranch wrote a story about how much it had touched her.

Murray's Dude Ranch, a former *Green Book* site on the edge of the Mojave Desert near Victorville, California

As Murray's became more popular, it received even more attention, praise, and inquiries from all over the country. Lela made sure to inform all the people interested in coming to the ranch that black people owned it. And they came anyway. The Murrays hosted about one hundred people every week.

The Murrays sold the ranch to Pearl Bailey in 1955 for sixty-five thousand dollars. Rumor has it that Bailey drove her pink Cadillac on the dirt roads around Bell Mountain. Unfortunately, nothing is left of Murray's Dude Ranch today, but Bailey's home, which was located directly across the street from the ranch, is still standing.

Clifton's Cafeteria, a former *Green Book* restaurant in Los Angeles, California

After Murray's, it was another seventy miles on Route 66 to Pasadena, California. This wasn't a good place to stop: There were no *Green Book* sites, and some of the pools in Pasadena allowed black people to swim only on "International Day," which was usually on a Wednesday, the day before the pool was cleaned. Leaving Pasadena, Route 66 then dipped into the busy streets of downtown Los Angeles.

Downtown's most memorable *Green Book* site was Clifton's Cafeteria, on Broadway, a sprawling five-story restaurant located right at the original terminus of Route 66. Diners entered through a wood-paneled tunnel that led to a wonderland of singing birds in a fake redwood forest with terraces, a fireplace, and shrubbery hanging from the walls.

Clifton's Bar in Los Angeles, California

Clifton's was originally owned by Clifford Clinton, a white man who was the son of Christian missionaries. As a boy, Clinton traveled with his parents to China, where he witnessed brutal and abject poverty firsthand. Back home, he couldn't understand how America, a country with so much wealth, could allow its citizens to go hungry. When he opened up his own restaurant, he never turned anyone away—even those who couldn't pay. Clinton followed what he called the "Cafeteria Golden Rule." His menu read, "Pay What You Wish" and "Dine Free Unless Delighted."

Clinton's partners rejected his compassionate business model, but he followed his heart and still figured out a way to make a profit. There were several Clifton's in Los Angeles. The Route 66 location opened just before the first *Green Book* was published but wasn't listed until 1957. (Another Clifton's, located downtown, was listed in earlier editions.) It may have helped that Clinton had several other restaurants in Los Angeles, but his altruism generated free publicity, which turned out to be good for business. At its height, Clifton's served fifteen thousand people a day, and celebrities ranging from Beat writer Jack Kerouac to Walt Disney to science fiction author Ray Bradbury were regulars.

Although the experience most black motorists had on Route 66 couldn't have been more different from that of the average white American, it's comforting to know that they could count on Clifton's. It was the perfect place to end this epic journey.

. . . . . .

Despite the dangers, driving Route 66 was a risk that most black motorists were willing to take, as the call of the open road seduced them just as it did other Americans. And it's not that Route 66 was more dangerous than other trans-American road trips. What makes Route 66 different is the branding associated with it. The "Mother Road" lives on in the hearts of tourists as a beacon of American travel. It became a global icon and is still the most celebrated highway of its time.

Although Nat King Cole sang the Mother Road's catchy anthem, telling motorists to "get your kicks on Route 66," the carefree adventure he was promoting was not meant for him. And even today, much of the marketing surrounding Route 66 tourism is a saccharine reimagination of the postwar

“happy days.” Route 66 tourist shops sell hundreds of products featuring Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Betty Boop, all in an effort to recapture a time that didn’t exist for black travelers, and only rarely for whites. The American ideals associated with Route 66, then and now, have usurped the true narrative, erasing the more harrowing aspects of the road’s past. Today, the Route 66 brand is so weighted with nostalgia that parts of the fabled highway are suffocating under an idealized past that never was.

Route 66 was at the height of its popularity in 1957, a time when black Americans were still fighting for their fundamental human rights. This was the year *Leave It to Beaver* premiered on CBS, Elvis Presley appeared from the waist up on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and Jack Kerouac’s novel *On the Road* was published. However, this was also the year the Arkansas National Guard descended on Little Rock to stop nine black students from entering Central High School and Strom Thurmond staged a twenty-four-hour, eighteen-minute filibuster to block a civil rights bill being proposed in Congress. It was the longest filibuster that ever had taken place on the Senate floor.

Route 66 was a complex network of roads that connected cities through many different configurations and alignments. The most significant factor that changed it was the arrival of the Interstate Highway System. The photo of the freeway on-ramp on the cover of the 1957 *Green Book* was a sign of progress, signifying the arrival of an efficient way to travel throughout the country. Freeways offered a faster way to deliver goods, and the trucking industry supplied stable employment to Americans. Ironically, it was this same Interstate Highway System that killed Route 66. By the 1960s, five interstates bypassed all the small Route 66 towns, and as a result, many fell into ruin and have yet to recover. In 2007, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Route 66 as one of “America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.”

The Mother Road was decommissioned in 1984. The Interstate Highway System was mostly to blame, and Route 66 wasn’t its only casualty. The freeway system was tied into “urban renewal” projects that spanned America, which not only took tourism away from Route 66 towns but also decimated black communities. Urban renewal’s effect on black neighborhoods was even more destructive, as many of the new freeways bisected more black communities than white. While I was scouting *Green Book* sites, I often found a freeway right where a dozen listed businesses once sat. Even Tulsa’s

Greenwood District (Black Wall Street) wasn't spared. Today, Interstate 244 runs right through the middle of it.

In the name of "urban renewal," the U.S. government seized many *Green Book* sites under the statute of eminent domain, and black-owned homes and businesses were bulldozed to make way for "progress." But this wasn't progress. Freeways created physical and psychological barriers, dividing a nation that was already struggling to find common ground. And although this was a time when the country thought it was moving forward, the pendulum was actually swinging backward—and this time, when it did, it literally became a wrecking ball. ♦

9
WOMEN AND THE GREEN BOOK
1959 Edition

Two women standing in front of a car, 1941

The *Green Book* played a critical role in the lives of women. Whether they were traveling across the country or running a hotel, beauty shop, tourist home, or even a sex club, women broke out of traditional gender roles. At a time when they couldn't get credit from a bank or even have their own bank account, black women found a measure of success and independence by listing their businesses in the *Green Book*.

By the 1959 edition, not only were women listing their businesses, but a woman was in charge of the entire *Green Book* operation. Alma Duke Green (Victor's wife) was now listed as the editor and publisher of the guide, and nearly all her staff members were female. (One name is listed as initials, so we don't know the gender.) Victor Green acted as an adviser for this edition, but given that he would die in 1960, it's possible he was too ill and unable to work. In any case, Alma was the perfect person to pick up the baton, because she had been right alongside him since he started the guide in 1936.

Editor Novera Dashiell brought a different energy and tone to the *Green Book*. For example, in her travel piece "Having a Wonderful Time," she describes the amenities on the "Slumbercoach" train, writing, "Seasoned travelers will appreciate the fact the plumbing functions with the bed horizontal." She ends the piece by saying, "Wishing you all a bon voyage. Hope you have a wonderful time. Wish we were there." Dashiell's pieces were practical, her written voice was personable and direct, and her appearance reflected these attributes. She wore short, stylish Marcel waves in her hair, and her decisive eyebrows framed her no-nonsense glasses as she looked into the camera with confidence. Her articles were the few in the *Green Book*s with a byline.

We see more of Dashiell's work in the later editions. With her frank, straightforward approach, she represented a refreshing new voice for the *Green Book*, and her content took a more political turn than Green's had shown. For example, in the same article just quoted, she refers to "tense world affairs," and writes, "Until the fear of war eases, we trust you will use your discretion in limiting your itinerary to the South American and East Indian areas."

Victor H. Green

Alma D. Green

Edith Greene

Dorothy Asch

Evelyn Woolfolk

Novera Dashiell

Page of staff members listed in the *Green Book*, 1961

With Dashiell's strong point of view, she appears to be right there with the reader. In the twentieth-anniversary edition, her pride is clearly on the page when she writes about the development and growth of the *Green Book*. It's almost as if she's talking about her own child. "After twenty years in circulation there are many things to wax sentimental about in retrospect. The conception, the first stumbling steps, difficulties in adolescence, then the ripening years of maturity; when at long last the realization of fulfilment."

Dashiell didn't mince words. She described her fellow staff member Dorothy Asch, the *Green Book*'s public relations representative, as the only "non-Negro member of the staff," and assures readers that even though Asch wasn't black, "she works just as hard and her aims coincide with ours in the desire that the *Green Book* be the best available for the purpose it serves."

Asch and Dashiell were joined by Evelyn Woolfolk, the *Green Book*'s advertising representative. Woolfolk was possibly the longest-serving *Green Book* staff member. She started working for Victor Green in the 1930s, as a secretary, and continuing until 1942, when the *Green Book* took a break from publication due to World War II. During that hiatus, Woolfolk moved to Cleveland, Ohio, and resumed working for the *Green Book* in the 1950s.

When Woolfolk left in the 1940s, Edith Greene filled in as the secretary. She started working for Victor the year she graduated from business school and was described by Dashiell as their "girl Friday."

. . . . . .

Although women ran the 1959 edition, its format isn't very different from the previous edition, with the exception of a couple of pieces. A mail-in form was designed with a rating system so readers could share information about businesses they thought should be listed. Also, an article at the end of the edition, entitled "How to Guard Your Home During the Vacation Season," offered tips on how to "keep the thief away from your door." Most of the suggestions are what you would expect—setting lights on automatic timers, insuring valuables, discontinuing milk and newspaper delivery, alerting neighbors to your absence, and asking them to pick up your mail. The most interesting suggestion was to notify the police of your absence so they could check on your property. This reflects a time when the black community not only knew their local police but also trusted them enough to ask for help.

When she took over the *Green Book* from her husband, Alma Green didn't have to change much; it was nearly perfect as it was. And although Victor is often credited as the sole publisher and creator of the *Green Book*, Alma's role and influence shouldn't be overlooked. It's unknown exactly how much work she did, but it's likely she was a critical force behind the success and longevity of the guide. She also undoubtedly worked on the *Green Book* while Victor was a full-time postman for thirty-nine years.

Their marriage, it seems, was a true partnership. Victor and Alma had applied for their marriage license in Brooklyn, on September 8, 1917, nearly two decades before the first *Green Book* was published. Alma was about twenty-seven years old when she decided to marry Victor. An attractive and strong-looking woman, she was light-skinned—possibly of mixed race, she was listed as "mulatto" on the 1910 Census and then as "black" on the 1920 Census—with short, curly hair, distinct features, and a solid frame.

As far as we know, this was Alma's first marriage. Getting married at the age of twenty-seven was unusually late in life for a woman in 1917. The marriage was also unconventional as the couple never had children, but they were together for forty-three years. Alma lived another eighteen years after she lost Victor, dying in March 1978.

Before Alma met Victor, she worked as a domestic for a family, but after they married, she took care of their home at 978 St. Nicholas Street, in the heart of Harlem's Sugar Hill district. W. E. B. Du Bois, Adam Clayton Powell Sr., and Sidney Poitier lived in Sugar Hill, and Duke Ellington's home was right across the street from the Greens'. Many years later, actress Ruby Dee lived down the street from Victor Green's home. "I wouldn't trade my upbringing and life in Harlem and in Sugar Hill for anything," Dee once said. "It was a fabulous time."

You didn't have to be wealthy to live in Sugar Hill, but it was a neighborhood of people with class, and Alma and Victor fit right in. They were a stunning couple. Victor was distinguished, tall and handsome, and Alma was always dressed in her finest. Even at home, she wore furry, heeled slippers to match her housecoat.

Between the ages of four and six, Alma's niece Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot would go to the Greens' house every day after school, along with her brother and sister. Sara remembered that the Greens kept a nicely appointed, comfortable, and fashionable home. And it was spotless. Sara's sister, Paula Wehmiller, writes about her memories of those days at the Greens' house in

the 1950s:

> After a long day at school, Aunt Alma's dressing table mirror was my little sanctuary. Coming back to the reflection of that strong, tough, bright-eyed, brown-skinned girl was a relief to me and a daily homecoming. My brother, Chuck, sister Sara, and I—six, five, and four years old—had spent the day at an all-white private school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan . . . After school, while our parents were still at work, we got dropped off uptown at Aunt Alma and Uncle Bob's [Alma's brother, the musician whom Victor "managed" and who taught voice lessons in the house] house at 155th and St. Nicholas in Harlem. We tumbled one, two, three out of Mr. Lemon's woodie-sided station wagon–taxi onto the sidewalk and up onto the stoop. My brother, the oldest, in the lead, managed the big heavy outer doors that opened to the old, once grand, marble-floored lobby and the deep, damp rich smell that it held.
>
> Aunt Alma was married to handsome Uncle Victor who was a postman and wore a uniform. I loved to be at the kitchen table when Uncle Victor came in after his rounds. He'd put his postman's cap up-side-down on the table and hike his blue-grey trousers up as he straddled one of Aunt Alma's yellow vinyl chairs. His legs were so long that his knees met the edge of the table. Aunt Alma had already poured the coffee, and as I watched, Uncle Victor performed his daily ritual of adding cream until it came right up to the brim of the cup, then adding three spoons-full of sugar. When he stirred the milky, sweetened brew, it spilled over the top. Now it was time to put down the spoon, take the saucer out from under the cup, and pour the spilled stuff back in the cup. He'd bring the cup expertly up to his lips and pull the liquid into his mouth with a delicious slurp. Uncle Victor and the coffee were the same color, and that was the part I liked the best.
>
> I still don't know if Aunt Alma had a regular job, but she often went out to funerals. I knew the days she was going to a funeral by her feet. On regular days, she wore her stockings rolled down toward her ankles and had on house shoes (as she called her slippers) with little heels and open toes and a fuzzy ball with a rhinestone on each. On days when she was going to funerals, she had on black stockings all the way up and

black tie-up shoes with heels.

In the hallway right outside the kitchen was an owl clock whose big white eyes looked up and down the hall, moving in synch with the clicking of the clock. That was the only sound in the hallway besides footsteps. Underneath the clock on a little wooden table with high legs were three ebony elephants walking in a row across a lacy doily . . . At the end of the hallway was the front room. Through the lacy curtains down below and across the park we could see the outfield of the Polo Grounds.

Then there was my favorite room: Aunt Alma's dressing room. Through the French doors off of the front room was a tiny, full, tidy, sunny room. No matter the weather, it was always sunny in that room. This is where my sister and I spent the afternoons, playing in front of the mirror at Aunt Alma's dressing table. Pink and blue and purple crystally bottles with fancy diamond shaped or spherical or pointy tops held sweet potions and perfumes for us to dab on our necks and wrists the way we saw Aunt Alma do. Some of the bottles had squeeze balls with fancy golden nets around them. We were warned not to do too much squeezing or we'd get an un-ladylike amount of fragrance on us. Hand mirrors and wooden hair brushes with traces of Aunt Alma's blue-tinted hair, great silver hair pins and hair combs were props for our afternoon of high drama. It was here after a long day at a school full of people who looked unlike me, after a day of struggling with puzzling images, that I came home to myself.

. . . . . .

In some states, hotel options in the *Green Book* were limited, so black travelers stayed in private residences listed as "tourist homes." These became popular after the Depression and were run primarily by married women who rented rooms in their houses. Renting out rooms was a way for families of all races to earn extra income. Most rooms were available for a dollar a night, and a warm meal cost seventy-five cents. Visiting a private home can leave a lasting impression. Unlike commercial spaces, they are personal and intimate. Every piece of furniture and art and each photograph, plant, curtain, and knickknack has been collected over years and handpicked by the owner. It's

possible that these tourist homes were the first Airbnbs.

More than fourteen hundred tourist homes were listed in the *Green Book* during its publication. And when it came to class, the tourist home was the great equalizer. Those who couldn't afford a hotel could likely afford a tourist home.

Gary Kirksey's grandmother owned a *Green Book* tourist home, in Alliance, Ohio. He remembers: "It was a very large brown house. There was a parlor, restrooms upstairs and downstairs. There was a grape arbor in the back and a screened-in porch for people to relax all summer long."

Tourist homes left people with fond memories of their travels. Baxter F. Jackson wrote about a tourist home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, called Blank's Riverview Cottage: "We rolled up to Mrs. Blank's home where we met some friends who came in from NY and were just starting their vacation. There is a quiet, restful calm about the place that puts you in the mood for enjoying a rest, and if a man digs his grave with his teeth, as I have been told, I hope I can dig mine with Mrs. Blank's cooking. In the evening it was nice to sit around and talk to Mr. Blank who had spent some of his younger years in the Navy. I can assure you that you cannot lend your ear to a more absorbing story-teller."

Tourist homes were also the perfect place to build social networks because they were intimate, relaxing environments where vacationers could let their guard down, share a meal, tell a few stories, and make memories. In states where no *Green Book* hotels were listed, tourist homes could be lifesavers. In fact, 90 percent of all the *Green Book* sites in Nebraska and Michigan (except in Detroit) were tourist homes.

Tourist homes were also places where black travelers were sure to get a warm meal. Usually, if they were in a town with no commercial *Green Book* restaurants, they had to fill up on cold cuts from grocery stores. Some cities, such as Springfield, Illinois, listed fourteen tourist homes, but during the entire time the *Green Book* was in publication, not one restaurant there was listed.

A former *Green Book* tourist home in Douglas, Arizona, near the U.S.–Mexico border

In addition to tourist homes, the *Green Book* featured traditionally "female" businesses, such as hair salons and beauty colleges. There were just under nine hundred beauty shops listed in the *Green Book* during its life. St. Louis, Missouri; Buffalo, New York; Kansas City, Missouri; and Wilmington, North Carolina, listed twice as many hair salons as they did food and lodging options. Other cities had an even wider disparity between salons and hotels. For example, Boston had forty-three salons and sixteen restaurants but only five hotels. San Antonio had fifteen beauty shops and five hotels, while Milwaukee had fifteen salons but only two hotels.

The uneven ratio of hotels to salons in the *Green Book* wasn't intentional on the editor's part. Most likely there were simply more black-owned beauty shops than hotels—which was no surprise. Beauty salons were active, long-standing businesses in a community, providing a safe place where people could sit for hours. Amid the aroma of corrosive chemicals and the clicking of curling irons, customers could let down their hair, literally and figuratively, and spill their secrets in the comfort of cushioned vinyl.

Salon operators were not just hairstylists; they were pillars of the community. During the time salons were listed in the *Green Book*, some of them served as headquarters for community development, especially during the birth of the civil rights movement. At election time, stylists drove their clients to the voting booth, and since the NAACP was considered a radical organization, some clients had its literature delivered to the beauty shop instead of to their homes. And you could usually find a copy of the *Chicago Defender* sitting on tables in the waiting area or in the magazine racks between hair dryers, next to *Jet* and *Ebony*.

Of the seventeen beauty schools listed in the *Green Book*, the two most popular were Madam C. J. Walker's College of Beauty Culture and Annie M. Turnbo Malone's Poro Colleges. Malone started the Poro schools in 1917, and although she passed away in 1957, eight of her schools were still listed in the 1959 *Green Book*. They were scattered throughout the United States, including in New Orleans; St. Louis and Jefferson City, Missouri; and Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to teaching cosmetology, Poro Colleges served as retail outlets, selling hair products for men as well as women. The Parkway Street location in Chicago was listed in the *Green Book*, and Earl Hutchinson remembers going to that one and said, "You could buy every type of hair dressing product" there.

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Madam C. J. Walker's advertisement in the *Green Book*

Walker and Malone revolutionized the black hair care industry by creating unique products to condition, grow, and straighten hair, which resulted in unprecedented wealth for both entrepreneurs. They trained thousands of women throughout the nation to use their hairstyling techniques, sell their products from door to door, and run their own businesses. Working for Walker or Malone offered independence, power, and freedom from cleaning up after white people. As the automobile industry lifted black men out of poverty and into the middle class, the hair industry did the same for black women.

The Velvatex College of Beauty Culture in Little Rock, Arkansas, is still in operation. In the early 1950s, its president, Mary Ellen Patterson, who established sorority chapters of the service organization Alpha Phi Omega throughout the state, took her students to do hair for free twice a month at the State Hospital for the mentally ill. Updates on what was happening at the Velvatex College were regularly covered in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Chicago Defender* featured Velvatex news by celebrating the school's graduates.

In addition to beauty shops, another female-branded *Green Book* site was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Founded in 1855, the YWCA is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country and a pioneer in women's and civil rights. The first African American branch opened in Dayton, Ohio, in the 1890s. In the 1930s, the YWCA encouraged its members to take a stand against lynching, and by the 1940s the organization had rallied to end racially segregated housing throughout the country.

Not only did YWCAs supply much-needed lodging for women, but they also helped black women find employment and guided them on how to dress and prepare themselves for interviews. They were a welcome asset in the community.

The *Green Book* listed forty-seven YWCAs, and three of them were named after the legendary Phillis Wheatley, the first black female poet published in America. Phillis arrived in Boston in 1761 on a slave ship and was purchased by John Wheatley. Wheatley's wife recognized that Phillis had a unique talent with words and supported her education. Young Phillis studied the classics and, eventually, learned to read ancient Greek and Latin. By 1773 she was emancipated from slavery and had published a book of her poetry. Over the following century, Phillis Wheatley became a celebrated

symbol of creativity and intelligence, as her poems inspired abolitionists and civil rights leaders. In addition to the YWCAs, eight *Green Book* hotels were named after her.

Green Book YWCAs and lodging facilities named after women were critically important to female travelers, as they signaled a welcome to a segment of society often seen as second-class citizens. In the period the *Green Book* was in publication, traveling alone for women was still frowned upon, and in many cases, if a woman walked into a hotel lobby alone, she could be labeled a prostitute. Not only were women restricted from renting rooms in reputable hotels, but some hotel policies wouldn't even allow them in the lobby if they were unaccompanied by a man. When traveling with a man, women were often advised by etiquette books to be discreet and stay out of public view. And in some cases it wasn't unusual for them to be directed to a "ladies' entrance."

It wasn't just at hotels that women were being scrutinized. Police and property owners were on high alert when a single woman appeared in a neighborhood. In fact, when police stopped waitresses walking home from work and found their tip money, they accused them of being prostitutes. It was considered suspect for any woman to be carrying cash.

Very few women even signed hotel registers in the early part of the twentieth century, which is why gutsy single female travelers of this time should be celebrated. They exuded an air of independence and navigated the country in a way that most men and society frowned upon—and yet they did it anyway.

Prostitution was a hot-button issue in America while the Green Book was in publication. Some policemen entrapped businesses by going undercover and bringing prostitutes into hotels to see if they would be solicited. This happened at the Cadillac Hotel, a *Green Book* site run by Myrtle Williams and located in Washington, D.C.'s Logan Circle, a highly desirable neighborhood lined with historic brownstones. Williams eventually sold the building, and today the neighborhood is predominately white.

Although there were plenty of situations in which women and business owners were innocent of prostitution, one *Green Book* site was anything but innocent. The 101 Ranch, also known as the Daisy Chain, was a sex club and gay cabaret run by an international singer and chorus dancer named Hazel Valentine. Valentine employed sex workers to perform live sex acts throughout the club. Customers could join in, and there was no sexual fantasy

or fetish that was off-limits. The 101 Ranch also featured a chorus line of drag queens, the most memorable being Clarenz, a six-foot-tall female impersonator and acrobat.

Local columnist Ron Ottley described the Daisy Chain as a “sin spot” serving “slumming whites.” Jazz bassist George “Pops” Foster remembered the Daisy Chain as “a house of prostitution and drinks and everything . . . Women goin’ with women, men goin’ with men, nobody paid it any mind, everybody was gay and havin’ a ball. [It] was a big railroad flat house, with these rooms over here and rooms over there and a long hall, and you’d see people on the floor getting’ their thing. You had to pay five dollars apiece, and everybody got buck naked and everybody was ballin. Half coloured, half white. Hell yeah, real integrated.”

Hazel Valentine wasn’t a prostitute. She performed as a dancer throughout the United States and in Europe, including with Josephine Baker in her Paris show, *La Revue Nègre*. But she found fame back home, where her 101 Ranch was wildly popular. Billie Holiday was a regular at the 101; Fats Waller wrote a song about it, called “Valentine Stomp”; and Count Basie wrote his “Swinging at the Daisy Chain” to commemorate the club.

In 1926, a public scandal broke out when Valentine was arrested for shooting her husband, Albert Valentine, in the torso. (He survived.) It’s unknown if the shooting was in self-defense, and the case was dismissed. A decade after, more tragedy fell upon Hazel’s club when she lost her drag queen performer Clarenz to suicide.

The Cadillac Hotel, a former *Green Book* site in Washington, D.C.

The 101 Ranch was listed only in the 1938 *Green Book*. After a citywide crackdown on sex clubs and prostitution, it closed the following year. It was likely the only sex club listed in the guide.

Another *Green Book* site with a strong woman in charge was the Macon Hotel in Columbus, Ohio. Built in 1888 and run by Blossie Edwards, in its heyday the Macon featured Big Maybelle belting out her raw, unbridled blues. There were other performers, such as Gloria Jean, a female impersonator who claimed to own fifty thousand dollars' worth of clothes—more than impressive even now, but in those days, astronomical. During performances, Gloria would say, "I love the life I live and live the life I love."

In the 1940s, Blossie Edwards filed for divorce from her husband, Gregory, who owned the Madonna Apartments, another *Green Book* site. The Cleveland *Call & Post* reported that Blossie was charging her husband with gross neglect. "[He] stays out all night . . . consorts with other women in Columbus and elsewhere . . . drinks to excess and often comes home drunk." She also accused him of going to the Macon and stealing money out of the cash register for his personal use.

The Macon Lounge, a former *Green Book* site in Columbus, Ohio

The Macon was a popular hotspot beloved by two generations of my own family. At around the age of twenty, my mother regularly went there. She remembers that “after a night out dancing, we’d always end up at the Macon for breakfast. And then I’d go home, change my clothes and go to work. Oh, to be young again.” My stepfather, Ron, went there when he worked in law enforcement. “We had to keep an eye on the numbers racket running out the place,” he said. “We didn’t bother them—just had to keep an eye on them. They had the best burgers.” And my sister, Aimee, remembers going to the Macon in the 1980s. “After the clubs closed,” she told me, “then we could go to the Macon and drink until four in the morning. We’d come out and it would be daylight.”

Ms. Geneva Haugabrooks, owner of Haugabrooks Funeral Home in Atlanta, Georgia

Another remarkable black businesswoman was Ms. Geneva Haugabrooks, who ran a funeral home on Auburn Street in Atlanta. Her husband drowned soon after she opened in 1929, and she never remarried. She began the business with only three hundred dollars and kept it going until 1977. During its height, she buried about a thousand people a year. Marcus Wimby—Geneva was his grandfather's aunt—runs the business today. "Ma" Haugabrooks knew everybody in town, he told me. She would sit on the porch and wave at people who passed by and tell them, "I'm gonna get you one day. I'm gonna get you one day."

The El Navajo, a *Green Book* hotel in Gallup, New Mexico

“Ma” Haugabrooks was an easygoing but also very powerful woman. “She owned Atlanta,” Marcus said. “She went to the Cadillac dealership on Spring Street . . . she wasn’t well dressed or anything, so the salesman didn’t think she had any money, so he blew her off. The manager knew who she was . . . fired the salesman, [saying,] ‘Do you know who you just disrespected? That’s Ms. Geneva Haugabrooks.’ Because she would buy three or four [Cadillacs] at a time.”

Ma Haugabrooks even had clout with law enforcement. As Marcus remembers, after one of her employees was picked up by the police, when he said he worked for Ms. Haugabrooks, the white police officer didn’t take him to jail. He took him to Ms. Haugabrooks and asked, “What do you want me to do with him?”

Scores of other women owned sites listed in the *Green Book*, but one woman, Mary Jane Elizabeth Colter, actually built one: the El Navajo, in Gallup, New Mexico.

Colter was an Irish woman with dark features, a robust nose, and full lips. Called an “incomprehensible woman in pants,” she rode horseback “through the Four Corners making sketches of prehistoric pueblo ruins, studying details of construction.” These descriptions of Colter make sense because, in the early twentieth century, she was the head architect and interior designer for the Fred Harvey Company. Since Harvey had an exclusive contract with the National Park Service, Colter had a long and distinguished career that lasted more than forty years. While most Americans treasured European culture and design, Colter loved the look of the great Spanish and Mexican haciendas, feeling that the designs rooted in Native American, Spanish, and Mexican cultures were undervalued and ignored.

Colter attended the California School of Design in San Francisco, where most of her classmates were female. While she was there, she apprenticed at an architect’s office, and she went on to pioneer an architectural style that blended Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival designs and used colors, textures, and surfaces native to the surrounding southwestern landscape. Colter was unique because she brought these outdoor elements inside, a radical idea for the time. Predating Frank Lloyd Wright, she was arguably the first architect to merge the interior and exterior in such an original fashion. Colter was also one of the first women to become prominent in the profession, and she revolutionized the field of interior design and architecture. Her rustic, earth-centered exteriors were balanced with softly

rounded sandstone edges, and her interiors were punctuated with bold, aggressive, and angular geometric art deco patterns. Her signature southwestern style set her apart from her contemporaries and has endured the test of time. Colter is considered one of the most important architects of the early twentieth century.

In addition to Colter's talent, it was likely her fierce and fiery spirit that enabled her success. She was confident in her designs and rarely yielded to a man's will. For instance, when she designed a hotel at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, she decided to call it "Phantom Ranch," an allusion to the area's mystery and intrigue and referencing nearby Phantom Creek. The National Park liked Colter's designs but wanted the name changed to "Roosevelt's Chalets." Colter was offended, and during a meeting with Park officials, she snatched the plans away, saying she wouldn't agree to the name change. "Not if you are going to be using my work," she said. She won the battle and built Phantom Ranch at the base of one of the largest canyons in the world. All the building materials had to be hauled down by mule. It was one of the signature works of her career.

In 1918, Colter designed Gallup's Santa Fe railroad station, and in 1923, just west of the depot, she built the El Navajo Hotel and restaurant, which was listed in the 1957 *Green Book*. The building merged Pueblo Revival and art deco styles with elements of Cubism.

Unfortunately, to widen Route 66, the El Navajo was destroyed the same year it was listed in the *Green Book*, and Colter died a year later.

Just as Mary Colter triumphed in the male-dominated profession of architecture, another woman tied to the *Green Book* made her mark in another male-dominated industry—the world of politics. Her name was Modjeska Simkins.

Simkins set up NAACP chapters throughout the state of South Carolina, so she knew firsthand how difficult it was to get services while traveling. "I worked on the road eleven years," she remembers. "And no matter if I'd have $500 in my pocket, which I didn't have . . . I couldn't buy a hot biscuit if I wanted one on the road. Especially small towns, there was no hot food available."

Along with Frank E. Bethel, Simkins co-owned Motel Simbeth, a *Green Book* site in Columbia, South Carolina. The motel offered a warm meal and cottages that could be rented by the day, week, or month. They were arranged in a semicircle nestled in a wooded area eight miles north of Columbia, on

U.S. Highway 1. The Simbeth was advertised as having "Exclusive Accommodations for Colored Tourists . . . Among the whispering pines."

Simkins was born in 1899 and remembers, "My great-grandmother [and] my grandmother was a slave, and my father was born in [18]70, which is just five years after freedom." She wasn't sheltered from the harsh realities of racism. In fact, her mother read to her about the lynchings that were happening, and her family spoke frankly about the horrors of white supremacy. So, when white supremacists shot up her motel at 8:50 PM on March 15, 1956, Simkins wasn't rattled. It was the second time that week that Motel Simbeth's neon "Colored" sign had been smashed and littered with bullets. The first time, the perpetrators had not only shot up the other side of the sign, but also fired at the porch, near the office. The Simbeth staff were unable to identify the perpetrators in the dark, and the gunmen (or others) came back the following month and shot up the place again.

When reporters came out to cover the story, Simkins didn't have much to say about white terrorism. Later, in an interview about the Ku Klux Klan, she said, "I don't even hate the Ku Klux Klan, because if they're fool enough to do what they want to do . . . just so they don't come here and step off that sidewalk onto my walkway . . . they can build a cross right out there if they want to, but don't come up on my porch."

Simkins didn't let the Confederate flag upset her, either. "They got that thing up there [at the State House] celebrating the Confederacy. There ain't nobody in the depths of Africa going to put a rag up there and say we got our behinds whipped, you see?"

Simkins was fearless, outspoken, and knew her history. She was also a highly intelligent woman, teaching medieval history and civics at Benedict College. She fought to equalize teachers' salaries and get bus transportation for those who needed it, and she frequently spoke out against taxation without representation. She organized several South Carolina NAACP chapters and was one of the founders of the NAACP state conference. She then spearheaded a statewide campaign that eventually dismantled the white primary election so that black people could vote. Columbia finally celebrated Simkins in 1991, when the mayor of the city declared December 5 Modjeska Simkins Day.

Simkins's fierce, independent spirit didn't fall in line with the position of the majority of civil rights activists, so she forged her own path and, on occasion, broke alliance with the Democratic Party. In one interview, she

said, “The Democratic [P]arty then, being the same as the state government[,] disqualified, disenfranchised us, and we were being taxed without representation, just as the colonists were which brought on the American Revolution. My philosophy is [being] an independent. I’m not a South Carolina [D]emocrat because the [D]emocratic [P]arty of South Carolina has never respected the needs of ours to the extent that we didn’t have to fight for what we got.”

When some people, including the governor of South Carolina, accused her of being a Communist, Simkins said, “The fellas in this state are kind of slick. They’ll fool you IF you let them. But they never were smart enough to fool me . . . I told them under [*sic*] no uncertain terms that I was going to sue every so and so that called me a communist. [They] invited me out of the Democratic Party . . . but I had been there before [them] . . . [I]f my being in the party was untenable, *they* would have to move because I had priority. So that was the end of that.”

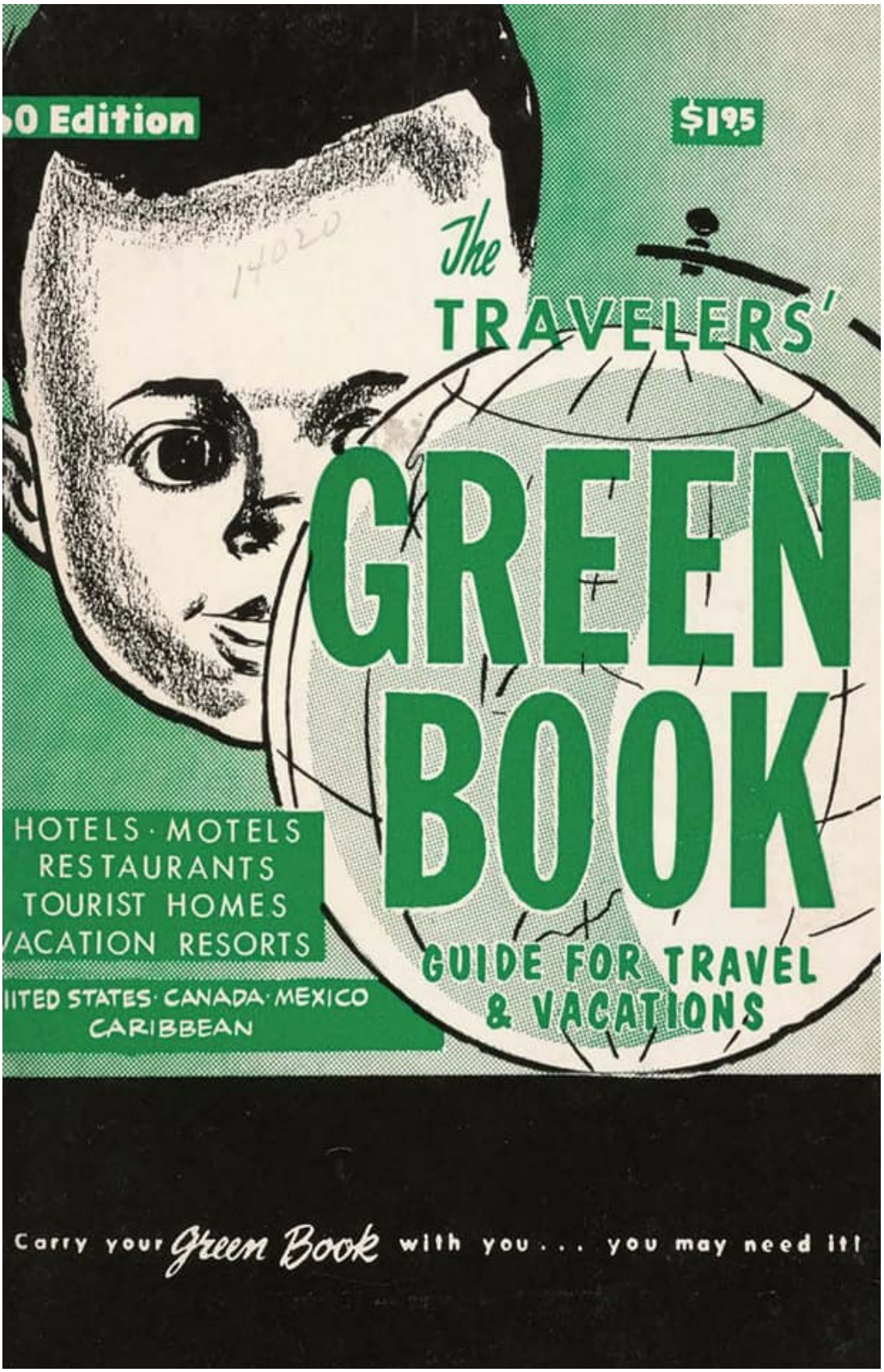
Like all the women in this chapter who thrived in the midst of relentless sexism and racism, Simkins spoke to every woman who has been dismissed or told to step aside. After the Democratic Party tried to oust her, she stood firm and said, “I wasn’t moving. That was my answer.” ♦

10
A CHANGE IS GONNA COME
The Sixties

China

Ron’s comb, “Black Power”

The 1960s was one of the most defining decades of the twentieth century for black Americans. Otis Redding released his hit “A Change Is Gonna Come,” and the Black Power movement emerged, making Americans of all races examine and redefine what “blackness” meant. Chemically processed hair was out, and the afro was in. As black Americans were literally feeling their roots, their stance in the culture was anchored in a strong, upright posture. The quiet, passive, concealed approach was no longer the plan. It’s as if the previous decades’ attempts and failures at integration were the grit that pushed the oyster to make the pearl. Suddenly, black people wanted to show off their jewels. By the end of the decade, James Brown told his brethren to “Say it loud. I’m black and I’m proud!”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Green Book cover, 1960

We see an afro on the cover of the *Green Book* for the first time in the 1960 edition, making it one of the most political editions of the series. The afro is worn by a young black figure. His head sits at the top left side of the cover, behind a large globe of the world. The size of the globe and the head are so similar, it gives the impression they are one and the same. His head is positioned higher than the globe, and it covers his left eye, but it's evident that the world is sitting right in front of him. He's omnipotent—looking at the world and beyond it at the same time.

This cover is also striking because it's the first time we see a person who is unmistakably black on it. Nearly all the figures on previous *Green Book* covers had fair skin with Anglo features that could have passed as white. This struggle to fully embrace traditional forms of blackness is finally gone. Another significant change is that the word *Negro* has been removed from the title. Instead of being the *Negro Travelers' Green Book*, it's simply *Travelers' Green Book*. We don't miss the word *Negro* because once we see this definitive illustration of a black figure on the cover, it's clear it is for black people.

It isn't surprising that the *Green Book* was published for twenty-five years before a black figure with traditional African features graced the cover. In American culture, beauty was (and often still is) defined as having light skin. This isn't to suggest that Victor Green found only light-skinned people attractive, but it does speak to the fact that he was living in a society that revered lightness. The *Green Book* wasn't unique. This oppressive, narrow image of beauty was, and still is, pervasive in black newspapers and magazines. It is a powerful form of oppression.

This aversion to darker skin is called "colorism." In America, colorism was born in the antebellum South, when lighter-skinned black slaves were chosen over darker-skinned slaves to be house servants. Many fair-skinned slaves (primarily women) were not forced to pick cotton under the blazing sun. However, conditions weren't necessarily better in the house. Although they may have been protected from the sun, most servants were not protected from the slave master. Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse were everyday occurrences.

Colorism isn't unique to America; it's an attitude that's way too common all over the world. Although this stigma was planted by American slaveholders, over time it has been upheld by the black community itself. The most blatant manifestation of this was the "brown paper bag test," a cruel,

humiliating exercise in which a paper bag was held next to the face or arm of a black person to see how his or her skin tone compared to the color of the bag. If the person was darker, he or she didn't "pass" and therefore wouldn't be admitted to the black party, sorority, nightclub, or cotillion. Lighter skin opened doors into higher echelons of black society. Even black churches and black universities used the paper bag test in their application process.

Like poison, colorism seeped into black advertising, social activities, and friendships; it even prevented marriages. My mother, who could pass for white, was told by her mother not to marry a dark-skinned man, to keep our bloodline light. So, it was a rebellious act for my mother, a petite, soft-spoken woman who never broke the rules, to marry Ron, a large, deep, umber-toned man.

Having lighter skin was such an obsession for black Americans that both white and black manufacturers advertised skin-lightening creams in black magazines and newspapers throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Just as eating disorders and excessive plastic surgery can be self-destructive ways to achieve a narrowly defined beauty ideal, colorism is an abuse people inflict on themselves. For black Americans, the ongoing struggle has been the pressure to assimilate into a society that reveres light skin, straight hair, and Anglicized features.

While it is wrong and hurtful to shun those with rich, maple-toned skin, being lighter has its advantages—especially in America. In the 1950s, a fair-skinned black traveler might be allowed to stay in a motel with the caveat that, if asked, he would agree to say he was Mexican. Wellington Cox-Howard III, a light-skinned man from Mississippi, drove west with his father in the 1960s, without a *Green Book*. "We were in Kansas or Colorado, someplace where you wouldn't expect segregation," he remembers. "This was in the sixties. My father was [of a medium-brown] complexion, so he would send me in [saying], 'Go on in there and get the room . . . Put your cap on.' As if I could pass. I'd know how to get the room and give the money and everything and then they'd see my father and say, 'Hey, hold on! Who's that?'"

Colored Waiting Room. A rest stop for Greyhound bus passengers on the way from Louisville, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee

Joyce Verrett was born in New Orleans's Seventh Ward. The light-skinned people in her community were called "Passe Blanc," which in Creole means "passing for white." Most were descendants of slave masters. "We knew who they were," Joyce says. "We would get on the bus. They'd sit in the forward section . . . We'd smile, but we wouldn't speak to them because we didn't want to blow their cover. And we [walked] to the back of the bus where we belonged, the brown-skinned of us. But we knew who they were, and we were happy that they were getting over on the white man."

Light-skinned black people didn't always have an easier time traveling, and some preferred to claim their African roots and sit with their friends and family in the back of the bus. Wilbert Verrett, Joyce's husband, remembers, "My wife had two of her cousins, they were real light-skinned, and they would ride the bus. On one occasion they were sitting in the back of the bus and two men, they were from Texas or somewhere . . . said, 'They are sitting in the wrong place!' So the bus driver, he got tired of the commotion that was happening and stopped the bus and told them to move [to the front,] and they said, 'No, we're not supposed to sit up there.' . . . The man got red in the face. They stayed where they was. They didn't want to pass."

Since the Jim Crow era, colorism intensified and then waned, but in the twenty-first century, it's more complicated. In some cases, it depends on where in the country one lives. Espresso-toned women such as actress Lupita Nyong'o are heralded as the pinnacle of beauty, and most major cities have embraced kinky hair. Chemical-free "natural salons" have opened throughout the country, and big, beautiful, tightly coiled curls can be seen regularly in the media.

Although it appears that more black Americans love the skin and hair they were born with, the scars of white supremacy run deep, and in some pockets of the country, colorism still reigns. And overall, America is still a place where darker people are subjected to more violence and discrimination. When his wife, who is white, was expecting their first child, Stefan Wehmeyer, a black man, said, "I prayed that she'd look white, and she does. She will be safe."

It's heartbreaking for Stefan to live in a country where he's afraid to see his skin color in his own child, but as long as black people are twenty times more likely to get shot and black women are twice as likely to be arrested than white women, it's understandable why he feels this way.

The fact that Wehmeyer lives in Sullivan, Missouri, a former sundown

town on Route 66, may well have contributed to his feelings. One year before he said that he hoped his daughter would look white, the NAACP issued its statewide travel advisory for black people driving in Missouri. Soon after, more black Americans began thinking that the *Green Book* should be revived as a tool to keep them safe. Unfortunately, "driving while black" is still a risky endeavor, and even though the *Green Book* could provide information about safe accommodations, black travelers would still have to drive through dangerous locations to get to these places of sanctuary. A revived *Green Book* wouldn't ensure their safety on the highway.

Paula Wynter's parents used the *Green Book* to visit family in North Carolina. One night, they were driving on a two-lane blacktop highway. She remembers, "The sheriff is coming toward us in the opposite direction, and as we drive past, he makes a swift U-turn. My father had a new Buick [with] a New York license plate, and he was very conscious of the New York plates, and in these small towns they know everybody in the town . . . So, anyway, they made a quick U-turn, he [her father] gunned the motor to outrun them, because we were afraid if they stopped us they would kill him or harm us. We were in the car crying. My mother was hysterical . . . He drove really fast. He cut off his lights and took a side road really quickly and drove off down the road, and we sat under a tree until the sun came up. We saw the lights go past back and forth. They couldn't figure out where he was. It was really frightening. I was really young. [We stayed there until] daybreak. Afraid to go to sleep."

The *Green Book* couldn't keep black travelers safe from racist cops, but it was still the best travel aid a black family could have. And for that reason, its popularity continued to grow. By 1962, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that the *Green Book* had a circulation of two million.

The 1960s was a time when there were more black drivers on the road than there had ever been. Four out of five black families owned cars, and three out of four cars were new. The *Chicago Defender* published an article stating that car ownership had risen to "record levels" and that black families were spending "more than one billion dollars a year for auto travel." Although foreign models such as the Volkswagen were popular, black consumers were still enamored with the Cadillac. It was the most expensive American car on the market, and black people were its best customers, outpacing whites.

Owning a car was so important that some black families spent more on

their car than their home. According to the *Defender* article, sociologists found that the car "in some ways [was] more important than a home, because it is the most obvious possession that a man has." Black families were finally living a stable middle-class life, and an impressive car was the outward representation of that status. Many of those who had moved north found good-paying blue-collar, union jobs. Small businesses in black neighborhoods were doing well, too, with a steady supply of local customers and tourists using the *Green Book*. In the introduction to the 1961 *Green Book*, editor Novera Dashiell writes, "With greater job opportunities, higher incomes and paid vacations the Negro has come into his own."

For many black families, the pendulum of equality in the form of financial security was swinging forward, but unfortunately, money couldn't buy equal treatment. The *Defender* article also reported that although more black people were purchasing cars, racism in the auto industry hadn't changed with the times. "There have been a bare minimum of Negro auto salesmen in showrooms for years, and little has been done in direct advertising . . . in Negro newspapers, or in other media to reach the Negro car buyer . . . There is still a timidity about actively selling to the Negro. There are few showrooms in Negro communities, few Negro auto salesmen . . . There are some in the auto field, who predict that the first big company that aggressively goes out to sell to the Negro will reap a bonanza in sales. But the saying around Detroit and the auto ad agencies is that 'No one wants to get his feet wet first.' "

Chrysler became the exception to this, and broke the mold when, in November 1963, it offered Ed Davis, a black man, his own dealership. After being in the business for twenty-eight years, Davis became the first black man to own a dealership from one of the "Big Three" auto manufacturers. He'd started as a machinist at a Dodge assembly plant in 1933 and became a salesman for Chrysler in 1935, in the Highland Park area of Detroit. Since Davis was black, he wasn't permitted to work on the showroom floor and was given a makeshift office out of a storeroom, where he met with prospective black buyers. Still, there was such a high demand from this untapped market that he outsold his white coworkers.

In 1937, Davis opened his own used-car dealership, which was listed in the *Green Book* two years later as "Davis Auto Co." In July 1940, he ran a Studebaker franchise in South Bend, Indiana, where he sold cars to the city's black population for fourteen years. With no bank willing to give him a loan,

he used his entire savings to open the franchise. His business survived the 1943 Detroit race riot, but was unable to survive the wrath of urban renewal. His Studebaker property was demolished in 1956 to make way for the Fisher Freeway.

Davis was forty-nine years old when he signed with Chrysler. He had a fleet estimated at between seven hundred fifty and one thousand new automobiles, and he employed fifty-three people. Chrysler estimated that Davis would sell two hundred fifty automobiles his first year, but he doubled that figure. And within a few years, he was selling nearly a thousand cars, grossing about six million dollars annually. The *Detroit Free Press* reported that Davis "never relied on Chrysler for a single penny of financing."

Davis's dealership was on the black side of town, but he was so good at what he did that within a few years, his white customer base rose from 3 percent to 20 percent. This crossover effect inspired other automobile companies to work with black auto dealers. Change was finally happening in the industry, and just as in the late 1930s, when car ownership helped swing the pendulum of equality forward, the automobile again became a powerful symbol of progress. By the end of the 1960s, fourteen black men had car dealerships. Ford trained six black dealers, and Chrysler trained seven.

Significant change was happening for the *Green Book* as well. When the 1960 edition hit the stands, it cost one dollar and ninety-five cents, a hefty price increase, up seventy cents from the previous edition. In 1961, Alma Green published the Silver Anniversary edition. Over its twenty-five-year tenure, the *Green Book* had grown from a ten-page pamphlet to a 128-page book. And although it was still sold at Esso stations, it could be purchased also on newsstands and in Gimbels department store in New York City. By the 1960s, the *Green Book* had subscribers from all over the world, including, Canada, Mexico, the West Indies, England, and West Africa. Achieving that level of reach at a time when there was no Internet, and when long-distance calls were expensive, was astounding.

In Novera Dashiell's opening statement in the 1961 edition, she looks back over the *Green Book*'s twenty-five-year history. "We have come over a rocky terrain of obstacles and hurdles since 1936. Remember the years of the thirties and forties, when travel to and from any given point was an ordeal if you did not have a copy of the *Green Book*?"

25th ANNIVERSARY 1961 EDITION

The TRAVELERS' GREEN BOOK

GUIDE FOR TRAVEL & VACATIONS

HOTELS MOTELS RESTAURANTS
TOURIST HOMES
VACATION RESORTS

in UNITED STATES · CANADA
MEXICO · CARIBBEAN

Carry your GREEN BOOK with you... you may need it!

Presented with Compliments of

Your Host

Green Book cover, 1961

Addressing race head-on, Dashiell writes candidly about racial freedom and the impact of the sit-in demonstrations happening all over the country. Change was happening both within the *Green Book* offices and out on the streets, and it was becoming increasingly clear that black Americans were no longer going to silently accept second-class citizenship.

Although in the 1960s some cities, such as St. Louis, opened all their restaurants and cafés to black patrons, and segregation in airports was substantially reduced, finding accommodation on the road was still a hit-or-miss proposition. Don Norman remembers driving up the California coast in 1962, while on his honeymoon. "It was late, so we stopped at the first motel we saw in Salinas. There was only one car in the parking lot . . . When we asked for a room, [he said] they were all full, but you could look at the back wall and see that practically every key was there . . . He never called us a curse word or a racially charged word, but we left. We were on Highway 1, it was pitch black and too dangerous to drive, so we stopped one more time[,] at another motel. I think this was called Seaside. We went in, and there was an elderly woman behind the counter. She said, 'Can I help you?' And I said, 'We're looking for a room, but I guess you won't give us one.' And she said, 'Why?' I said, 'Because we're Negro.' She said, 'That's silly. How many rooms do you need?' I said, 'One.' We explained to her that we had just gotten married. She gave us a key to the room. About twenty minutes later there was a knock on the door, and I thought, Maybe she didn't realize we're black. We opened the door, and she had a tea service and a piece of homemade cake, and that made me feel like all is right with the world."

Being served at white-owned establishments was getting a little easier in the 1960s, but even these minor wins didn't happen without strategy and sacrifice. Black Americans were still fighting on the front lines, sitting on stools at lunch counters, and staging boycotts and protests that spilled onto the streets and into living rooms through television screens. As much as the *Green Book* excelled at presenting an ideal solution in the midst of a dangerous reality, by the 1960s, the protests, riots, and bombings happening throughout America were too serious to ignore, and the *Green Book* stepped on board to aid in the civil rights struggle.

As Dashiell writes in her introduction, "Every age across recorded time, had its minority group pinioned in the talons of prejudice. Each race had its torch-bearers. History shows the rewards gained when a race made its own struggle against the ebb and flow of local and national passions. No one

esteems freedom given or sought without it being earned. We have had our torch-bearers . . . 1960 has been quite an eventful year for Negroes in both domestic and foreign affairs. Our young generation with their successful sit-in demonstrations have prodded the older generation to greater effort in the struggle for civic dignity."

Dashiell was likely referring to the efforts led by Ella Baker, who organized the founding conference of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), at Shaw University, in Raleigh, North Carolina, in April 1960. SNCC was one of the most powerful and influential civil rights groups of the sixties.

th Consecutive Issue

OUNDED 1936

By Victor H. Green

Travelers' GREEN BOOK

"Assured Protection for the Negro Traveler"

63-64 EDITION

Published by
TOR H. GREEN CO.

L. A. WALLER
MELVIN TAPLEY
Co-Publishers

s edition of Travelers' n Book is dedicated to our friends and advertisers e cooperation and encour- ent made it possible: Mrs. Green, Reginald Pierre- e, Carlton Bertrand, Atty. Fieulleteau, Atty. Hope ns, Constance Curtis, Al art, William Capitman, chneider, Wendell Colton, Celliers, Ken Brown, asina Norford, Dr. P. M. vory, Ted Shearer, Vondel ls, Frank Palumbo, and

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LOCKHART AGENCY

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Cover by
WILLARD SMITH

Green Book contents page, 1963–1964

RIGHTS GUARDIANS—Congressmen William L. Dawson, Ill.; Augustus C. Hawkins, Calif.; Adam C. Powell, N. Y.; Robert N. C. Nix, Pa.; Charles C. Diggs, Mich., are five stalwarts
ROBT. COTTROL

YOUR RIGHTS, BRIEFLY SPEAKING!

Most people who 'go on holiday,' as they say in England, the Caribbean and other places where the accent is English, are seeking someplace that offers them rest, relaxation and a refuge from the cares and worries of the work-a-day world.

The Negro traveler, to whom the Travelers Green Book has dedicated its efforts since 1936, is no exception. He too, is looking for "Vacation Without Aggravation".

Of course, this is no surprise. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the Congress on Racial Equality. the Students Non-Violence Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Association and other groups fighting for minority rights make it very clear that the Negro is only demanding what everyone else wants . . . what is guaranteed all citizens by the Constitution of the United States.

In fact, the militancy of these civil right groups exhibited in sit-ins, kneel-ins, freedom rides, other demonstration and court battles has widened the areas of public accommodations accessible to all.

Realizing that a family planning a vacation hopes for one that is free of tensions and problems, the Travelers Green Book includes the following brief summary of various state statutes on discrimination as they apply to public accommodations or recreation:

ALASKA	Law bans jimcro in recreational facilities. Violators are subject to criminal punishment (court proceedings).
CALIFORNIA	Anti-jimcro law in recreational facilities. Violators are subject to civil suits for damages plus $250.
COLORADO	Anti-jimcro law in recreational facilities, including discriminatory advertising. Administrative enforcement machinery. Alternatively, enforcement through court proceedings (criminal punishment).
CONNECTICUT	
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	Anti-jimcro law in recreational facilities. Violators subject to criminal punishment, forfeiture of licenses (court proceednqs).
IDAHO	Anti-jimcro in recreational facilities. Violators subject to criminal punishment (court proceedings).
ILLINOIS	Anti-jimcro law in recreational facilities, including discriminatory advertising. Violators subject to civil damages, criminal punishment and injunction (court proceedings).

“Your Rights, Briefly Speaking!” *Green Book*, 1963–1964

Change came to the *Green Book* again in 1963, when Alma Green decided to have Langley P. Waller and Melvin Tapley copublish the 1963–64 and 1966–67 editions—the final two editions. Waller was an engraver for the *New York Amsterdam News,* a popular Harlem newspaper. Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he lived in Chicago before settling in New York City in 1937. Waller, who had a lithography shop, was the first black printer for the *Amsterdam News* and printed posters for the Apollo Theater and for boxer Sugar Ray Robinson. It's unknown how, or if, he knew Victor Green, but he clearly knew about the *Green Book,* because his lithography shop on Lenox Avenue was listed in the 1949 edition. And when Waller moved to New York City a year after the *Green Book* was born, he paid three dollars a week to stay at the YMCA, a *Green Book* hotel on 135th Street.

Melvin Tapley was the editorial cartoonist for the *New York Amsterdam News*. Tapley had illustrated the *Green Book* as well, creating the cover art for the 1959 edition and the image of the figure with the afro that appears on the cover of the 1960 edition. Tapley was described as "quiet" and "soft-spoken," but he communicated a loud message in his politics. He was the president of the Peekskill, New York, NAACP chapter and won numerous awards for his art, including the top prize offered by the National Newspaper Publishers Association for excellence in editorial cartoons. He received his bachelor of arts from New York University and a certificate in art from Cooper Union, and he attended Columbia University for his master's degree. He continued drawing for the *New York Amsterdam News* into the 1990s.

The *Green Book* editions published under Waller and Tapley were double-year issues, the 1963–64 edition and the 1966–67 edition. (To our knowledge, there is no 1965 edition.) Although the *Green Book* was under new leadership, the masthead for the 1963–64 edition still lists "Victor H. Green and Co." as the publisher, and Alma Green is the first person to be thanked in the dedication section, as someone "whose cooperation and encouragement made it possible." Also on the masthead is a photograph of a smiling black woman hugging a palm tree and holding a coconut shell drink in her hands. We think this might be Waller's daughter.

Although the *Green Book* was given the tagline "International Guide" as far back as the 1949 edition, Waller and Tapley added "International" to the main title, and these last two editions were, in fact, more global than the others had been, with nearly seven pages of European accommodation and listings for sites throughout South America and in more than thirty countries

in Africa.

It's clear the guide is in new hands when readers turn to this page and see in bold black letters at the top of the page, "YOUR RIGHTS, BRIEFLY SPEAKING!"

along with a photo of men the editors call "Rights Guardians." These include congressmen from Illinois, California, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Also listed are organizations fighting for black peoples' rights, such as CORE, the NAACP, and SNCC.

The article"Civil Rights: Facts vs. Fiction" opens up with a simple, yet powerful statement: "Most people who 'go on holiday,' as they say in England, the Caribbean and other places where the accent is English, are seeking someplace that offers them rest, relaxation and a refuge from the cares and worries of the work-a-day world. The Negro traveler, to whom the *Travelers' Green Book* has dedicated its efforts since 1936, is no exception. He, too, is looking for 'Vacation Without Aggravation' . . . The Negro is only demanding what everyone else wants . . . what is guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution of the United States."

Using words such as *demanding* signaled a new tone for the *Green Book*. The article outlines antidiscrimination laws for thirty states so travelers know their rights. It also gives readers information on what they could do if they are refused service or treated poorly. In addition, every U.S. Civil Rights Commission office is listed by state.

According to this article, black travelers had no recourse for bad treatment in Montana, New Mexico, or West Virginia, because there were no anti–Jim Crow laws on the books in those states yet. But civil rights violators were subject to criminal punishment in Alaska; Colorado; Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Minnesota; Nebraska; New Jersey; New York; North Dakota; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Vermont; Washington; Wisconsin; and Wyoming. Discriminatory advertising was off-limits in Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington State. Black people who were discriminated against could sue for damages in California, Idaho, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. And violators could lose their business licenses in Michigan and Washington, D.C. The place with the most punitive repercussions, however, wasn't on the mainland; if a business in the U.S. Virgin Islands discriminated against a black person, violators could lose their license and be sued for damages up to five thousand dollars.

Also in these final two editions, Tapley illustrated a section called "*Green Book*'s History Makers," a celebration of successful black figures in history. One was Jim Beckwourth, one of the founders of Denver. A cowboy and fur trapper, Beckwourth also became a chief of the Crow Indians. Another "History Maker" was a man named William Leidesdorff, who built San Francisco's first hotel and was reported to be the first black millionaire in America.

The years spanning the publication of the final two *Green Books* were some of the most tumultuous in the country. Civil rights activist Medgar Evers was assassinated, and four precious little black girls were killed in the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Los Angeles had one of its worst race riots, in Watts, and other riots broke out in Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit. It's prophetic that the 1963–64 edition ends with a large advertisement for Langston Hughes's book *Fight for Freedom*, which chronicles the fifty-four-year history of the NAACP.

When this stage of the civil rights movement was under way, advertisements for books on racial freedom set the *Green Book* apart from other travel guides. In the 1966–67 edition, A. G. Gaston, a third *Green Book* "History Maker," was featured. A self-made millionaire and one of the most successful black businessmen of the twentieth century, Gaston owned an insurance company, a chain of funeral homes, a savings and loan association, a farm, a business college, and a string of motels. He was a powerful man, and he used his money to challenge the status quo. When a white-owned bank hung a Whites Only sign over its water fountain, Gaston threatened to withdraw his funds if it weren't removed.

green book's

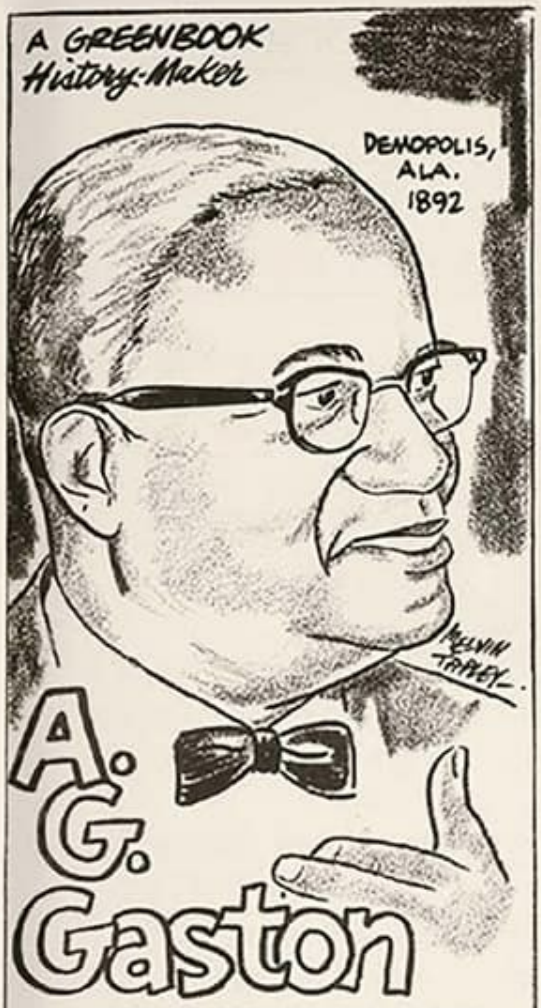
HISTORY-MAKERS

JIM BECKWOURTH

HUNTER AND TRAPPER, HE CAME FROM ST. LOUIS WHERE HE WAS A BLACKSMITH. A U.S. SCOUT, HE WON FAME AS A FIGHTER AND BECAME A CHIEF OF THE CROW INDIANS! HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF DENVER, COLORADO!

© HERITAGE FEATURES

“History Maker” Jim Beckwourth, *Green Book*, 1963–1964



A. G. Gaston

A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE, ARTHUR G. GASTON IS HEAD OF AN INSURANCE CO., A CHAIN OF FUNERAL HOMES, REALTY & INVESTMENT CORP., A SAVINGS & LOAN ASSN., A LARGE FARM, A BUSINESS COLLEGE *AND* A STRING OF MOTELS! HE'S IN THE BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND IS AN NAACP LIFE MEMBER!

“History Maker” A. G. Gaston, *Green Book*, 1966–1967

Gaston's most significant hotel was the A. G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham, Alabama, considered the best place for black people to stay in the city. Before the Gaston, there weren't any dignified motels for black people. Gaston had the place built in 1954, and two years later it was listed in the *Green Book*. A place where his community could feel safe to congregate, eat, and socialize, the Gaston featured thirty-two rooms with custom-made furnishings and was designed to serve high-class clientele. People dressed in their best clothes to attend the parties held in its dining room and to sip signature cocktails in the lounge, where the top musicians entertained the crowds.

Martin Luther King Jr. was the Gaston's most famous regular, holding meetings in his "war room" to organize his troops. The Gaston became the headquarters for Dr. King's comprehensive integration campaigns, and it was here where it was decided that in order to support the local protesters, King would go to jail. This was when he wrote his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

King was at odds with Bull Connor, Birmingham's public safety commissioner. King thought things had been smoothed over, but two days after a truce was signed, just before midnight on May 12, 1963, the Gaston was bombed. There were no casualties, but four people were injured and most of the motel's façade was destroyed. King's younger brother's home was also bombed. These bombings didn't come without a warning. Earnest Gibson, the restaurant manager at the Gaston, had received a phone call the day before, telling him that the Ku Klux Klan was planning to bomb the motel. Officials at the Gaston informed the police in advance, but the attack still went off, without any interference from law enforcement.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Gaston Motel, Birmingham, Alabama

After the bombing, about twenty-five-hundred people (mostly black) rioted in the streets. They threw bricks, bottles, and rocks at police and firemen, slashed their tires, and set fire to six stores and a two-story apartment building. Fifty people were injured, and a policeman and taxi driver were stabbed.

King's executive assistant, Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, emerged from the Gaston with a white handkerchief tied around his arm, calling for peace. Despite his urging the crowd to disperse and go home, the rioting continued until five in the morning. The *New York Times* reported that the police were out in full force, and the "thonk of clubs striking heads could be heard across the street."

Claude Sitton, the author of the *New York Times* piece, reported that King said, "Violence was the 'tactic of the white man' and he urged Negroes not to adopt it." The piece acknowledged that the night the Gaston was bombed, the message wasn't working. "Today's riots, like those that greeted the arrival of the Freedom Riders here two years ago[,] came on Mother's Day," Sitton wrote. "One difference was that in the previous outburst, whites were attacking Negroes."

It was clear that in the fight for civil rights, the tide had turned, and black Americans were being pushed to their limit. A "change was gonna come" by any means necessary. ♦

A. G. Gaston Motel, a *Green Book* site, Birmingham, Alabama

11
INTEGRATION AND THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF PROGRESS
1966 – 67 Editions

Malcolm X photographing Mohammad Ali (born Cassius Clay), Miami, 1964

Just from the cover, it's evident that the final *Green Book* was unlike any other that had been published before. It has a lighthearted, kitschy spirit, and for the first time since 1940, the color green is gone, replaced by turquoise and magenta. An illustration of a woman is featured waterskiing and snowskiing simultaneously, wearing a snowsuit on one half of her body and a bikini on the other. This *Green Book* opens up to a full-page portrait of a man, most likely Langley Waller, and for the first time in the guide's history, there is an entire section on U.S. parades, two pages on camps, and a listing of nineteen caves.

Travelers' Green Book

International Edition 1966-67

FOR VACATION WITHOUT AGGRAVATION!

$1

HOTE

MOTE

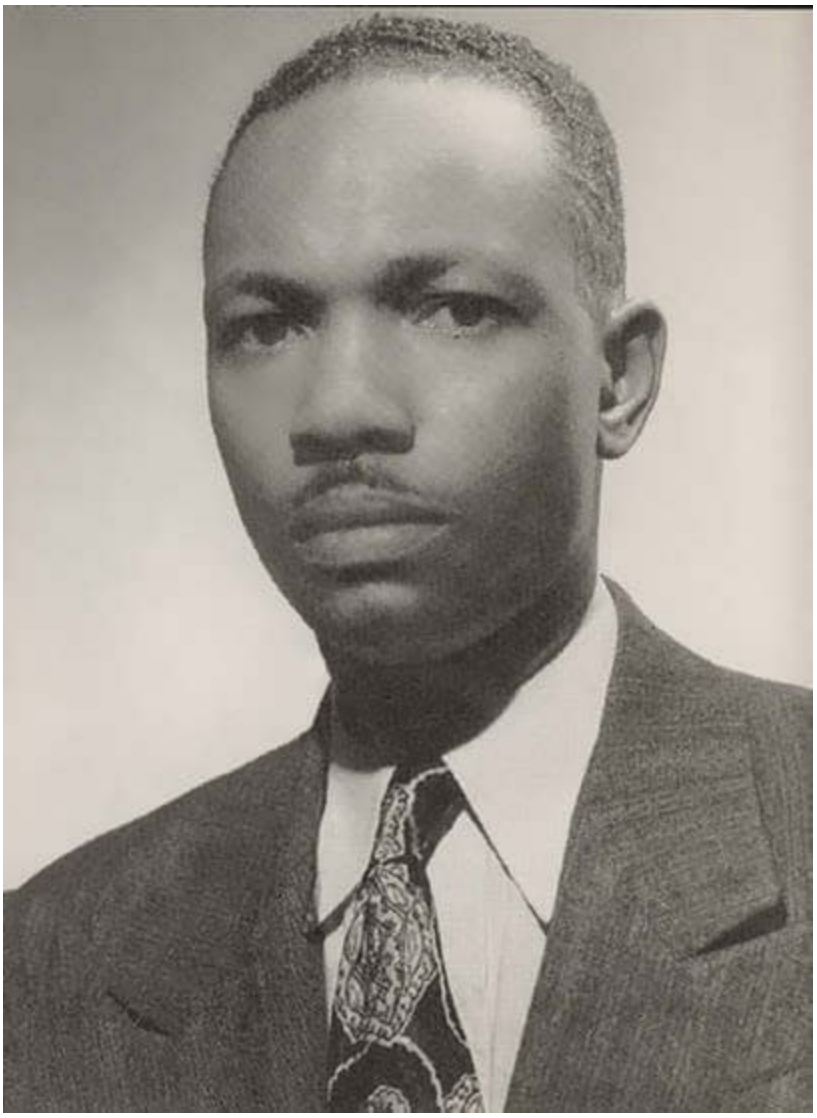
CAMP

VACAT
RESO

EATER

TOUR
HOME

Green Book cover, 1966–1967



Langley Waller, publisher of the *Green Book*, 1966–1967

The final cover is joyful and fun, but inside, the more serious political tenor that had emerged in the 1960 edition continues. This last issue was the only one published after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and it informs the reader immediately (on the second page) that there is "a new bill of rights for everyone, regardless of race, creed or color. Public Accommodations: Effective at once, every hotel, restaurant, theater or other facility catering to the general public must do exactly that."

The 1964 Civil Rights Act was the change Victor Green had dreamed about but did not live to see. His quote, appearing in the introduction for several editions, bears repeating: "There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication[,] for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment."

The 1964 act was the sixth civil rights bill that had been passed since the abolishment of slavery. The first one was written in 1866, one year after passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Another was passed five years after that, to protect black Americans from the relentless terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. Four years later, in 1875, another law made it illegal to ban black people from jury duty, public transportation, and public accommodations—but that didn't work, because by 1883 the U.S. Supreme Court had decided that portions of the act were unconstitutional. It wasn't until seventy-four years later, in 1957, that the next piece of civil rights legislation was passed. This bill was supposed to protect voting rights as well. Clearly it wasn't effective because, eight years later (and one year after the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed), three marches took place in Selma, Alabama, to demand fair and equal voting practices for black people. During the first protest, on March 7, 1965, known as "Bloody Sunday," approximately six hundred marchers were doused with tear gas and beaten with bullwhips, billy clubs, and cattle prods outside the county courthouse in Selma. More than one hundred people were injured and more than fifty hospitalized. It seems that after all the failed attempts to legislate equality, most black Americans were right not to expect the 1964 Civil Rights Act to be the panacea we learn about in history books today.

This is not to say the 1964 Civil Rights Act wasn't important. It was a critical step toward swinging the pendulum of equality forward, but it didn't happen without a great deal of pressure from the sit-ins led by popular

African American organizations such as SNCC, CORE, the NAACP, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s cohorts and former colleagues. Their concerted efforts pushed the federal government into passing this landmark legislation.

For unknown reasons, the *Green Book* took a hiatus in 1965. It's likely, though, that Waller and Tapley, both having worked for a leading black newspaper in Harlem, knew there would be a need for one last edition of the *Green Book*, which they put out in 1966.

. . . . . .

In the wake of the Civil Rights Act, white business owners found that desegregation increased profits by broadening their customer base, and it gave some of them the courage they had needed to do the right thing. Still, once the act passed, change didn't happen overnight. There were plenty of racist business owners who continued to refuse to serve black Americans, in some cases finding devious loopholes to continue the legacy of segregation. In the South, some restaurants implemented a card-carrying system in which patrons now had to be "members" to receive service, and they made sure that no black people ever joined their club.

But it wasn't just the South that used underhand tactics to keep black patrons out. Other places served black customers while finding ways to exploit them. Don Norman remembers going to Lawry's, a steakhouse in Los Angeles. "I was going to LA City College. I was working on the college newspaper. There was only one other black person on staff [George]. He said, 'I'm never going to Lawry's again. They charged seven dollars and fifty cents for a prime rib dinner.' The editor of our paper said, 'No, that's not what they charge.' We both went [to Lawry's] and brought a date. Not knowing that there was a dual menu system, we noticed that the prices were higher. George and I almost simultaneously turned around to another table and asked to see a menu. It turned out that the prices at the other table, [whose occupants] happened to be white, were different. George asked to see the maître d' and he apologized profusely[,] saying that the prices had changed and we had the new menu. However, I noticed a gravy stain on the one I had. This turned out to be how we found out about the dual menu system."

Black patrons were rightfully frustrated with these scheming tactics of

white-owned businesses, and many didn't want to spend their money at places that disrespected them. Paula Wynter remembers that, when she was a child, her father refused to patronize white-owned establishments. When they were on vacation, he told a black hotel owner, "I'm not staying where they don't want me . . . I'm not going to eat in their establishments . . . I'm not going to patronize them in any way."

Wynter's father knew that his power lay in where he chose to spend his money. But now that black travelers were suddenly free to go anywhere, many wanted to try white businesses that had previously shut them out. So the new law ended up putting pressure on black business owners to keep the customers they had. The editors of the *Green Book* were discerning enough to have addressed this issue three years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act. In the 1961 edition, editor Novera Dashiell writes, "He [the black traveler] is selective. He is no longer content to pay top prices for inferior accommodations and services. White owners have come to realize the enormous economic power of the Negro. Conversely, our businessmen must now raise and maintain a higher standard to compete for our people's patronage."

Ultimately, the *Green Book* wanted black tourists to have the same options that were available to white Americans. So, after desegregation, it listed white-owned luxury hotels that hadn't appeared in earlier editions, such as the Claremont, in Oakland, California; the Sir Francis Drake, in San Francisco; and the Benjamin Franklin, the place where Jackie Robinson had been denied service when he arrived in Philadelphia with his teammates in 1947. Waller and Tapley added even more high-end hotels, such as the Bel-Air, in Los Angeles; the Drake, in Chicago; and the Waldorf Astoria, in New York City. They also listed the top clothing stores, such as Brooks Brothers, Macy's, and Bergdorf Goodman.

Including upscale establishments in the *Green Book* had its advantages, but the downside was that it took customers away from the black-owned businesses that had been listed there for decades. In the 1956 edition, Victor Green had published a letter from the Nationwide Hotel Association (NHA), a black hotel organization, warning black businesses about this problem. The piece cautioned that in light of racial integration, the "Negro businessman is not prepared to enter the market serving all people. The NHA is aware of this problem and believes that the salvation of the Negro businessman, particularly in the hotel industry[,] lies in raising standards. Mr. Dykes

Brookins said at a reception at the Dunbar Hotel in Washington, D.C., 'I am convinced the Negro traveler would just as soon shop among his own if he could get—not comparable, but fair accommodations.'" A campaign to urge every NHA hotel owner to make improvements in his or her property in order to compete with white businesses was put in motion. The NHA assured readers that "standards are being raised, services are being improved, buildings are being modernized and well-equipped motels are being built throughout the country where they are needed. When you are traveling, stop at a hotel, motel or guest house that displays the NHA emblem—they are 'Your friendly hosts from Coast to Coast.'"

The problem wasn't just that some black venues were "inferior." Once black people could venture into new areas, they did. However, as more black travelers patronized white businesses, black business owners lost the support they had relied on, and many struggled to keep their businesses open. It was a no-win situation. If black travelers took their money elsewhere, it hurt their community. Yet, if they didn't go to these new places and show white Americans they deserved to be there just like anyone else, the country was never going to change. The stereotype that black people couldn't afford to stay in nice hotels or were too animalistic or "wild" to assimilate into the upper crust of society had to be confronted.

Despite having access now, black Americans were conflicted about pulling their money out of the black community and spending it in white-owned establishments. Some black business owners were even willing to take a financial hit for progress, such as a black hotel owner who told Paula Wynter's father that it was important for him to go to white establishments. "[Even though] I need your business . . ." he said. "I'm begging you. You have the money. Please go do it."

For the rest of their trip, the Wynter family stayed in white-owned hotels, but it wasn't a pleasant experience. Although the Civil Rights Act ensured that they could legally patronize public restaurants, there was no law to force someone to be kind to them when they arrived. Once, at a hotel near the border in Texas, they went into the dining room for dinner. Wynter remembers: "My mother had us in bows, you know, really dressed up, looking our absolute best. We step into the dining room. Silence. It was a really big room. Silence. Everybody stopped talking. Everybody turned and looked at us. It was terrifying. Not smiling. Scowling. Some people got up and walked out of the dining room as we walked in. We sat down. [My

parents] ordered the food, and we ate. But it was not a fun memory. It was real scary to me, and very uncomfortable."

In less than a decade after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, at least half of the *Green Book* black-owned businesses were closed, either through lack of support or through eminent domain, which allowed federal, state, and city governments to take over the land to expand freeway systems and for urban renewal projects.

One business that lost its battle with integration was the Dew Drop Inn, in New Orleans's Tremé district. Since black tourists weren't welcome to stay in the French Quarter, most of New Orleans's *Green Book* sites had been located south of the quarter, along Rampart Street, in "Central City" and in Tremé.

The Dew Drop, on LaSalle Street, was a rare integrated nightclub. Frank G. Painia opened it in 1939. Although he only had a seventh-grade education, Painia knew how to run a business. He started by selling cold drinks to serve local laborers and then purchased a barbershop and a grocery store two doors down. Originally called the "Groove Room," the Dew Drop lived up to its original name when James Brown, Sam Cooke, Ike and Tina Turner, Otis Redding, and the fabulous Big Maybelle performed there. The Dew Drop was so popular that Little Richard wrote a song about it.

Female impersonators were also a staple at the Dew Drop. Sir Lady Java and Patsy Vidalia (born Irving Ale), a drag queen known as the "Toast of New Orleans," hosted the Dew Drop's annual Gay Ball. White gay men from the French Quarter made the Dew Drop a regular stop, mingling with black and brown men, especially during the Gay Ball.

In addition to the celebrity musicians and drag queens, a varied cast of characters could be spotted there, including pimps; prostitutes; card sharps; a ventriloquist; a tap dancer with a wooden leg, named Peg Leg Bates; and a man called "Iron Jaw," who picked up chairs with customers sitting in them, using his teeth.

The Dew Drop was beloved for its red beans and rice cooked in pig tails. Anywhere from two to three hundred people came each night, and the party could last until nine the next morning. Painia, always the businessman, tipped taxi drivers so they would bring tourists by the Dew Drop. By 1945, the place was so popular that the *Louisiana Weekly* called it the swankiest nightclub in New Orleans.

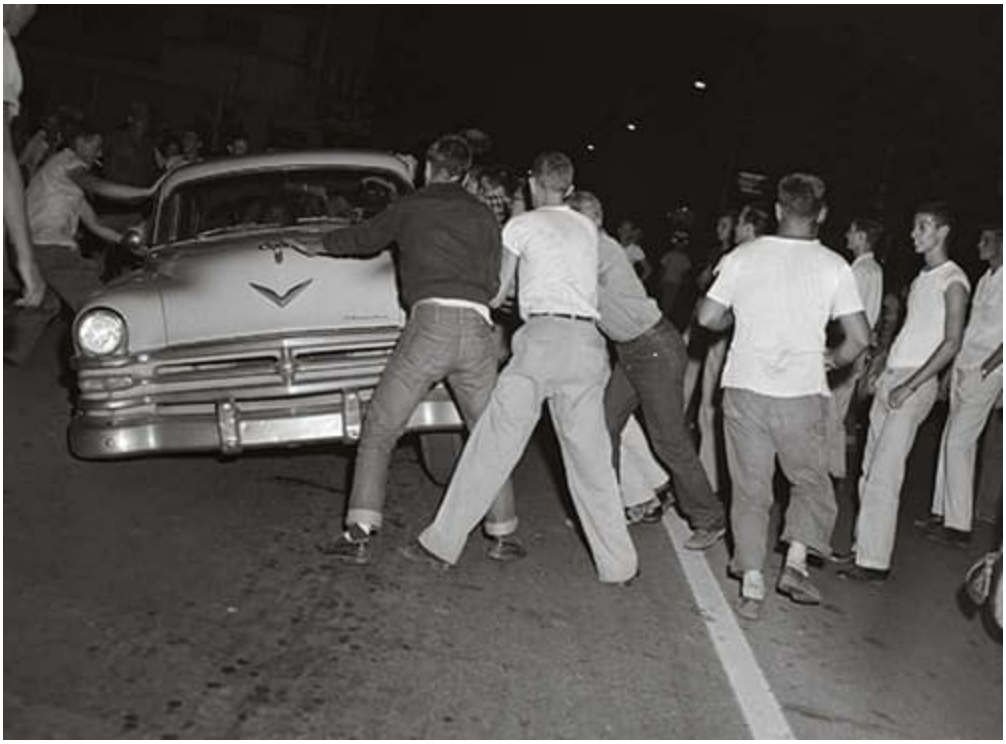
The police regularly raided the Dew Drop because it served both black and white people, which was illegal up until 1964. Painia grew tired of the raids, and after President Lyndon Johnson finally signed the Civil Rights Act, ending segregation in public accommodations, Painia sued the city of New Orleans in federal court, claiming that its race-mixing ordinance was unconstitutional.

The harassment stopped, but once Bourbon Street was open to black patrons, they abandoned the Dew Drop to explore the French Quarter. Ironically, it was integration, the very thing Painia had fought for, that killed the Dew Drop. It fell into decline during the end of the 1960s and closed for good in 1970.

Unfortunately, integration was the reason we lost most *Green Book* sites. By the time the Dew Drop closed its doors, America had been struggling with integration since the landmark 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which was supposed to ensure that black Americans had "separate but equal" public facilities, railway cars, and legal protection under the law. The promise of "separate but equal" was never delivered, and it took nearly sixty years of black Americans receiving subhuman treatment before there was a legislative push for integration and *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The first order of business after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was to integrate the schools. This was the most critical piece of legislation black Americans of this generation had seen, and one of the key elements that ignited the civil rights movement.

Change rarely comes easily, but most Americans felt that, in theory, integration was the right thing to do. However, in practice, it was a significant hardship for both black and white communities. As usual, the burden of this change weighed far heavier on black Americans.

The Dew Drop, New Orleans, Louisiana



A white mob attacking a Michigan car full of black people passing through Tennessee in 1956

Since the 1970s, *Brown v. Board of Education* has been weakened, and it suffered a significant blow when the George W. Bush administration and the Supreme Court almost dismantled it by allowing nearly two hundred school districts to ignore court orders to integrate. Out of the 755 districts required to desegregate, as of 2009 as many as 268 remain segregated. Without the court mandate, schools left to their own devices did not make integration a priority, and since most neighborhoods in America are segregated, the schools reflect the racial makeup of the neighborhoods and are now far more segregated today than they were in the 1960s.

When desegregation began, protests and violence broke out all over the country, but even in situations where everything looked fine on the surface, being the first wave of black students to attend an all-white school was traumatic for some children. Alma Green's niece Paula, who attended an all-white school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, remembers, "For this little African American girl, it was a long day away from home, out to sea in an ocean of blonde strangers. It was a long day for a four-year-old to be in a world with no reflection of herself."

It took another decade after *Brown v. Board of Education* before any real progress was made. Some black Americans didn't think that forced integration was worth all the problems. After living in a racist society, many had become experts at sheltering their children from the pain of segregation. Curtis Graves, a former legislator in the Texas House of Representatives (1967–73) and director of civil affairs at NASA, used the *Green Book* to travel. "For the first six or seven years in my life, [my parents] lied a lot," he said. "For instance, we would go to one of the department stores downtown where there was a lunch counter, and I would say I wanted to have a Coke or I wanted to have a sandwich, and my mother would say, 'The glasses are not clean there.' And we would go home to have a Coke. She had a lie for everything that would have demoralized me. For instance, we didn't sit downstairs in the movie theater because 'it was cooler' upstairs. This was the story that I believed. The reason we sat at the back of the bus was that it was a better seat back there. In the front, 'it was too dusty and you wouldn't want to sit up in the front.' She had a story for every one of these indignities that I would have suffered as a child."

Ron, my stepdad, said, "Integration was the worst thing that happened to us." He insisted that he got a better education in his all-black school because everyone was treated the same and given the same respect and attention. He

said, “The white teachers didn’t like me, they never called on me, and they didn’t care if I learned anything or not.”

One year after the *Brown v. Board Education* decision, Mamie Till showed the world her son Emmett Till’s disfigured body after he was beaten to death by white supremacists. Approximately three months after Till’s murder, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) banned racial segregation on interstate buses and in waiting areas. It considered the treatment of black travelers “unreasonable” and cited the 1946 Supreme Court decision *Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia*, which found segregated bus travel unconstitutional. The ICC ban was a symbolic step forward, but in practice—thirteen states still required segregated travel *within* their borders—and it was not effective until 1961, when the Freedom Riders pressured Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to enforce it.

Six days after the ICC ban, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks said, “I thought of Emmett Till and when the bus driver ordered me to move to the back, I just couldn’t move.” Four days after Parks’s arrest, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by Martin Luther King Jr., inspired black residents to refuse to ride city buses for thirteen months. The boycott ended on December 20, 1956, when the U.S. Supreme Court finally ordered Montgomery, Alabama, to integrate its bus system.

Hampton House, a *Green Book* hotel in Miami, Florida

Green Book sites were on the front lines in the battle for equality. From top to bottom, civil rights leaders were planning their next move. Before, during, and after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King and his inner circle held secret meetings on the roof of the Hotel Ben Moore, a *Green Book* listing, while downstairs in the basement, Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy, officials from the NAACP, and other civil rights leaders socialized in the barbershop.

Since black Montgomery residents weren't taking the bus downtown during the bus boycott, they did all their shopping in their own neighborhoods, supporting local, black-owned businesses. And because they weren't spending their money on bus fare, even more money was being funneled back into the black community. Supporting black-owned businesses was critical to the success and the health of black neighborhoods, not only in Montgomery but throughout the country as well. Black entrepreneurs rarely had access to capital, so it was hard enough to start a business, let alone maintain one, so they relied on a steady stream of black patrons.

Many of the iconic black-owned businesses, such as the Dew Drop Inn, fell on hard times after integration, becoming obscure, unrecognizable relics of the past. Another seminal New Orleans *Green Book* site that fell into obscurity was the Marsalis Mansion (see chapter 2). It was located on the outskirts of New Orleans, and it offered lodging for black tourists, who couldn't stay in the French Quarter.

After integration started to take hold in the 1960s, and black travelers could stay in the French Quarter, the Marsalis Mansion lost its luster and eventually became a seedy motel for drug dealers, prostitutes, and cheating spouses. It closed in 1986, and after it was condemned as a fire hazard, it was demolished in 1993.

Another important *Green Book* site that lost its shine was the Hampton House, in Miami. When the owners, Harry and Florence Markowitz, a white Jewish couple, opened the Booker T. Washington Hotel (the original name of the Hampton House), they told the *Atlanta Daily World* that the hotel would "cater largely to high-class professional people, entertainers and other substantial Negroes visiting here." And it did. When world-renowned musicians such as Aretha Franklin, Sarah Vaughan, Count Basie, and Sammy Davis Jr. performed on Miami Beach, they couldn't stay in the Miami Beach hotels, so they traveled inland to the Brownsville neighborhood to stay at the Hampton House, where they'd often play a second, late night set. It was

during this second set, reserved for their peers, that the musicians let loose, relaxed, and performed the B-sides they didn't play for predominately white audiences. News of these jam sessions got out, and suddenly white folks were following these musicians to Hampton House, making it one of the most integrated hotspots in Miami.

The fifty-room midcentury modern hotel boasted a grand lobby, wrought iron railings, terrazzo floors, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. The building was set on five acres and hosted both amateur and pro black golfers, who made use of its access to nearby golf courses. Tourists dined in the on-site Napoleon Lounge, at tables with white linen tablecloths. Maître d'hotel Charles Martin, known for his gold lamé tuxedo jacket, strictly enforced a dress code of jackets for men and dress shoes for women.

Muhammad Ali stayed on the second floor, right above Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's. room. (Ali first met Malcolm X at the Hampton House, and legend has it that it was this meeting that inspired the boxer to convert to Islam.) Civil rights organizations such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) met weekly in the hotel to implement desegregation policies, and Dr. King rehearsed his "I Have a Dream" speech there. Describing that day to filmmaker Kathy Hersh, civil rights activist A. D. Moore said, "It blew that place wide open. I'm telling you. He was fantastic."

Once black people were allowed to frequent Miami Beach clubs, restaurants, and hotels, the Hampton House fell into decline. By the 1970s, the room where Dr. King stayed had become home to squatters, and a tree grew out of the pool he was once photographed in.

The Hampton House was on the verge of being demolished when, thankfully, Miami-Dade County invested millions of dollars in its restoration. Dr. Enid Pinkney spearheaded this effort, and since then, the Hampton House has undergone a full transformation. It reopened in May 2015.

It's ironic that it was integration, which most Americans wanted (and still want), that killed many of the sites in the *Green Book*. It's also ironic that something as hateful as segregation facilitated a stronger sense of unity in the black community. Years of enforced isolation, seclusion, and fear of connecting with people outside one's race all came at a high price. All black Americans wanted was the ability to walk, run, drive, shop, and live freely outside their neighborhoods, just like white people. After the Hampton House became another casualty to integration, community activist Georgia Ayers summed it up: "We got what we wanted, but we lost what we had." ♦

EPILOGUE

AMERICA AFTER THE *GREEN BOOK*

In 1967, the year the *Green Book* ceased publication, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke out against the Vietnam War, launched a war on poverty, and, in June, published his final book, *Where Do We Go from Here?* In the book, King tells his readers that the fight for freedom is not over, and that black people will have to keep fighting for equal education, housing, voting rights, and jobs. A month later, he delivered a sermon with the same title at the annual Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in Atlanta, saying, "This is no time for romantic illusions and empty philosophical debates about freedom. This is a time for action. What is needed is a strategy for change, a tactical program that will bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible. So far, this has only been offered by the nonviolent movement. Without recognizing this we will end up with solutions that don't solve, answers that don't answer, and explanations that don't explain . . . I'm concerned about justice."

One year after King delivered this speech, he was killed at the Lorraine Motel, a *Green Book* site in Memphis, Tennessee. His assassination was a symbolic bullet to the change and progress the country had made with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The pendulum of justice became a rudderless arm, and for a moment, everything stopped.

The same year we lost Dr. King, Richard Nixon ramped up Lyndon B. Johnson's "war on crime" initiative into a "war on drugs," targeting black neighborhoods, where most *Green Book* businesses were located. Nixon told his chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, "You have to face the fact that the problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to . . . there has never in history been an adequate black nation, and they are the only race of which this is true. Africa is hopeless."

The Lorraine Motel, a former *Green Book* site and the place where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated (commemorated with a wreath). Today it is the home of the National Civil Rights Museum.

This is no time for romantic illusions and empty philosophical debates about freedom. This is a time for action. What is needed is a strategy for change, a tactical program that will bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible. So far, this has only been offered by the nonviolent movement. Without recognizing this we will end up with solutions that don't solve, answers that don't answer, and explanations that don't explain . . . I'm concerned about justice.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Less than a decade after Nixon's "war on drugs," I was riding in the front seat of our used baby-blue Volkswagen Bug with my mom. We were driving to the suburbs to visit family on the outskirts of Houston, Texas. It was 1978, and I was seven years old. As we approached the sugarcane fields, I saw figures dotting the landscape. As we got closer, I could see they were all black men, and they were wearing chains.

I turned and looked at Mom, shocked, and said, "Isn't slavery over? They told us at school that slavery was over."

She answered, "Yes, honey, it is."

As we got closer, I got a clearer look at these men, bent at the waist, shackled, and sweating in Houston's oppressive heat and humidity. It looked so similar to the pictures I had seen in the history books of slaves working the fields. Shaking my head, I asked Mom again, "Why are they chained up?"

She said, "They're prisoners."

I looked at her, even more confused, and asked, "Well, then why are they all black?"

. . . . . .

All I remember is silence. Perhaps she didn't know how to explain institutional racism to a seven-year-old, but I felt I was ready to have that conversation.

I have been struggling with the image of that black chain gang, and questioning the existence of racial equality, ever since. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, and the fact that my mother appeared to be so desensitized to it was a mystery to me. As I grew up, I began to understand why this wasn't shocking to her. She had watched this struggle for equality play out for decades, so when we drove past that black chain gang in Texas, she took it in stride. But for me, it is one of my most alarming, disturbing memories.

In many respects, Nixon's "war on drugs" essentially became a war on black communities, the places where *Green Book* sites once thrived. Apparently, Nixon's plan worked. Just one decade after the *Green Book* ceased publication, the number of Americans incarcerated had doubled. And today it has skyrocketed to 700 percent of what it was in the 1960s. The

Justice Department now predicts that one in three black male babies born in America will be incarcerated in his lifetime.

It isn't just Nixon who is responsible for the mass incarceration catastrophe we have today. Nearly every U.S. president since Nixon designed his own "get tough on crime" initiative, but it was President Bill Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill that was the worst. Among other outrageous provisions, it eliminated higher education for inmates, authorized the use of boot camps for delinquent minors, and allocated money for new prisons, contributing to the prison-industrial complex we know today. Clinton signed three other laws that also brought irreparable damage to black communities. His 1996 Welfare Reform Act made it a crime for someone with a drug conviction to get food stamps or live in public housing. His Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (also signed in 1996) made it difficult to challenge wrongful convictions; as a result, there are many people sitting in prison today who don't belong there. And his Prisoner Reform Act (1994) made it difficult for inmates to file rape charges, even when they are assaulted by a corrections officer; the level of abuse and violence inflicted on prisoners has therefore risen. As a result of these laws and Clinton's Crime Bill, those that survive prison leave deeply scarred and traumatized.

Clinton's Crime Bill kicked the pendulum of justice further back than any failed policies that attempted to address racial equality since the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Once we locked up nearly a third of our black men, families dissolved, more black-owned businesses closed, and schools in black neighborhoods started to look more like jails. And once black men were released from jail, they couldn't go back to their homes because it would be a violation of their parole; those who did go home put the whole family at risk for eviction. Only two years after the Crime Bill was signed, seventeen billion dollars that had been allocated for public housing was being used to build new prisons.

By 2010, forty-three years since the *Green Book* ceased publication, more Americans had been incarcerated in the United States than in the country's entire recorded history. Michelle Alexander's seminal book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, found that more African Americans are under correctional control today than were enslaved in 1850, and the majority of felons have lost their right to vote, further disenfranchising the black community. In most states, a felony record prevents convicts from receiving public housing, food stamps, student loans,

or stable employment. Alexander also found that for some convicts lucky enough to find a job, up to 100 percent of their wages could be garnished to pay back the cost of their incarceration and cover accrued child support payments, court costs, fees, and fines (averaging about sixteen thousand dollars). These punitive laws make life on the outside so difficult that it's not surprising that 70 percent of convicts return to prison in a matter of months.

My stepfather, Ron Burford, worked in the criminal justice system for forty years. He served as an assistant regional administrator and a parole counselor for the Ohio Youth Commission, in Dayton, Ohio; and a probation officer for the U.S. District Courts in Cincinnati. While working in a southern Ohio police department, Ron was resented by other officers (all white). He believed he was treated badly because he was one of the only men there to have a master's degree. Still, he kept his head down and moved up the ranks, until there were only five positions above him in the entire Ohio prison system.

After years of watching black men go in and out of prison, Ron developed antirecidivism programs that included everything from military boot camps to smoking cessation programs to yoga. The problem was, no matter what he did, once they got into the system, nothing seemed to free these men from it. After Ron retired, he mentored high school boys. He wanted to help children who were buried in trauma and chained to circumstances that most would never overcome, so he coached football in a Columbus, Ohio, school that had some of the poorest students in the city. Rudasil, one of the boys Ron took under his wing, became part of our family. Ron was like a father to him. He helped him get into college, and within a year of Ron's passing, Rudasil had earned a master's degree in business administration.

I believe Ron knew that it was only due to luck that his life turned out the way it did. When he was younger, he drank too much and got into fights. But he changed his life. Once he stopped drinking and decided to rein in the testosterone and curb his anger, he walked through life with a soft, yet heavy heart. If he had been raised in a neighborhood that implemented "stop and frisk" policies, it's likely he would have spent decades in prison, as many black men in our society do.

If they could see the current state of affairs, Dr. King, Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers, and countless others who fought in the war for racial equality would be turning over in their graves. These men couldn't have imagined

America electing a black president during a time when more than a million black Americans were incarcerated. And if he were alive today, Green certainly wouldn't recognize the neighborhoods and businesses he once encouraged black travelers to visit.

The *Green Book* was a formidable weapon in the fight for equal rights. It gave black Americans permission to venture out onto America's highways and enjoy the country they helped build. Victor Green probably didn't set out to create a weapon for change, but it's also likely that when Steve Jobs put a video camera in a phone, he didn't plan to trigger a new civil rights movement, either. The point is that real change can come from simple tools that solve a problem. That is why the *Green Book* was so powerful.

When I started working on this project in 2013, most of the people I encountered had never heard of the *Green Book*. Many said, "Oh, thank god we don't need that anymore." Six years later, as news reports continue to show unarmed black people losing their lives at the hands of law enforcement, most Americans can no longer pretend that things are okay. While I was writing this book, every month another story would surface. Black people were being arrested and harassed for waiting at Starbucks, entering their Airbnb rentals, and swimming in a public pool. By 2018, when I mentioned the *Green Book*, the response had changed from "Thank god those days are over" to "We need a modern-day version of the *Green Book*."

It's understandable why people think we need something to address the brazen display of white nationalist rhetoric, but given that black people are legally able to walk into any public establishment—though, in many cases, black people are still feared in these establishments—a new *Green Book* will not make things better. The *Green Book* provided listings of black-owned businesses and accommodations, and yes, a guide that showcased today's black-owned shops would be a great asset. Still, a *Green Book* for today wouldn't guarantee black travelers' safe access to those places or prevent them from being discriminated against at the airport, or harassed by law enforcement, or shot to death on the street.

More than a new *Green Book*, we need to learn from our past mistakes. This country was built on racism, and if we're not careful, racism is the weapon that will destroy it. The pendulum will simply keep swinging back and forth until it breaks. There will be times when the fight for justice feels futile, but these are the battles worth fighting for—even if we lose. And if in another twenty, or fifty, years we find ourselves scratching our heads

wondering why America still isn't living up to its promise of freedom and equality for all, at some point we have to accept that we are all responsible. As the author and educator Jelani Cobb tells his students at Columbia, "History doesn't repeat itself. Humans do." ♦

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The issue of racism and mass incarceration is so close to my heart because I see how many people (both white and black) dismiss what I believe is the civil rights crisis of our time. When I started this project, I knew that writing this book would not be enough. After completing it, I began work on a children's book based on this material (which will also be published by Abrams), for ages nine to twelve. I also plan to mentor black youth, and am developing *Green Book* walking tours, a mobile app, and a digital interactive map that traces black physical and social mobility over the last century.

While conducting research for the map, I found a report titled "Racial Residential Segregation and Exclusion in Illinois," by Maria Krysan. The author said she found "a particularly troubling kind of residential segregation" tied to sundown towns. "There are many instances where the [Illinois] census reports a sizeable black population in a particular community, but closer inspection reveals that only a small number of householders are black. Instead, the vast majority of the black population counted in the census is actually housed in a prison. For example, the town of Ina, according to the 2000 census, had 1,027 black residents; but all except two were living in the Big Muddy River Correctional Facility."

There are other sundown towns that are still over 95 percent white but that have inflated their census numbers with the black and brown people sitting in their prisons. This "prison gerrymandering" pulls black people out of their communities and places them, at least in the census, into nearly all-white communities. Once these black inmates are counted as residents, the rise in population gives these towns more legislative power in Washington, while simultaneously disempowering the black communities the inmates left when they were incarcerated.

The statistics are staggering, and they beg the question: why has our society so freely accepted slavery, convict leasing, Jim Crow segregation, housing segregation, educational segregation, and now mass incarceration? Why are we willing to accept poverty, substandard schools, and subhuman

treatment of black people? And when I say “we,” I mean Americans of every race. In an interview, Diane McWhorter, the author of *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968*, said of the widespread acceptance of racial segregation in the South, “You have to deform your conscience to accept something that is clearly wrong.”

I believe this is what we are doing as a nation when we accept mass incarceration. We must be clear and vigilant in our understanding of the past, question America’s aspirational exceptionalism, and be honest about where this country has triumphed and where it has failed. Until America reckons with its moral debt, it will not live up to its ideals.

One of our greatest challenges to living up to those ideals will be dismantling and rebuilding the criminal justice system. Ida B. Wells said, “The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth on them.” But once we know the truth, we have to take action. We now live in a country that has more prisons than universities. To help people leaving prison, Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, says we have to end the shame and stigma that follow convicts for the rest of their lives. We need to build an “Underground Railroad” for them to help them find jobs and housing.

Alexander’s idea inspired me to work on my own version of help, an “Overground” Railroad. Toward that end, I am finding former *Green Book* sites that need rehabbing and then seeking state and city funding programs to create living-wage jobs to rehab, renovate, and staff these sites. Ideally, these jobs would be reserved both for people living in the community in which the site is located and for those transitioning from prison life back into civilian life. This is just one way to follow Alexander’s lead, but there are many other things that we can do to educate ourselves and change the system. ♦

WHAT WE CAN DO

This list was inspired by the brilliant minds and leadership of people such as Michelle Alexander, Douglas Blackmon, *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Jelani Cobb, Angela J. Davis, Adam Foss, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Nikole Hannah-Jones, Marc Lamont Hill, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Richard Rothstein, Bryan Stevenson, Heather Ann Thompson, Dr. Cornel West, William Julius Wilson, Tim Wise, and Sherrilyn Ifill, who is the head of the Legal Defense Fund and arguably the Thurgood Marshall of our time.

Hold your district attorney accountable.

Find out what their charging and plea bargaining policies are and ask them what they are you doing to reduce the incarceration rate.

Do not buy products from companies profiting from mass incarceration.

GET INVOLVED in YOUR LOCAL ELECTIONS

and ban any tax breaks or support for housing development projects unless those developers have identified how they will address the issue of dismantling racial and socioeconomic segregation.

READ

Michelle Alexander's
The New Jim Crow,

and if you don't have time
for that, watch Ava DuVernay's
documentary *13th*.

Don't just watch The Wire,

says Michael K. Williams, the actor who
played Omar on the hit HBO drama.

MENTOR A KID

from a vulnerable community, and like
Victor Green, you could save a life.

*Seek out
and patronize
black-owned
businesses!*

PRESSURE POLITICIANS

*to have a radical,
comprehensive policy to*

STOP MASS INCARCERATION.

*If you are
a business
owner or a
landlord,*

GET RID OF THE FELONY QUESTION

*on all
applications.*

CHECK with YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISER

and make sure your 401(k)
isn't funding the prison-industrial
complex. The prison industry's
biggest investors are
Fidelity Investments and
the Vanguard Group.

Hotel Ben Moore, Montgomery, Alabama

GREEN BOOK

SITE TOUR

Photographs by CANDACY TAYLOR

All too few *Green Book* properties are still standing. This section offers a site tour of a sampling of those that were still with us as of 2019. Some of them may still be open for business; others may just have the original sign; and some may be on private property, so please be respectful when visiting. All these sites are tangible links to the past and help tell the story of African American travel.

Bel-Air Hotel, Los Angeles, California

ALABAMA

BIRMINGHAM

A.G. Gaston Motel,
1510 5th Ave. North

MONTGOMERY

Hotel Ben Moore,
902 Highland Ave.

ARIZONA

BISBEE

Hotel Copper Queen,
11 Howell Ave.

FLAGSTAFF

DuBeau Hotel
(not in *Green Book* but served black travelers),
19 W. Phoenix Ave.

ARKANSAS

LITTLE ROCK

Velvatex College of Beauty Culture,
1004 State St.

CALIFORNIA

BERKELEY

Claremont Hotel, Ashby and Claremont Aves.

Durant Hotel,
2600 Durant Ave.

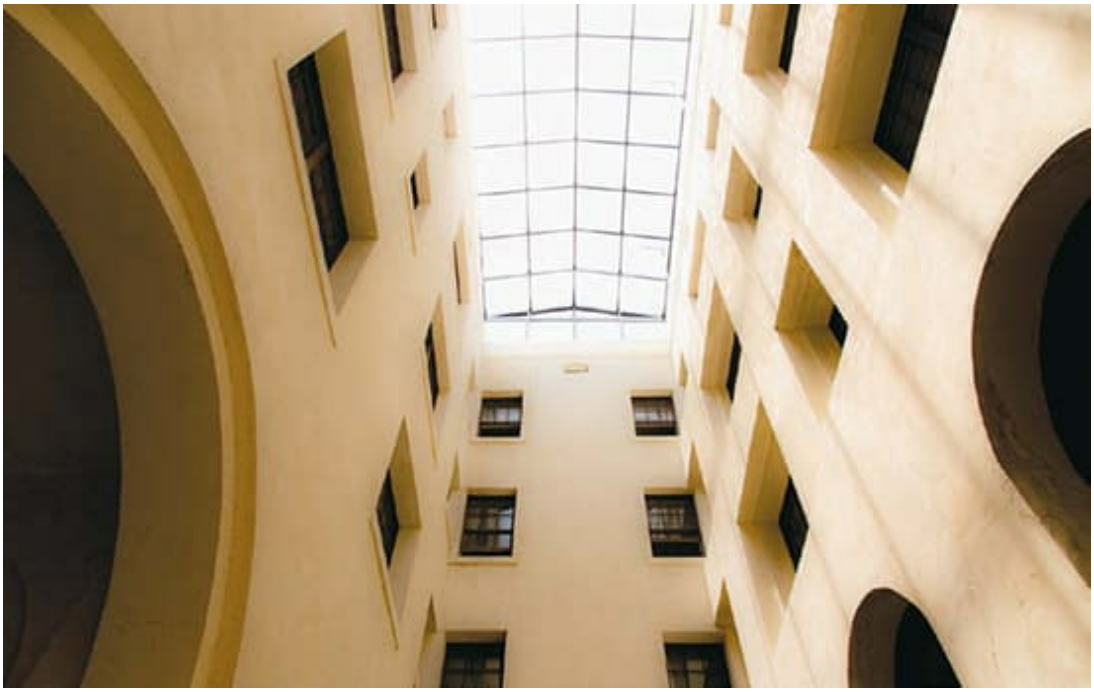
Shattuck Hotel, Shattuck and Allston Aves.

LOS ANGELES

Alexandria Hotel,
210 W. 5th St.

Aster Motel,
2901 S. Flower St.

Durant Hotel, Berkeley, California



Dunbar Hotel, Los Angeles, California

Hollywood Plaza, Los Angeles, California

Bel-Air Hotel,
701 Stone Canyon Rd.

Biltmore,
515 S. Olive St.

Clifton’s Cafeteria,
648 S. Broadway

Dunbar Hotel,
4225 S. Central Ave.

EC Eastsider,
2133 S. Central Ave.

EC Motel,
3501 S. Western Ave.

Hayes Motel,
960 Jefferson Blvd.

Hollywood Plaza,
1637 N. Vine St.

Regal Hotel, Los Angeles, California

Las Palmas,
1738 N. Las Palmas
(Hollywood; not in *Green Book*, but served black people)

Lincoln Hotel,
549 Ceres Ave.

Mark Twain Motel,
1622 Wilcox Ave.

Mayfair Hotel,
1256 W. 7th St.

Norbo Hotel,
530 E. 6th St.

Notel Motel,
4766 S. Main St.

Regal Hotel,
815 E. 6th St.

OAKLAND

California Hotel,
3501 San Pablo Ave.

SAN DIEGO

Simmons Hotel,
542 6th Ave.

Sun Restaurant,
421 Market St.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sir Francis Drake Hotel,
450 Powell St.

COLORADO

DENVER

Rossonian Lounge,
2650 Welton St.

PUEBLO

Coronado Lodge,
2130 Lake Ave.

CONNECTICUT

BRIDGEPORT

Arcade Hotel,
1001 Main St.
(now a mall)

Coronado Lodge, Pueblo, Colorado

Hamilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Hotel Barnum,
150 Fairfield Ave.
(now apartments)

Hotel Stratfield,
1241 Main St.
(now apartments)

NEW HAVEN

Duncan Hotel,
1151 Chapel St.

Taft Hotel, Chapel & College Sts.

NEW LONDON

Crocker House,
178 State St.

Mohican Hotel,
281 State St.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON

Cadillac Hotel,
1502 13th St. N.W.
(at Vermont)

Charles Hotel,
1334 R. St. N.W.

Madison (Loews) Hotel,
15th & M Sts. N.W.

Hamilton Hotel,
14th & K Sts. N.W.

Master’s Liquor,

1806 D. St. N.E.

Republic Gardens Night Club (sign),
1355 U St. N.W.

FLORIDA

MIAMI

Hampton House,
4200 N.W. 27th Ave.

ORLANDO

Wells' Bilt Hotel (now museum),
509 W. South St.

POMPANO BEACH

Hotel Grisham,
407 N.W. 4th Ave.

Republic Gardens, Washington, D.C.

GEORGIA

ATLANTA

Haugabrooks Funeral Home,
364 Auburn Ave. N.E.

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO

Ambassador Hotel,
N. State Pkwy & Goethe St.

Belmont Hotel,
Sheridan Rd. at Belmont Ave.

Conrad Hilton,
7th & 8th Sts & Michigan Ave.

Drake Hotel,
Lake Shore Dr. & Michigan Ave.

Jokes and Notes,
4641 S. Martin Luther King Dr.

Royalton Hotel (sign),
1810 W. Jackson Blvd.

Sutherland Hotel,
47th St. & Drexel Blvd.

YMCA,
3763 S. Wabash Ave.

IOWA

DES MOINES

Hotel Kirkwood,
4th & Walnut Sts.

KANSAS

ABILENE

Diamond Court Motel,
1403 N. W. 3rd Sts.

KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE
YMCA,
920 W. Chestnut St.

LOUISIANA

NEW ORLEANS

Dew Drop Inn,
2836 LaSalle St.
(closed, may reopen)

Dooky Chase’s Restaurant,
2301 Orleans St.

The Drake Hotel, Chicago, Illinois

Carlton Plaza Hotel, Detroit, Michigan

Gladstone Hotel and Bar,
3435 Dryades St.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE

Sugar Hill Tavern (sign),
2361 Druid Hill Ave.

Wonderland Night Club,
2043 Pennsylvania Ave.

YMCA,
1600 Druid Hill Ave.

MASSACHUSETTS

BOSTON

Charlie’s Sandwich Shoppe,
429 Columbus Ave.

Kornfield’s Drug Store,
2121 Washington St. (Roxbury)

Slade’s Bar-b-que,
958 Tremont St.

OAK BLUFFS (MARTHA’S VINEYARD)

Shearer Cottage,
4 Morgan Ave.

MICHIGAN

DETROIT

Carlton Plaza Hotel (now lofts),
2931 John R. St.

Town Motel,
2127 W. Grand Blvd.

MINNESOTA

ST. PAUL

Hotel St. Paul,
350 Market St.

Lexington Restaurant,
1096 Grand Ave.

MISSOURI

KANSAS CITY

Gates Bar-B-Q (was Old Kentucky's Restaurant in the *Green Book*),
1221 Brooklyn Ave.

Green Duck Tavern (sign),
2548 Prospect Ave.

Town Motel, Detroit, Michigan

Kornfield Pharmacy, Roxbury, Massachusetts

Mardi Gras Night Club,
19th & Vine Sts.

ST. LOUIS

Loper Super Service,
918 Walton Ave.

Sara-Lou Cafe (sign),
4069 St. Louis

YWCA,
2709 Locust Ave.

MONTANA

GREAT FALLS

Motel Central,
715 Central Ave. W.

LIVINGSTON

Murray Hotel,
201 W. Park St.

NEBRASKA

OMAHA

Broadview Hotel (now private),
2060 N. 19th St.

NEW JERSEY

ATLANTIC CITY

Liberty Hotel Apt.,
1519 Baltic Ave.

EAST ORANGE

China Pagoda Restaurant,
376 Main St.

NEW MEXICO

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Black Range Court,
711 Date St.

NEW YORK

BRONX

Bronx Park Motel,
2500 Crontona Ave.

Concourse Plaza Hotel,
900 Grand Concourse

Deegan Motel,
3600 Bailey Ave.

Lobster Box,
34 City Island Ave.

Riverdale Motor Inn,
6355 Broadway

Van Cortlandt Motel,
6393 Broadway

HARLEM

Apollo Theater,
253 W. 125th St.

Carver Federal Savings & Loan,

75 W. 125th St.

Friedland’s Liquor Store,
605 Lenox Ave.

Black Range Court, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

Motel Central, Great Falls, Montana

Liberty Hotel Apartments, Atlantic City, New Jersey

Woodbine Cottage, Lake George, New York

HOTEL
FANE

Hotel Fane, Harlem, New York

Pan American Motor Inn, Queens, New York

Victor Green’s Office,
200 W. 135th St. 2nd Floor (private)

YMCA,
180 W. 135th St.

LAKE GEORGE

Woodbine Cottage,
75 Dieskau St.

MANHATTAN

Algonquin Hotel,
59 W. 44th St.

Bergdorf Goodman,
754 5th Ave.

Brooks Brothers,
346 Madison Ave.

Hotel Fane,
205 W. 135th St.

Lexington Hotel,
511 Lexington Ave.

Meurice Hotel,
145 W. 58th St.

New York Hilton,
1335 Ave. of the Americas

New Yorker Hotel,
481 8th Ave.

Paramount Hotel,
235 W. 46th St.

Paris Hotel,
752 West End Ave.

Pierre Hotel,
2 E. 61st St.

Plaza Hotel,
768 5th Ave.

Prince George Hotel,
14 E. 28th St.

Regency Hotel,
540 Park Ave.

Skyline Hotel,
725 10th Ave.

Waldorf Astoria,
301 Park Ave.

Warwick Hotel,
65 W. 54th St.

Wolcott Hotel,
4 W. 31st St.

QUEENS

Pan American Motor Inn,
79 Queens Blvd.

SCARSDALE

Saxon Woods Golf Course,
315 Mamaroneck Rd.

NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE

Chicken ’N’ Ribs,
1100 Beatties Ford Rd.

Rough Riders Hotel, Medora, North Dakota

Rough Riders Hotel lobby, Medora, North Dakota

GREENSBORO

Plaza Manor Hotel,
511 Martin St.

NORTH DAKOTA

MEDORA

Rough Riders Hotel,
301 3rd Ave.

OHIO

CLEVELAND
Phillis Wheatley Hotel,
4450 Cedar Ave.

COLUMBUS

Hotel St. Clair (senior housing),
338 St. Clair Ave.

Macon Hotel (closed but standing),
366 N. 20th St.

DAYTON

YMCA,
907 W. 5th St.

OREGON

CRATER LAKE

Crater Lake Lodge, inside Crater Lake National Park

Crater Lake Lodge deck, Crater Lake, Oregon

Inside Crater Lake Lodge, Crater Lake, Oregon

Capitol Hill
MOTEL

Capitol Hill Motel, Portland, Oregon

Hotel Terrace Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

PORTLAND

Capitol Hill Motel,
9110 S.W. Barbur Blvd.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA

Bellevue Stratford Hotel,
200 S. Broad St.

Benjamin Franklin Hotel,
834 Chestnut St

Carlyle Hotel,
1425 Poplar St.

Hotel Terrace Hall,
2335 Centre Ave.

YMCA,
1724 Christian St.

READING

Hotel Abraham Lincoln,
100 N. 5th St.

Rocket Motel, Custer, South Dakota

WESTCHESTER

Magnolia Hotel,
300 E. Miner St.

YORK

Yorktowne Hotel,
48 E. Market St.

SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA

Holman’s Barber Shop (sign only),
2138 Gervais St.

MYRTLE BEACH

Fitzgerald’s,
1420 Carver St.

SOUTH DAKOTA

ABERDEEN

Alonzo Ward Hotel,
104 S. Main St.

CUSTER

Rocket Motel,
211 Mount Rushmore Rd.

TENNESSEE

CHATTANOOGA

Volunteer

Parking Garage,
845 Lindsay St.

HUMBOLDT

Booker T. Motel,
607 W. Main St.

MEMPHIS

Four Way Grill,
998 Mississippi Blvd.

Lorraine Hotel,
406 Mulberry St.

NASHVILLE

R&R Liquor Store,
1043 Jefferson

Swett's Dinnette & Drive-In,
2725 Clifton Rd.

TEXAS

HOUSTON

El Dorado Nightclub (currently a dance studio),
2310 Elgin St.

UTAH

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Bryce Canyon Inn,
21 N. Main St.

ZION

1 Zion Lodge,

Springdale

R&R Liquor Store, Nashville, Tennessee

El Dorado Nightclub, Houston, Texas

Moss’ Garage, Beckley, West Virginia

VIRGINIA

CHARLOTTESVILLE

Jokers Barbershop,
406 Commerce St.

Paramount Theater,
215 E. Main St.

ROANOKE

Hotel Dumas,
106 Henry St. N.W.

WASHINGTON

SEATTLE

Doric Mayflower,
405 Olive Way

WEST VIRGINIA

BECKLEY

Moss’ Garage,
501 S. Fayette St.

WYOMING

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel,
2 Mammoth Hotel Ave.

Old Faithful Inn,
3200 Old Faithful Inn Rd.

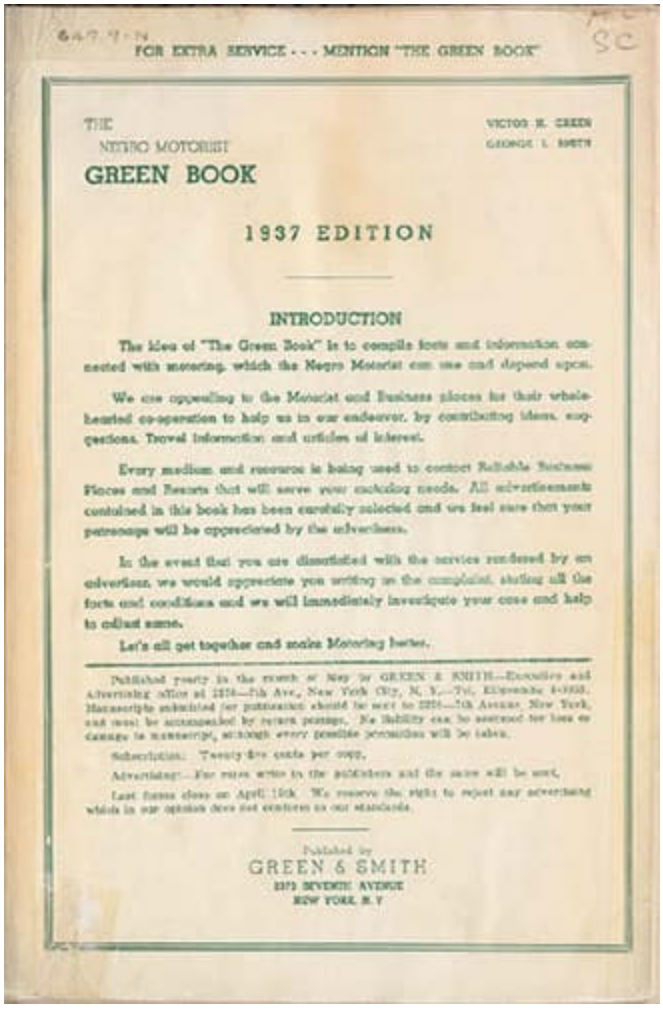
WINES
AND
Liquors

The GREEN BOOK

COVER GUIDE

Although we know through historical references that the 1936 edition existed, so far a copy has not been located.

1936



FOR EXTRA SERVICE . . . MENTION "THE GREEN BOOK"

THE
NEGRO MOTORIST
GREEN BOOK

VICTOR H. GREEN
GEORGE I. SMITH

1937 EDITION

INTRODUCTION

The idea of "The Green Book" is to compile facts and information connected with motoring, which the Negro Motorist can use and depend upon.

We are appealing to the Motorist and Business places for their wholehearted co-operation to help us in our endeavor, by contributing ideas, suggestions, Travel information and articles of interest.

Every medium and resource is being used to contact Reliable Business Places and Resorts that will serve your motoring needs. All advertisements contained in this book has been carefully selected and we feel sure that your patronage will be appreciated by the advertisers.

In the event that you are dissatisfied with the service rendered by an advertiser, we would appreciate you writing in the complaint, stating all the facts and conditions and we will immediately investigate your case and help to adjust same.

Let's all get together and make Motoring better.

Published yearly in the month of May by GREEN & SMITH—Executive and Advertising office at 2256—7th Ave., New York City, N. Y.—Tel. ELdorado 4-9555. Manuscripts submitted for publication should be sent to 2256—7th Avenue, New York, and must be accompanied by return postage. No liability can be assumed for loss or damage to manuscript, although every possible precaution will be taken.

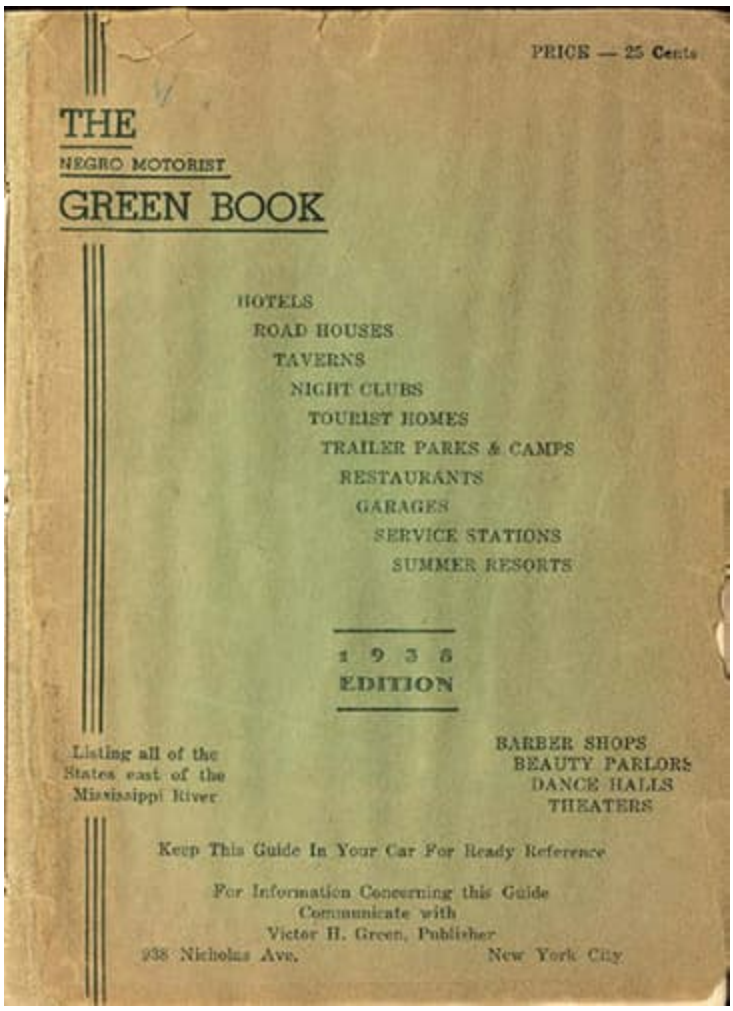
Subscription: Twenty five cents per copy.

Advertising:—For rates write to the publishers and the same will be sent.

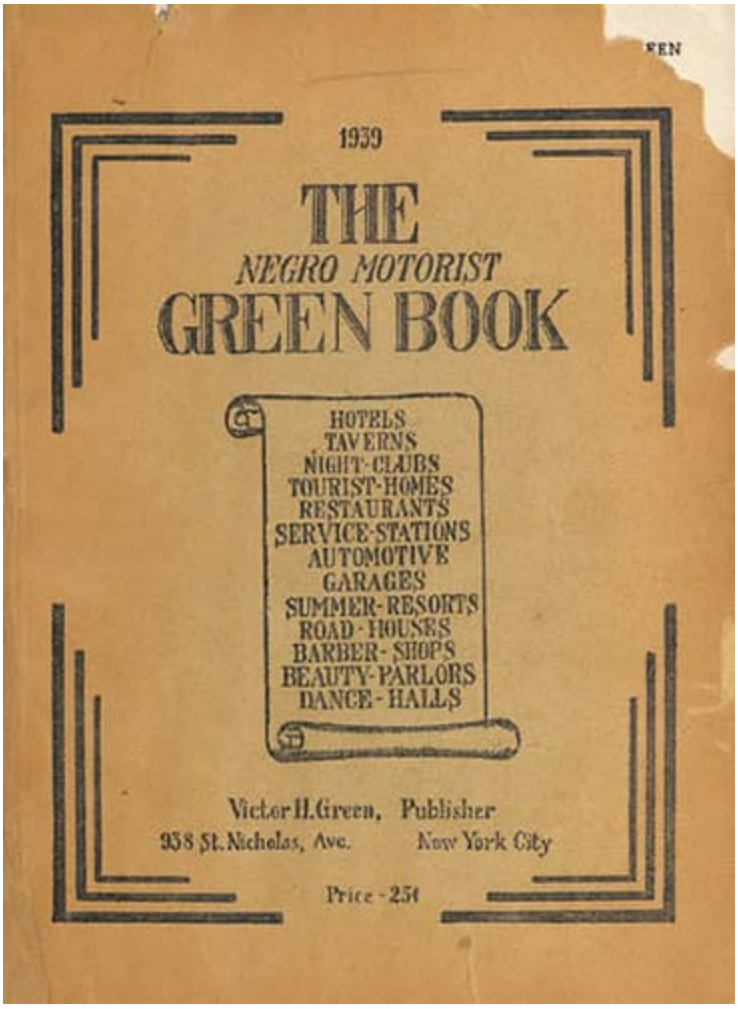
Last forms close on April 15th. We reserve the right to reject any advertising which in our opinion does not conform to our standards.

Published by
GREEN & SMITH
2256 SEVENTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

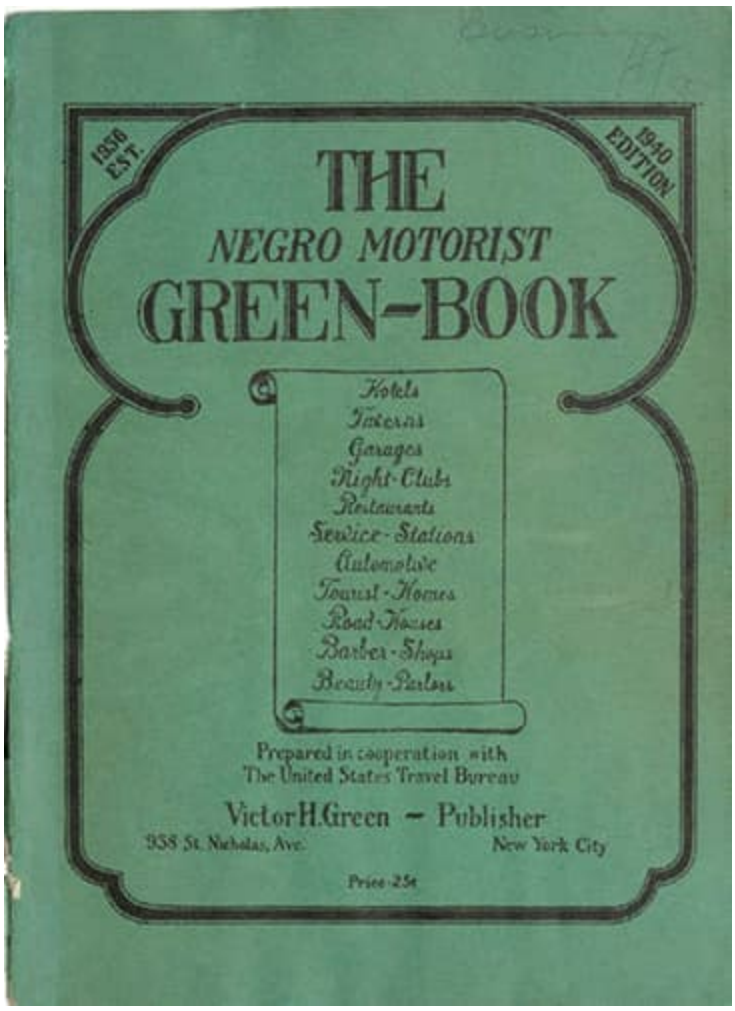
1937


PRICE — 25 Cents
THE
NEGRO MOTORIST
GREEN BOOK
HOTELS
ROAD HOUSES
TAVERNS
NIGHT CLUBS
TOURIST HOMES
TRAILER PARKS & CAMPS
RESTAURANTS
GARAGES
SERVICE STATIONS
SUMMER RESORTS
1 9 3 8
EDITION
Listing all of the States east of the Mississippi River
BARBER SHOPS
BEAUTY PARLORS
DANCE HALLS
THEATERS
Keep This Guide In Your Car For Ready Reference
For Information Concerning this Guide
Communicate with
Victor H. Green, Publisher
938 Nicholas Ave. New York City

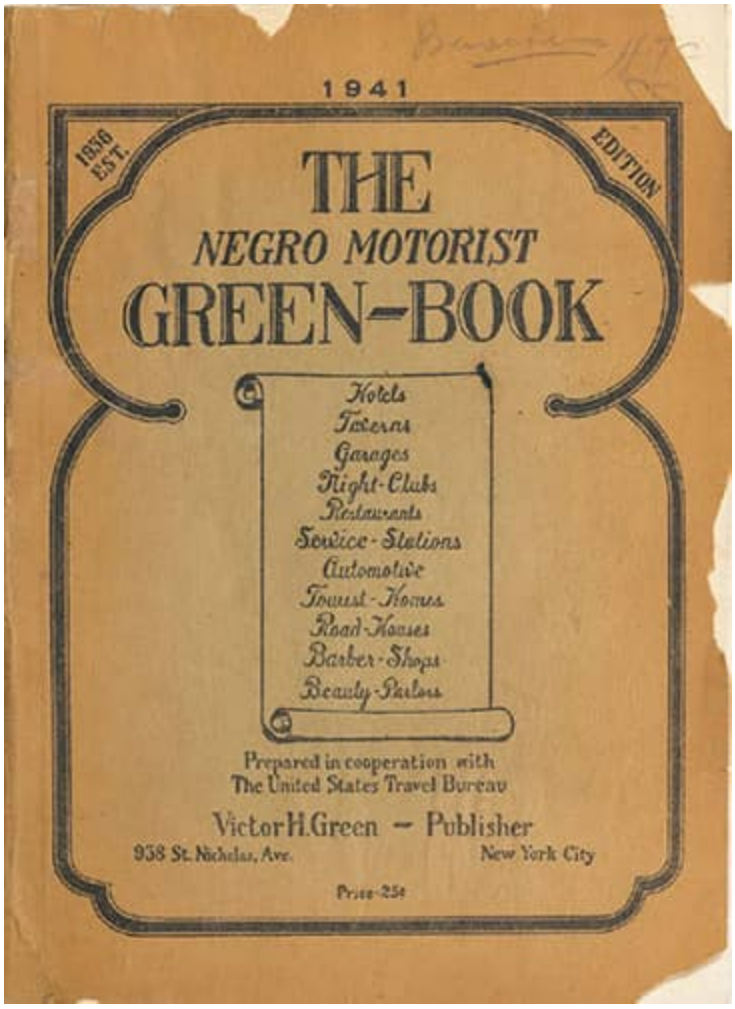
1938


1939
THE
NEGRO MOTORIST
GREEN BOOK
HOTELS
TAVERNS
NIGHT-CLUBS
TOURIST-HOMES
RESTAURANTS
SERVICE-STATIONS
AUTOMOTIVE
GARAGES
SUMMER-RESORTS
ROAD-HOUSES
BARBER-SHOPS
BEAUTY-PARLORS
DANCE-HALLS
Victor H. Green, Publisher
338 St. Nicholas, Ave. New York City
Price - 25¢

1939


1936 EST.
1940 EDITION
THE
NEGRO MOTORIST
GREEN-BOOK
Hotels
Taverns
Garages
Night-Clubs
Restaurants
Service-Stations
Automotive
Tourist-Homes
Road-Houses
Barber-Shops
Beauty-Parlors
Prepared in cooperation with
The United States Travel Bureau
Victor H. Green – Publisher
938 St. Nicholas, Ave. New York City
Price 25¢

1940


1941
1936 EST.
EDITION
THE
NEGRO MOTORIST
GREEN-BOOK
Hotels
Taverns
Garages
Night-Clubs
Restaurants
Service-Stations
Automotive
Tourist-Homes
Road-Houses
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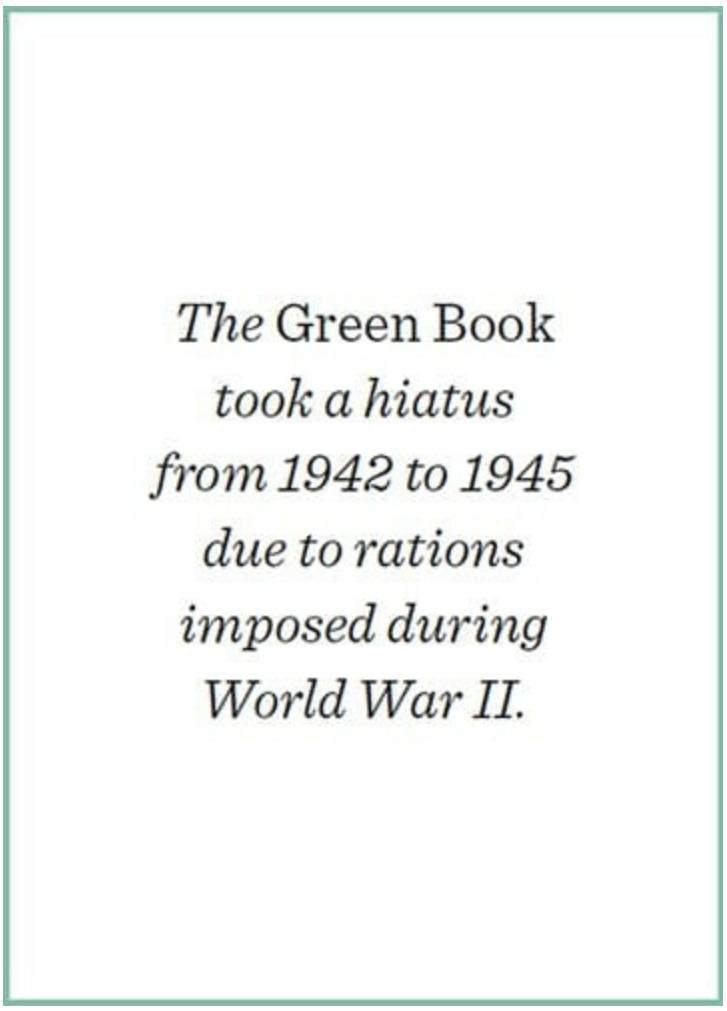
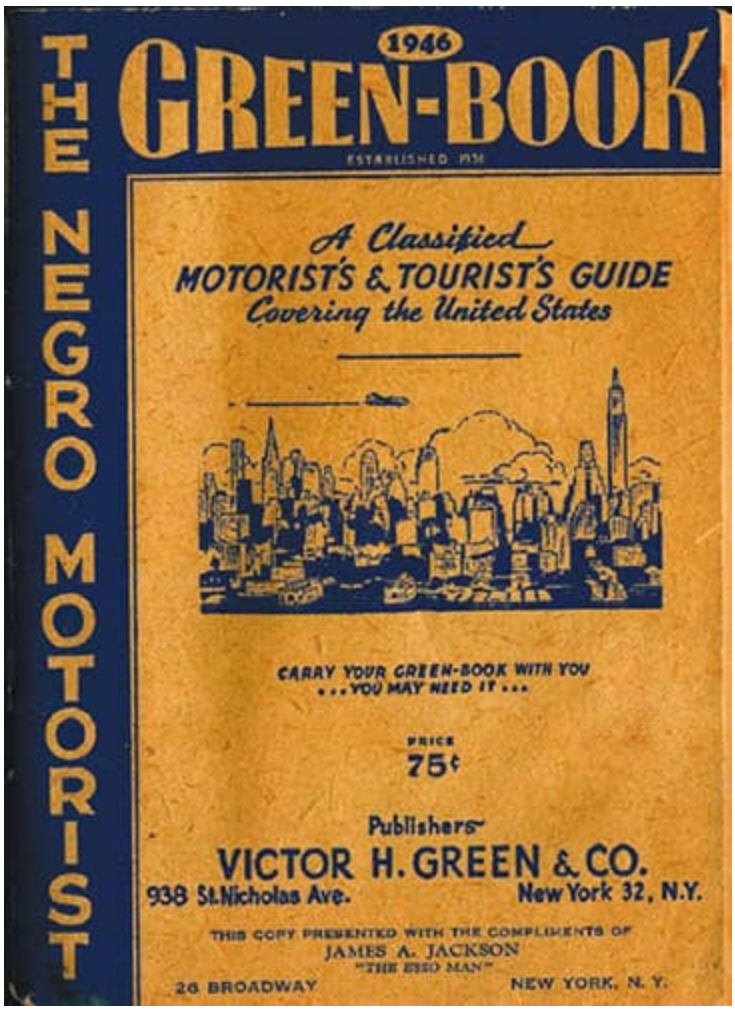
Victor H. Green – Publisher
938 St. Nicholas, Ave.
New York City
Price-25¢

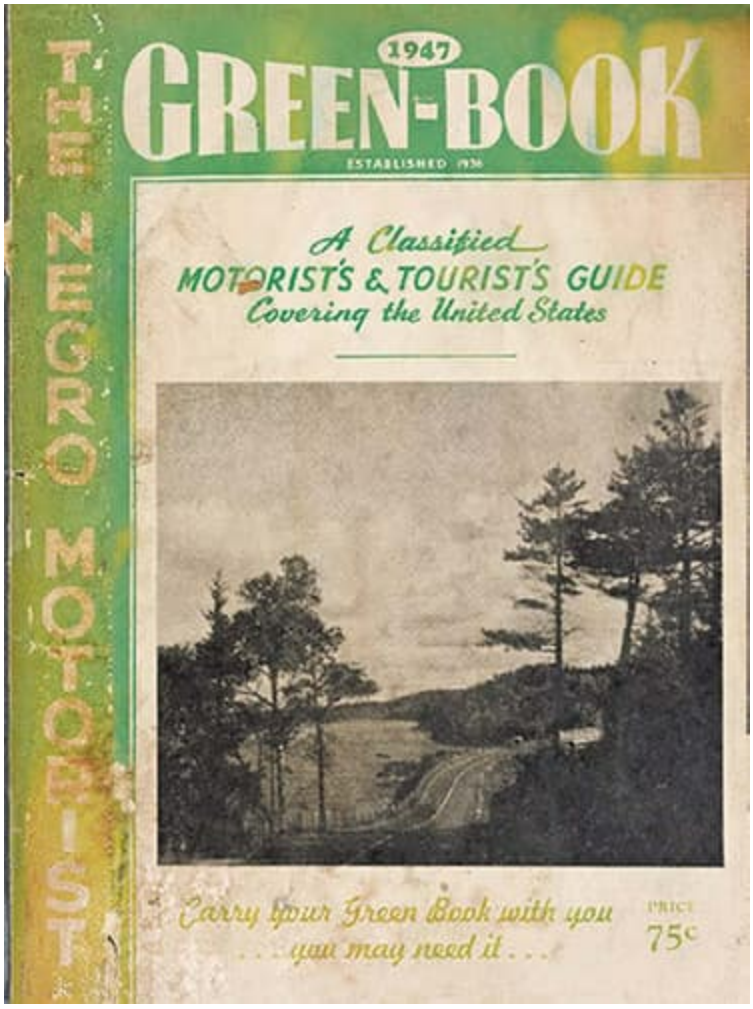
1941


The Green Book
took a hiatus
from 1942 to 1945
due to rations
imposed during
World War II.

1942–45


THE NEGRO MOTORIST
1946
GREEN-BOOK
ESTABLISHED 1936
A Classified
MOTORIST'S & TOURIST'S GUIDE
Covering the United States
CARRY YOUR GREEN-BOOK WITH YOU
...YOU MAY NEED IT...
PRICE
75¢
Publishers
VICTOR H. GREEN & CO.
938 St. Nicholas Ave. New York 32, N.Y.
THIS COPY PRESENTED WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF
JAMES A. JACKSON
"THE ESSO MAN"
26 BROADWAY NEW YORK, N. Y.

1946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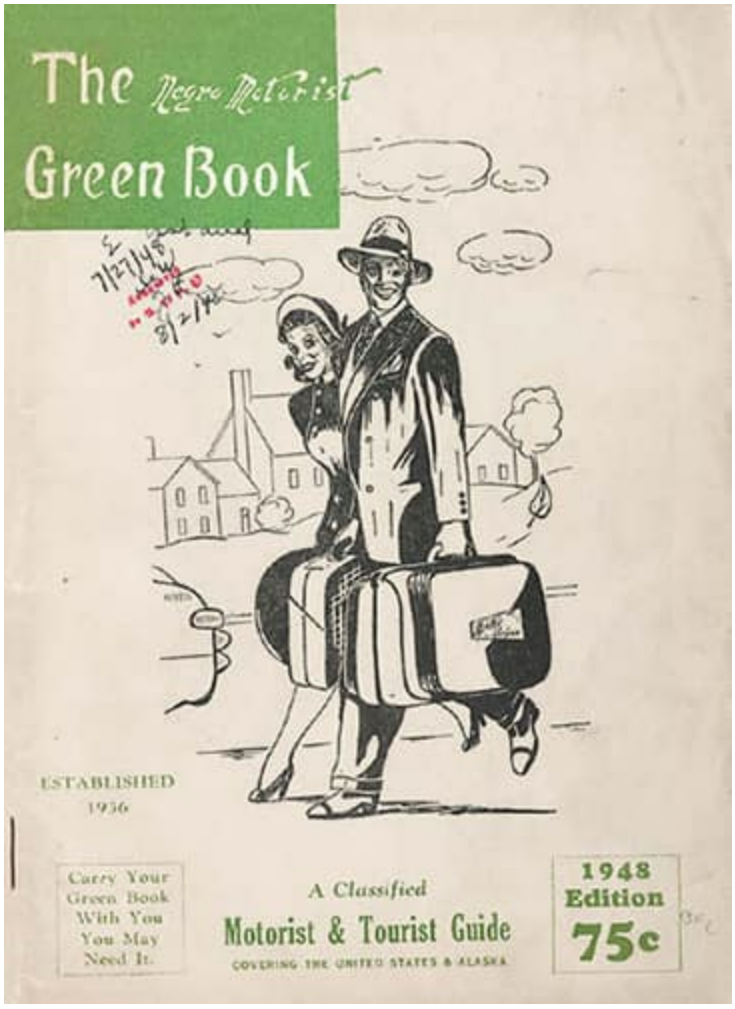
. . . you may need it . . .
PRICE
75c

1947


The Negro Motorist
Green Book
ESTABLISHED
1936
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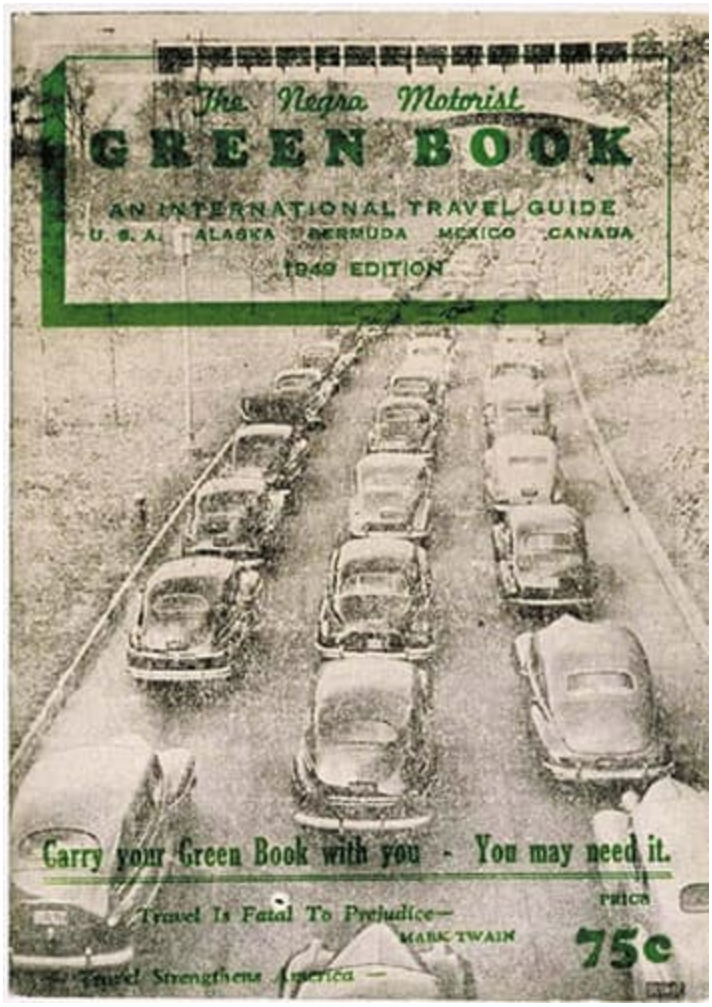
Green Book
With You
You May
Need It.
A Classified
Motorist & Tourist Guide
COVERING THE UNITED STATES & ALASKA
1948
Edition
75c

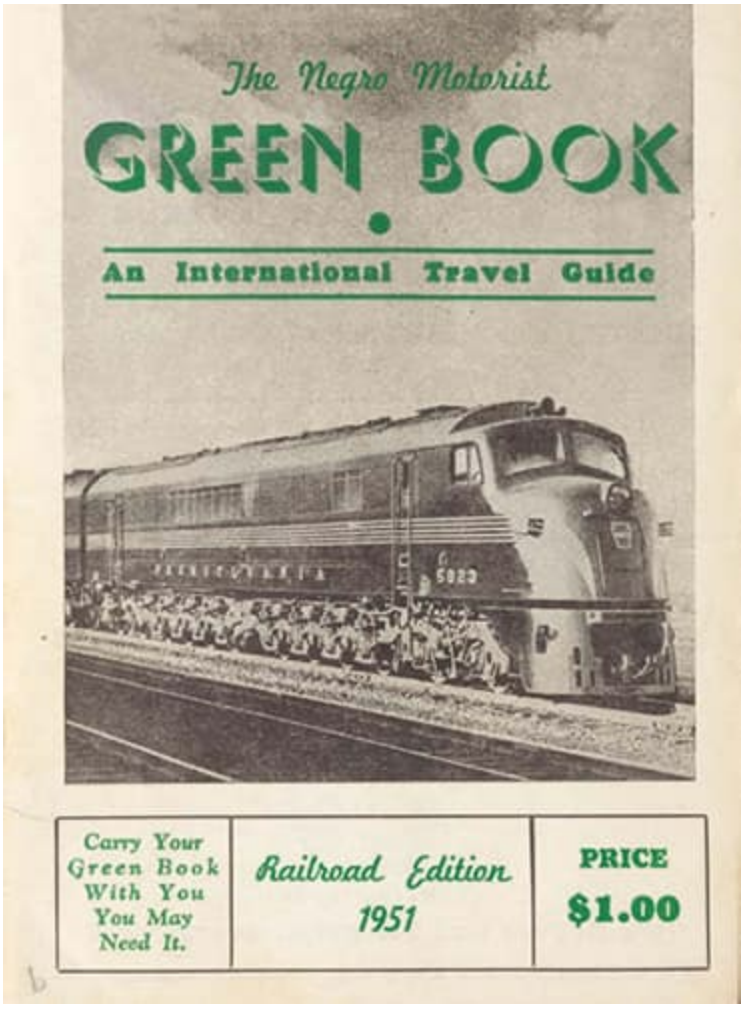
1948


The Negro Motorist
GREEN BOOK
AN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL GUIDE
U. S. A. ALASKA BERMUDA MEXICO CANADA
1949 EDITION
Carry your Green Book with you - You may need it.
Travel Is Fatal To Prejudice—
MARK TWAIN
PRICE
75c
Travel Strengthens America

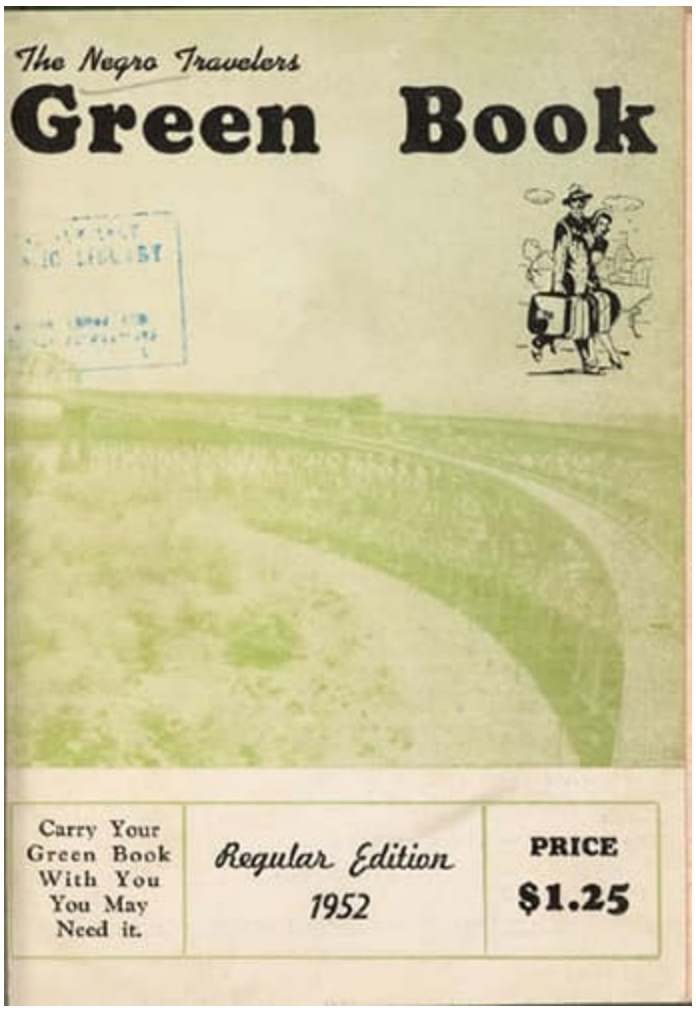
1949

The Negro Motorist
GREEN BOOK
An International Travel Guide
Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need It.
1950 Edition
Price
$1.00

1950


The Negro Motorist
GREEN BOOK
An International Travel Guide
5023
Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need It.
Railroad Edition 1951
PRICE $1.00

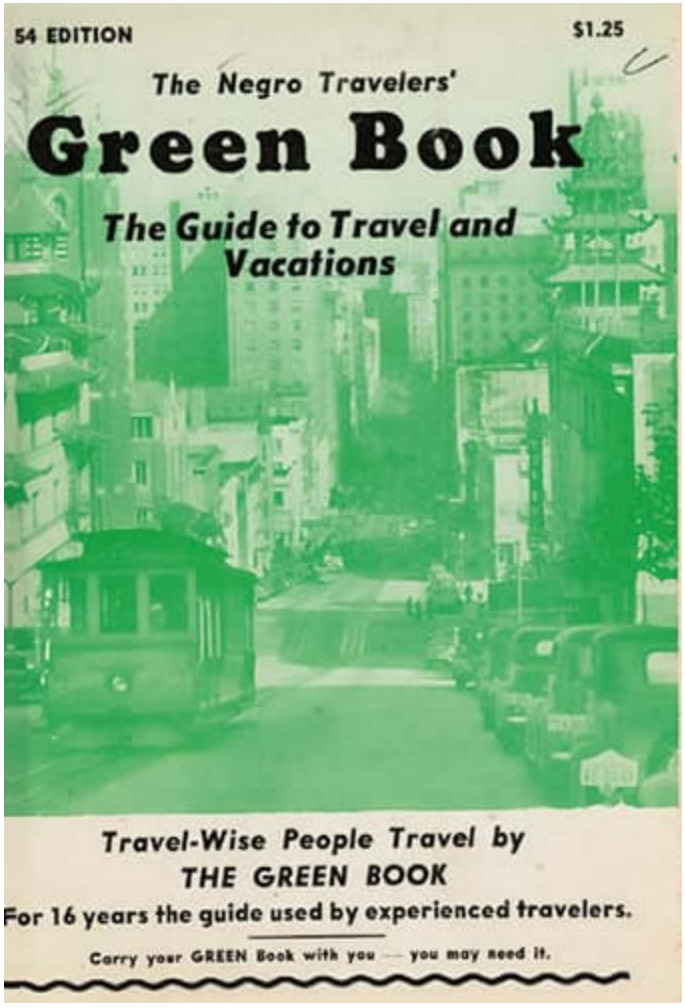
1951


The Negro Travelers
Green Book
Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need it.
Regular Edition 1952
PRICE $1.25

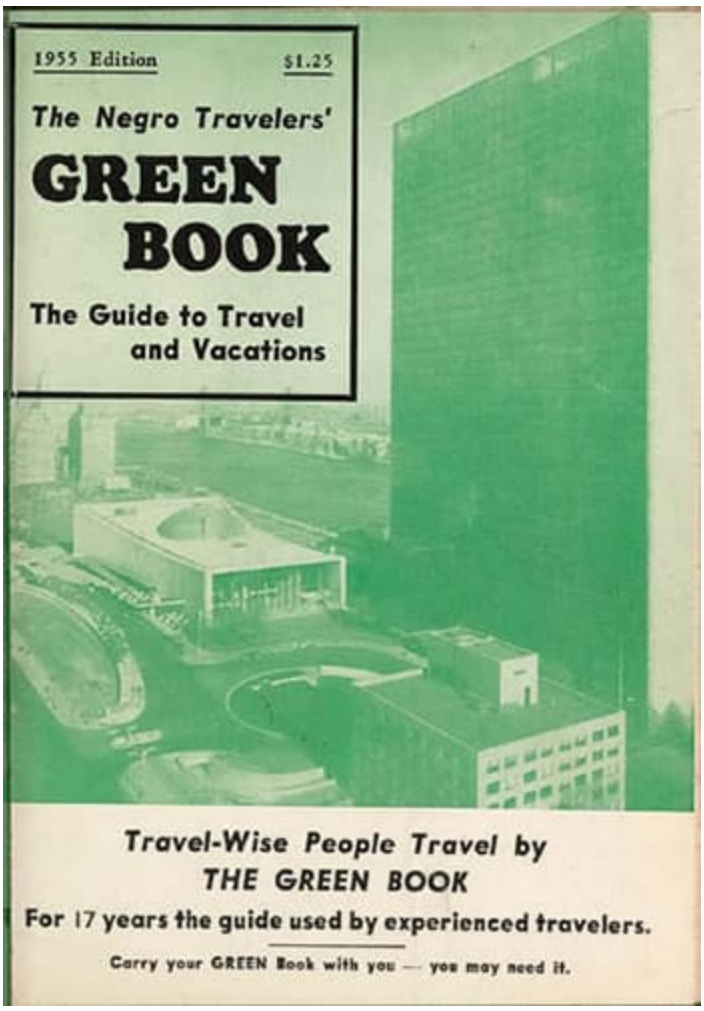
1952

The Negro Travelers'
Green Book
PAA
Carry Your Green Book With You You May Need it.
Airline Edition
1953
PRICE
$1.25

1953


54 EDITION
$1.25
The Negro Travelers'
Green Book
The Guide to Travel and Vacations
Travel-Wise People Travel by
THE GREEN BOOK
For 16 years the guide used by experienced travelers.
Carry your GREEN Book with you — you may need it.

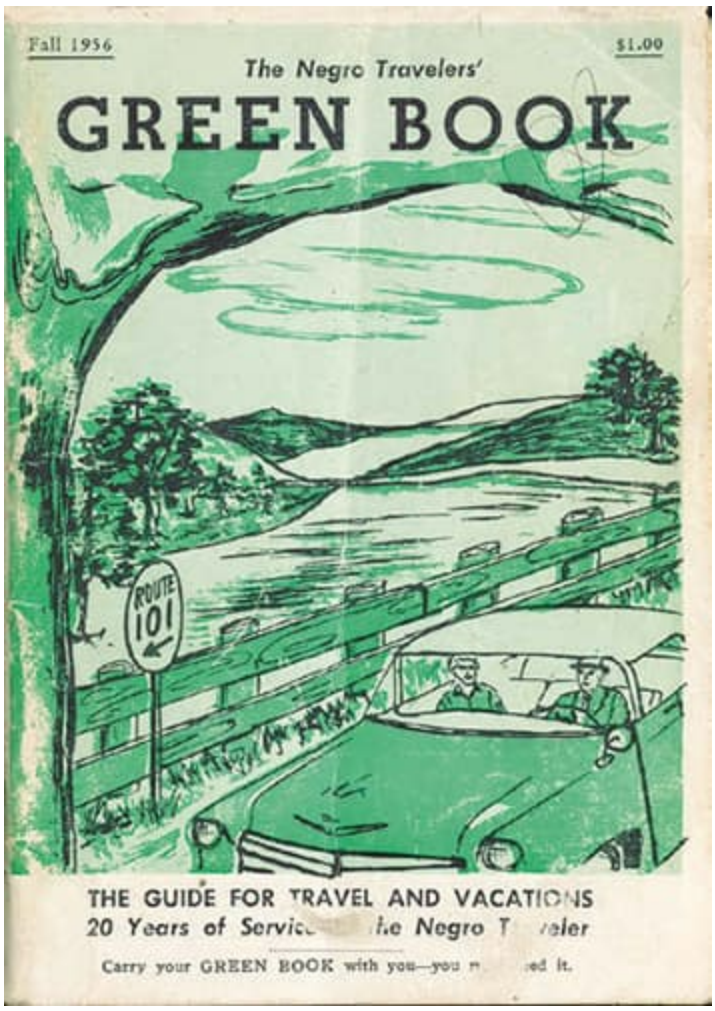
1954


1955 Edition
$1.25
The Negro Travelers'
GREEN BOOK
The Guide to Travel and Vacations
Travel-Wise People Travel by THE GREEN BOOK
For 17 years the guide used by experienced travelers.
Carry your GREEN Book with you — you may need it.

1955

Spring 1956
$1.00
The Negro Travelers'
GREEN BOOK
SoCar
647.9573
N31
1956
Presented with the Compliments of
WENDELL P. ALSTON
"The Esso Man"
THE ESSO BUILDING
15 West 51st Street, New York 19, N. Y.

1956 Spring


Fall 1956
$1.00
The Negro Travelers'
GREEN BOOK
ROUTE 101
THE GUIDE FOR TRAVEL AND VACATIONS
20 Years of Servic
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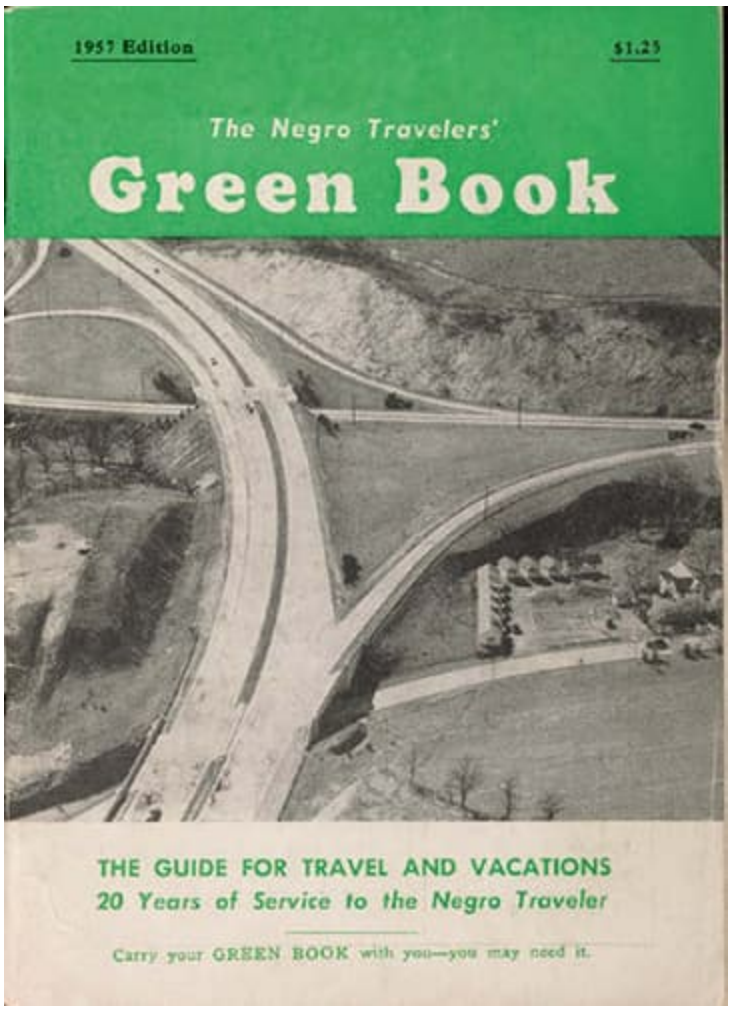
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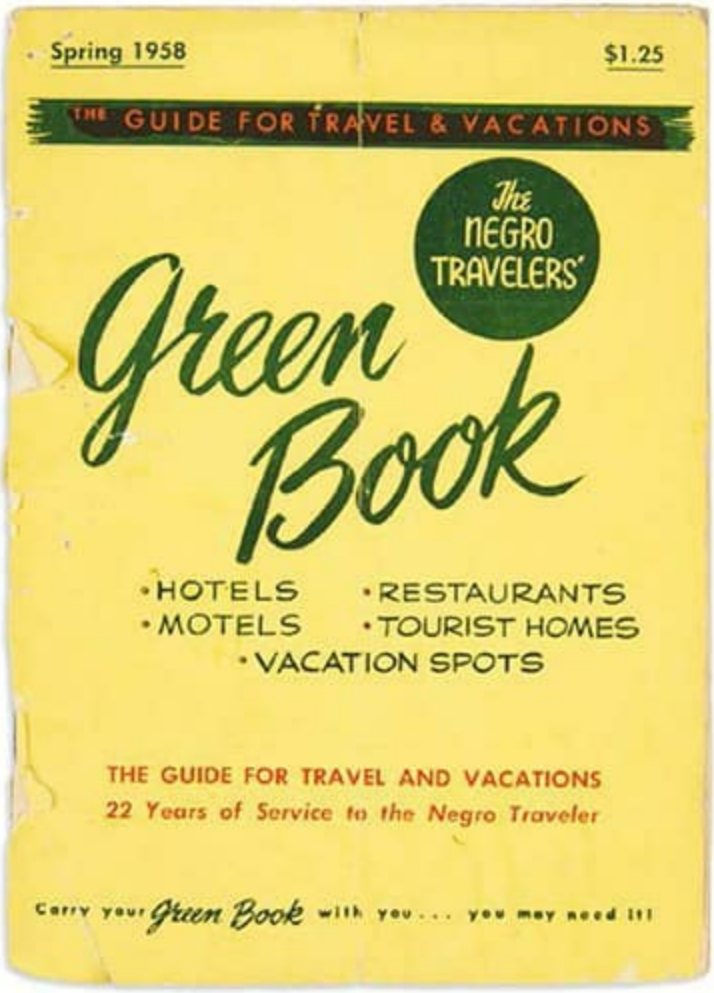
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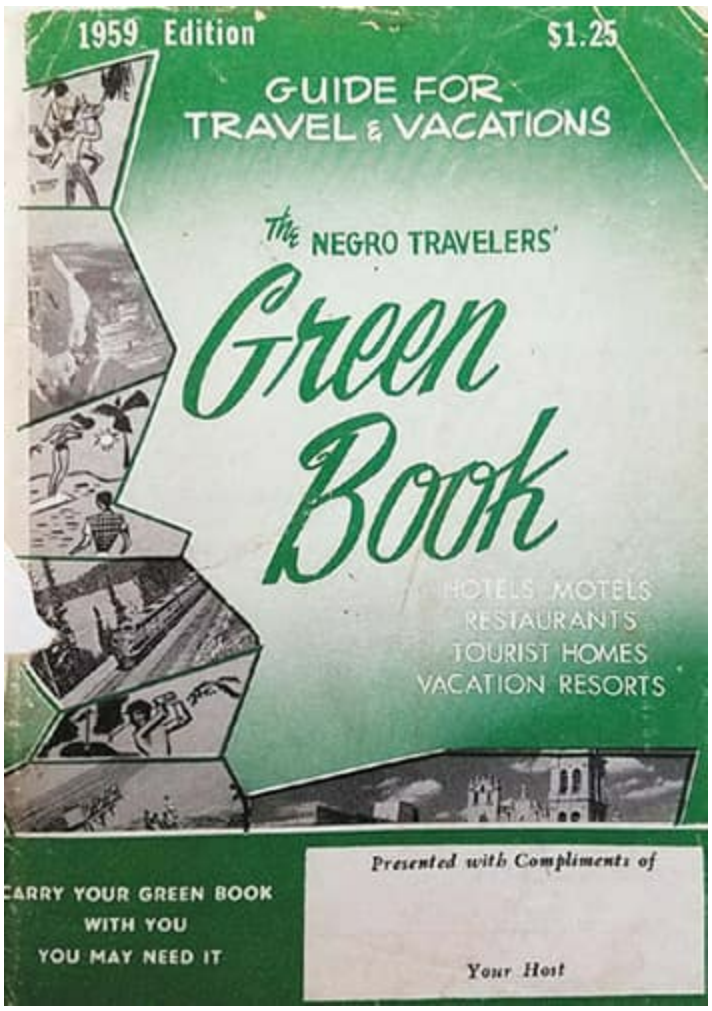
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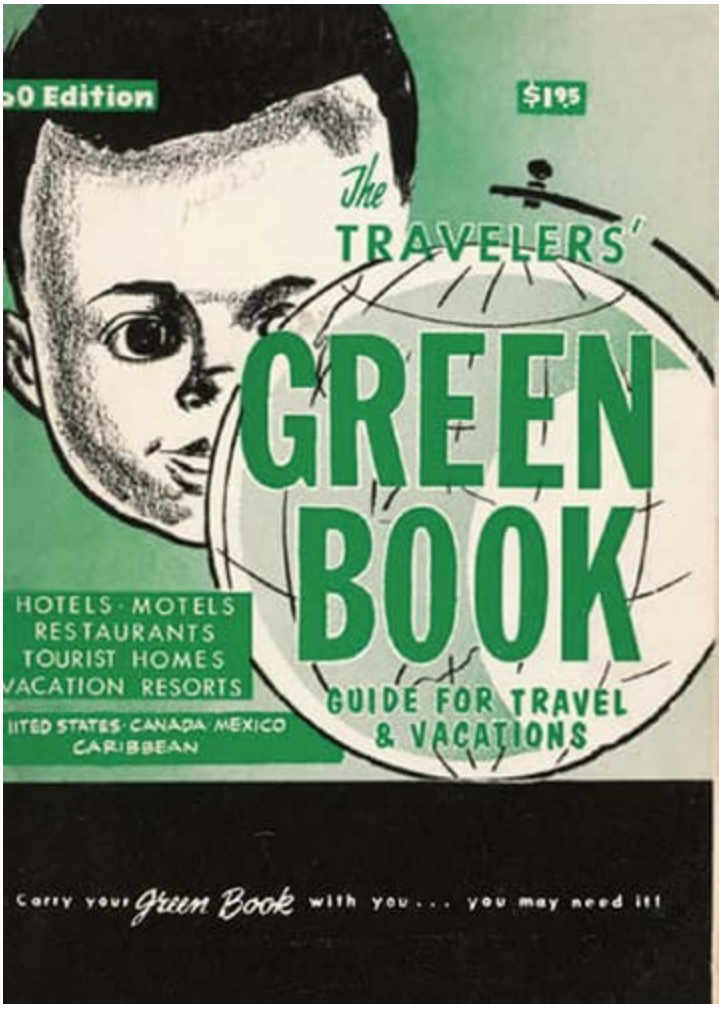
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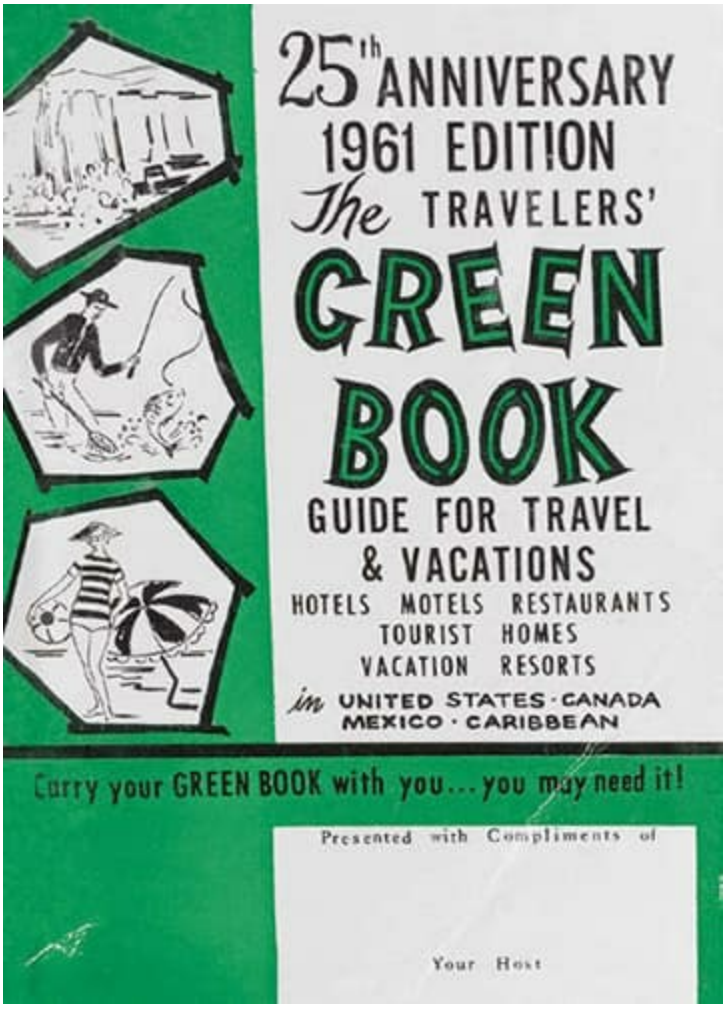
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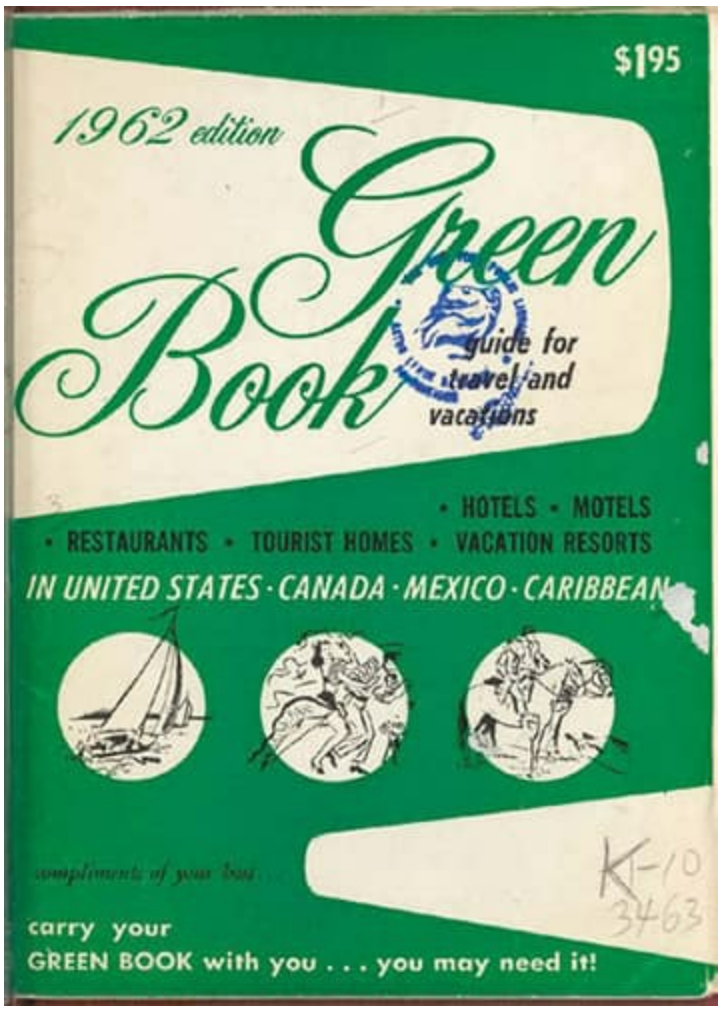
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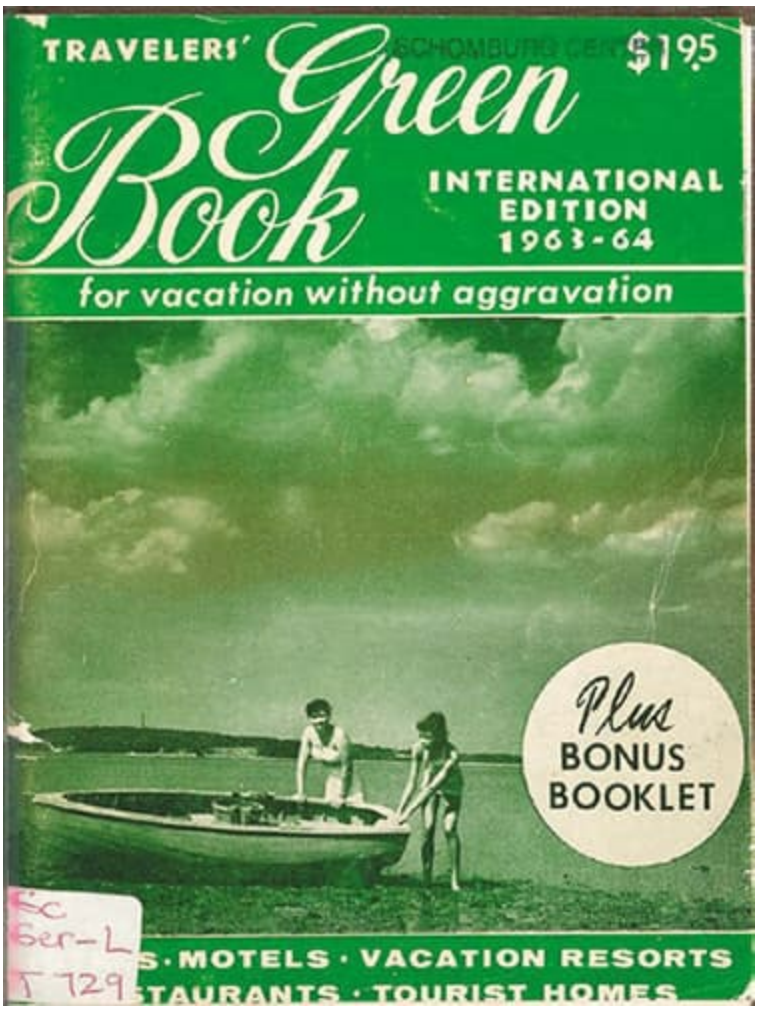

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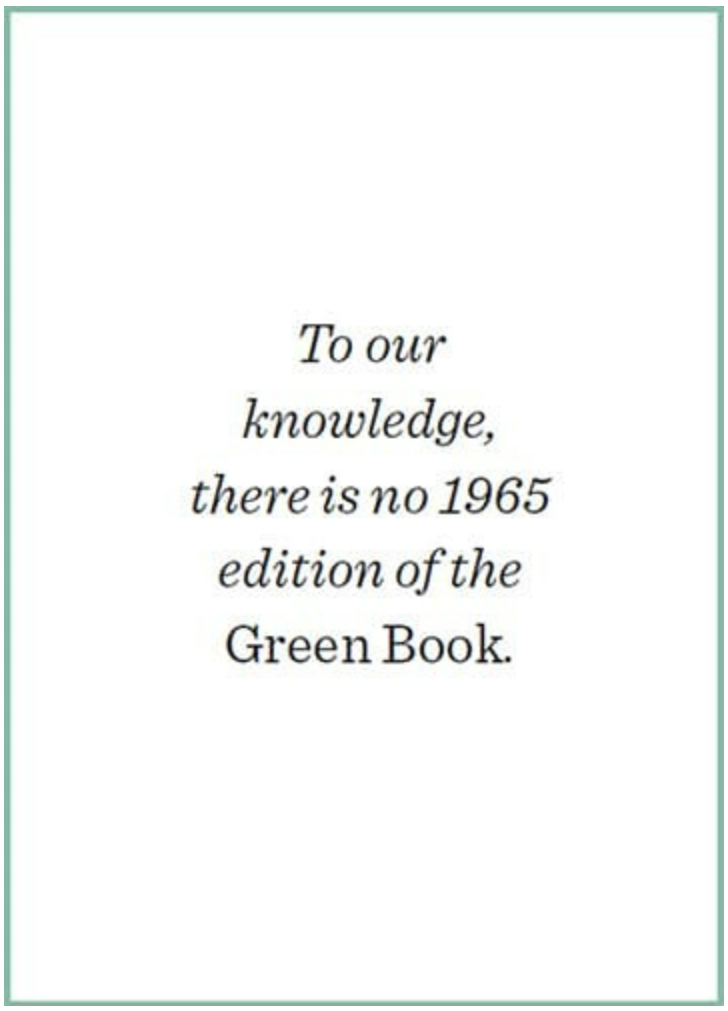

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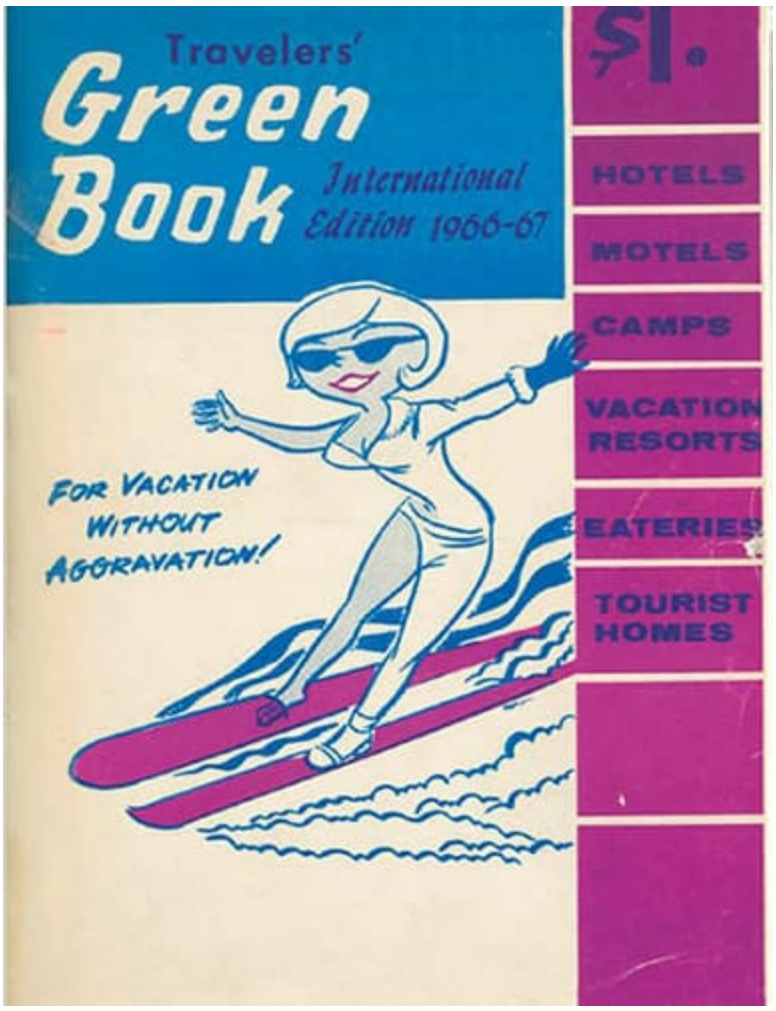

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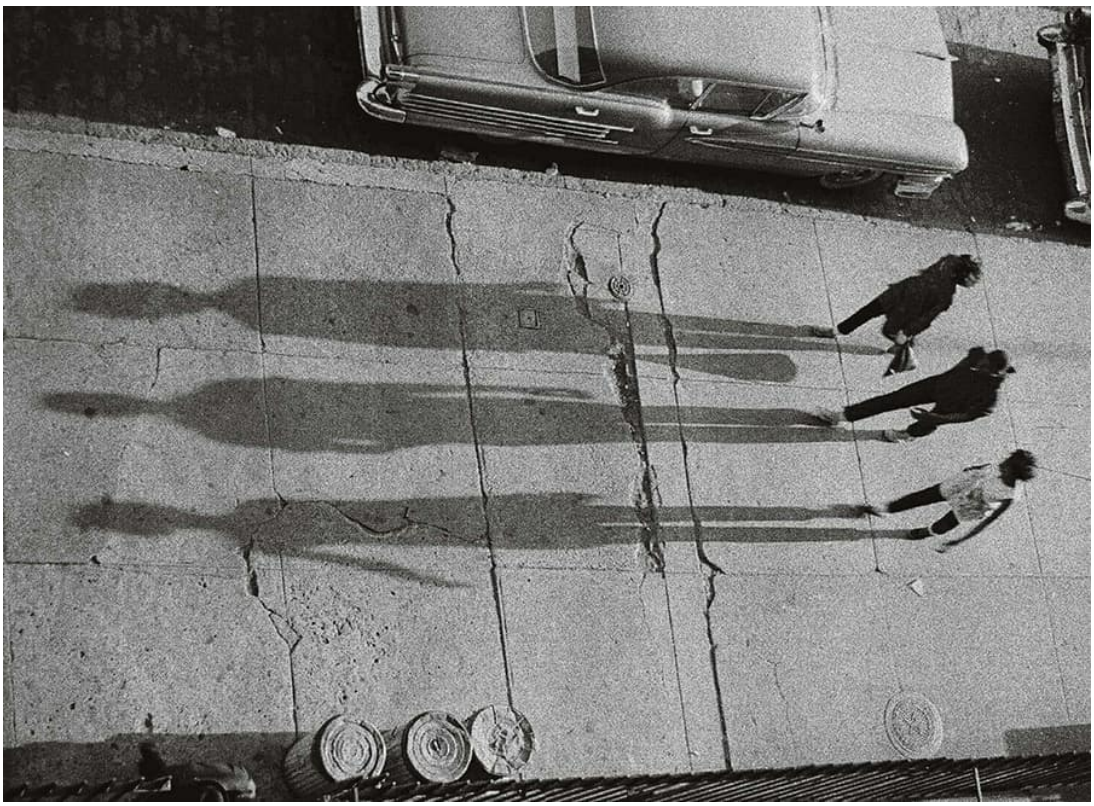

3 Shadows, photograph by Adger Cowans

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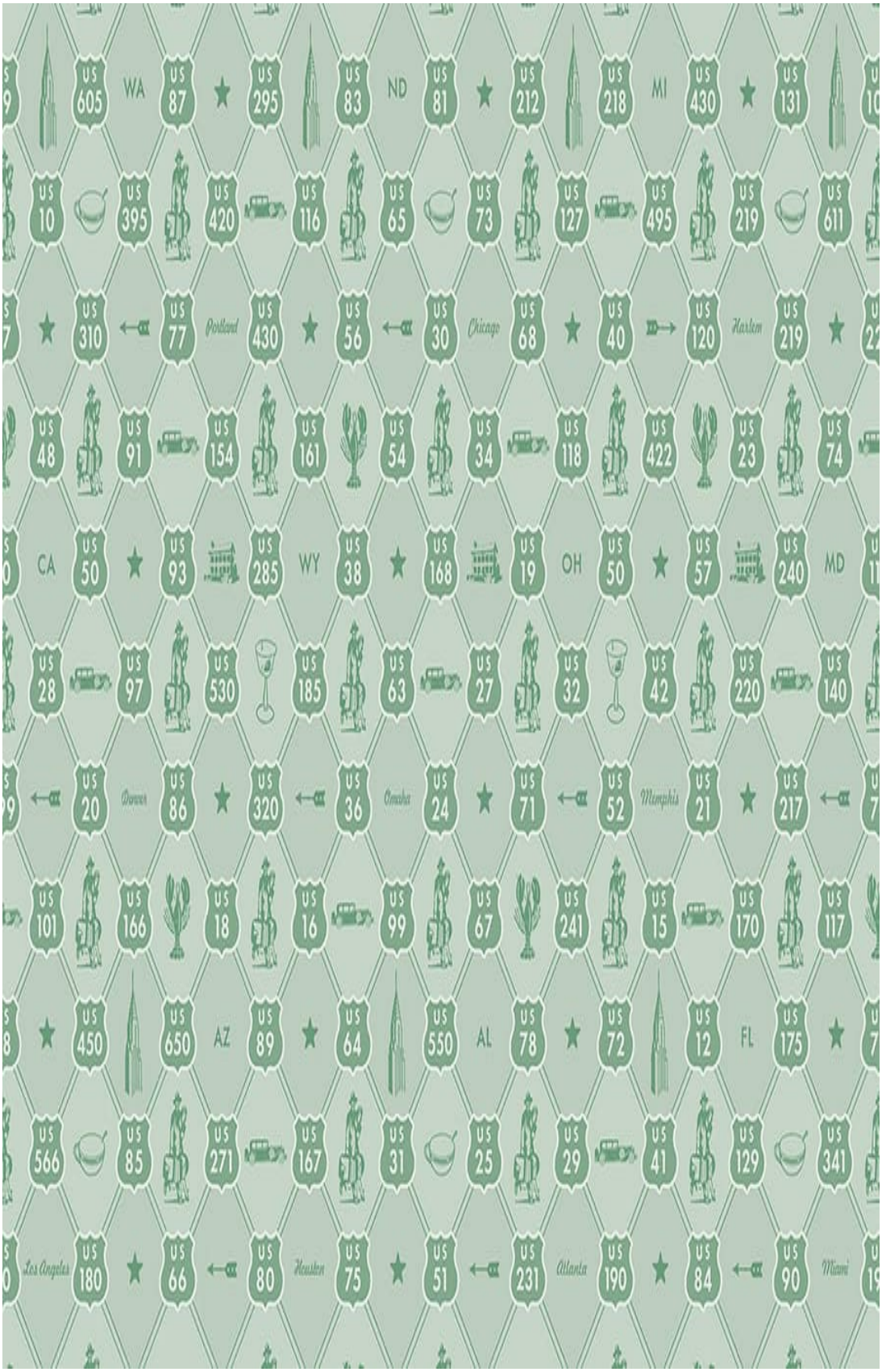
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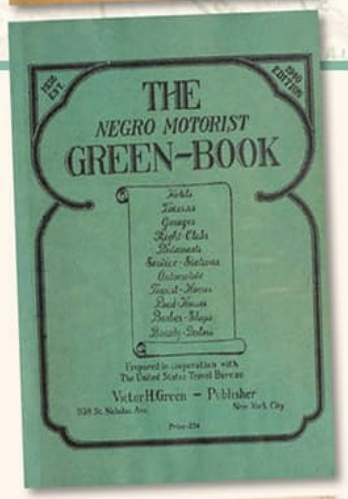

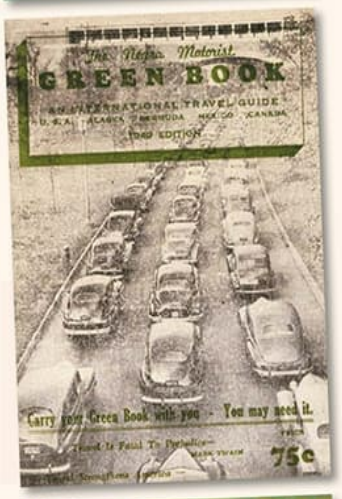

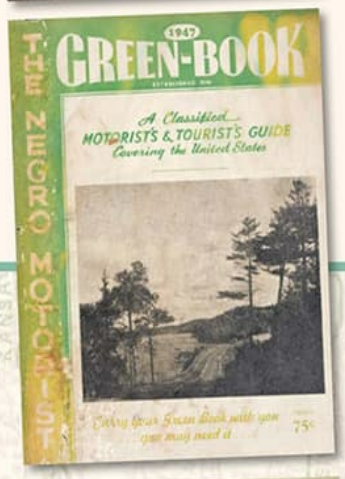

"If 'making a way out of no way' is a theme that runs throughout African American life, few things encapsulate that theme more powerfully than the *Green Book*. A symbol of Jim Crow America, it is also a stunning rebuke of it, born out of ingenuity and the relentless quest for freedom. Candacy Taylor's own quest for *Green Book* sites throughout the United States reveals her own relentlessness as well as a potent gift for bringing these sites, and the black past, alive."

—**HENRY LOUIS GATES JR.**, Harvard University

"*Overground Railroad* is an extraordinary reckoning with the America that whites have always believed existed, and with the America that blacks actually experienced, navigated, and made theirs despite every barrier."

—**HEATHER ANN THOMPSON**, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy*

"Candacy Taylor's cleverly titled, heroically researched *Green Book* travelogue should be indispensable reading. The Underground Railroad carried tens of thousands of slaves to freedom. Taylor's *Overground Railroad* transports their twentieth-century descendants to the Jim Crow reality of a hypocritical country. Her stunning book compels us to wonder where the ride is taking all of us now."

—**DAVID LEVERING LEWIS**, author of two Pulitzer Prize–winning biographies of W. E. B. Du Bois

"Published during the period of Jim Crow segregation, the various editions of the *Green Book* identified establishments willing to serve blacks, ranging from hotels and restaurants to drugstores and gas stations. *Overground Railroad* carefully places these operations in their historical and geographic context and provides a wealth of useful information not only for social scientists, historians, students, and journalists who want to examine important aspects of the changing black experience, but for general readers as well."

—**WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON**, author of *The Truly Disadvantaged*