

## “What is a Civil Rights Site?”: Re-conceptualizing the Preservation of Black American Heritage”

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Mount Vernon Baptist in Germantown, Philadelphia, built between 1893 and 1894, is a heritage site reflecting Black agency and resilience against racialized violence, discrimination, and property damage within the context of “Blackness” at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States. Formerly known as the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, this Late Gothic Revival building sits on a parcel once owned by the Montiers, a Black American family mostly known for pendant portraits of family members painted by Franklin R. Street in 1841. These portraits are currently hanging in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps less well known is that the Montiers are descendants of the first Mayor of Philadelphia, Humphrey Morrey. After the Morreys manumitted their enslaved laborers in 1715, Cremona, the matriarch of the Montier Family, entered a common-law marriage with Humphrey Morrey’s son, Richard Morrey. Cremona gave birth to five children: Robert, Caesar, Elizabeth, Rachel, and Cremona, Jr. In his will written in 1746, Richard bequeathed Cremona 198 acres of land. Upon his death in 1753, however, women could not legally own land, let alone Black women, so the property was placed with a White trustee in Cremona’s stead.<sup>2</sup> The Morreys had purchased part of the property bequeathed to Cremona from William Penn in 1683, and in 1775 members of the Montier Family built a house on a portion of the land.<sup>3</sup> Near this house in

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<sup>1</sup> The Montiers of Philadelphia,” Philadelphia Museum of Museum of Modern Art, updated 2024, <https://www.philamuseum.org/calendar/exhibition/the-montiers-of-philadelphia>.

<sup>2</sup> “Deed of Bargain of Sale,” Philadelphia County Deed Book G-7:539-543, dated January 6, 1746.

<sup>3</sup> Elaine W. Rothschild, “A History of Cheltenham Township,” Cheltenham Township Historical Commission, Montgomery County, PA (1976), 15-17. Some maps of the original land owned by the Morrey family list their family name as “Merry”. This alternative spelling of Morrey is preserved with the street in Cheltenham Township named “Humphrey Merry Way” which sits at the southern end of the original 1683 property line.

Glenside, Pennsylvania, the Montiers founded a burial ground for free Black people living in what was then referred to as “Guineatown.”<sup>4</sup> The Montiers also owned land in Germantown, including the property where Mount Vernon Baptist is currently located. The Montiers and Mount Vernon Baptist were part of a larger institution network supported by Black-owned businesses, churches, and services in the late nineteenth to early twentieth Germantown.

Although there have been recent local efforts to promote the historical significance of not only the Montiers but also Mount Vernon Baptist, the Germantown site would benefit from extended national recognition that would aid in desperately needed preservation repairs.<sup>5</sup> The original church building is not only a monument to AME Church’s religious ideology that sought to prove Black ingenuity and self-reliance through building during the mid to late-nineteenth century, but the current denomination that owns the property, Mount Vernon Baptist, still serves local congregants living in historic Black Germantown. These attributes should make justification for Mount Vernon’s preservation easy, but they don’t. If a Black Church building—a recognizable feature of Black American culture and history—faces difficulty in attesting its significance and continued present day usage, what can be said about other sites of Black heritage that are not easily identifiable nor definable by the current lexicon of preservation heritage standards? How can the field present a reconsidered or new rationale in appreciating various types of Black American heritage that could also aid in preserving heritage sites of historically marginalized people at large?

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Scott, “The Montiers: An American Family’s Triumphant Odyssey,” (August 31, 2004) in the AfriGeneas – African American and African Ancestor Genealogy Digital Library. The consolidation of historical information and sources has been compiled with the assistance of master’s students studying historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>5</sup> “The Montiers: An American Story,” WHY Y PBS, <https://why.org/montiers-american-story/>, accessed April 10, 2024.

## Exploring a new “type” of heritage

Despite numerous measures on local and national scales, preservation policies have inadequately addressed and accommodated heritage sites associated with Black American culture.<sup>6</sup> While it is important to acknowledge current efforts that seek to correct historical injustices in the preservation field and improve historic designation and recognition of Black heritage sites, the type of sites that are most often considered for preservation and designation represent only a partial understanding of Black American experiences. This partial understanding is, unfortunately, then, further marred by erasure, discrimination, misunderstanding, mischaracterization, and a failure to reflect Black American experiences in favor of “official” narratives that deny the historical and contemporary hardships and injustices felt by Black Americans across various socio-economic backgrounds.

Historic preservation institutions, academics, and practitioners should be radically holistic in their approach to preserving Black American heritage. The goal, then, as Brent Leggs, Executive Director of the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, often says, should be telling the “whole American story”—recognizing both the inequity of current preservation efforts in preserving Black heritage while also acknowledging that Black American culture and heritage are crucial pieces of American cultural heritage. Whereas conventional preservation tools and concepts, institutions, and power structures have aided in preserving some sites of Black heritage in the past—specifically places such as historic houses associated with famous leaders and activists or sites associated with the landscape of slavery—

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<sup>6</sup> Current efforts include the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. The AACAF’s projects include the Historically Black College/University Heritage Stewardship Initiative and various buildings and sites that have received preservation grants from the fund. In addition, congress signed into law in 2018 the 400 Years of African American Commission Act which led to the National Parks Service commission of the same name. The commission seeks to recognize the cultural contributions of Black Americans; the impact of slavery and discrimination; and coordinate public policy initiatives.

the field should take a more encompassing perspective on what constitutes “heritage,” utilizing alternative strategies aimed at recognizing other forms of heritage and material culture and specifically, for this article, forms that reflect holistically Black American experiences.

Exploring these “alternative” types and forms—while also acknowledging “traditional” types and forms—brings intangible expressions of heritage to the fore. These concerns demonstrate how a methodological approach to reconceptualizing the ways the field interprets Black American heritage will allow for the inclusion of more and not readily apparent sites. By focusing on “type”—such as landscapes or foodways—rather than narrative, geography, or a given historical period, a discussion on preserving Black American heritage can be more encompassing. Types range across time and geography; and while certain types, such as church buildings and schools, are often historically and culturally specific, one can see changes in values by studying types synchronically and diachronically. Effectively utilizing strategies presented in this paper requires that historic preservationists become more educated about Black American experiences; thus, we must be willing, as educators and practitioners, to rethink traditional categories and policies that currently define historic preservation practice.

It is also imperative that those in the profession rethink concepts of “integrity” and “intangibility” and how these concepts have often—especially in the case of integrity—been purposely and inadvertently used to exclude the historical legacy of Black American heritage places. Intangibility and integrity, respectively, are used to qualify the historic significance of a place and to determine whether abstract values can define historical significance.<sup>7</sup> The use of

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<sup>7</sup> “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?,” UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, updated 2024 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>; Ayesha Pamela Rogers, “Values and Relationships between Tangible and Intangible Dimensions of Heritage Places,” In *Values in Heritage Management: Emerging Approaches and Directions*, edited by Erica Avrami, Susan Macdonald, Randall Mason, and David Myers (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2019, <http://www.getty.edu/publications/occasional-papers-3/part-two/12/>; “Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage,” National Park Service, updated February 29, 2016. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tangible-cultural-heritage.htm>. UNESCO lists several types of “intangible” heritage

these terms is especially important when considering the significance of places that do not necessarily fit the Secretary of the Interior's standards for preservation, as the physically built part of a heritage site may be deteriorated or missing.<sup>8</sup> Rigid standards continue to promote discrimination against heritage sites that would further add to the historic cultural landscape of Black American history, thus signifying the need for an alternative approach to preserving new types of heritage.<sup>9</sup>

To imagine what this newer and reconsidered approach would look like, basic research on the historiography of Black heritage sites, narratives, and practices is needed. This paper begins to construct this foundational research by drawing together a broad range of published works, noting absences and blind spots to elaborate on types of heritage sites—both tangible and intangible—not typically considered as part of the legacy of the Black American experience. Although specific to Black American culture, the methodologies presented in this paper could be extrapolated and applied to preserving heritage sites of other marginalized peoples and communities. In addition, though exploring intangible forms of heritage can lead to the inclusion of sites associated with historically marginalized people on registers and lists like the National Register of Historic Places, it is important to keep in mind who owns the rights to culture and

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that include music, dance, costumes, family traditions, technical skills, and oral traditions. "Conditions of Integrity," Workshop of National Focal Points of Central, South-East and Eastern Countries on the Preparation of the Second Cycle of the Periodic Reporting Exercise on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, May 2011.

<sup>8</sup> "Sites," as defined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, locations "of a significant event, precontact or historic occupation or activity, or building or structure no longer standing where the location itself possess historic, cultural, or archeological value."

[https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env\\_topics/section\\_106\\_tutorial/chapter3\\_2.aspx](https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_topics/section_106_tutorial/chapter3_2.aspx).

<sup>9</sup> Judith Wellman, "The Underground Railroad and the National Register of Historic Places: Historical Importance vs. Architectural Integrity," *The Public Historian* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 11 – 29; Charles W. Smythe, "The National Register Framework for Protecting Cultural Heritage Places," *The George Wright Forum* 26, no. 1 (2009): 14 – 27; Cynthia G. Falk and Anna Vemer Andrzejewski, "Peopling Preservation: A Forum in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 1 – 5.

who decides what is appropriate for preservation.<sup>10</sup> Failing to understand and/or recognize the latent power imbalances that are often present when preserving tangible forms of culture can unfortunately migrate into preserving intangible heritage. Historic preservationists must be willing to work outside the profession and engage a range of voices to democratize preservation efforts.<sup>11</sup>

This paper positions its argument by exploring types of heritage sites that do not conform to any typical standard or criterion. These include landscapes that are considered part of the lexicon of cultural landscape theory but may not be readily identifiable, sites of Black displacement, reinterpretations of established sites, and sites of upheaval, both historical and contemporary. These types of sites will also be positioned within traditional and reconsidered ways of evaluating, investigating, and documenting heritage sites such as mutable knowledge like pedagogical books and the Green Book, laws and regulations, and foodways. This second list of tools to evaluate sites could also be considered types of “heritage sites,” as these tools are often living representations of historic moments and values in Black American history and culture.

It is vital that we acknowledge current preservation efforts in saving Black heritage sites—or as this paper will advocate for, civil rights sites or heritage places that reflect the long historical struggle for civil liberties for Black Americans—considering that for much of American preservation history, these sites have been ignored or abandoned, including numerous

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<sup>10</sup> This paper’s frame of focus relies mostly on criteria associated with the National Register, however, the concepts and methods explored can also apply to local registers as states and regions have their own varying policies when it comes to preserving heritage.

<sup>11</sup> See Sharon R. Sherman, “Who Owns Culture and Who Decides? Ethics, Film Methodology, and Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection,” *Western Folklore* 67, no. 2/3, Special Issue in Honor of Michael Owen Jones (Spring/Summer 2008): 223-236; and Chen Zhiqin, “For Whom to Conserve Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Dislocated Agency of Folk Belief Practitioners and the Reproduction of Local Culture,” *Asian Ethnology* 74, no. 2, *Chinese Folklore Studies Toward Disciplinary Maturity* (2015): 307-334.

unknown burial grounds, houses, and churches. However, we should also acknowledge that this paper is only a beginning point in rethinking how to categorize and define alternative types of heritage. Historic preservationists will need to continue processing and interpreting the legacy of these sites in the context of issues related to historical injustices still plaguing our social and political environments, thereby shaping opportunities for historic preservation to address issues and concerns more adequately. To reflect and help archive Black culture and the experience of civil rights struggles and triumphs in the United States, preservation must be more than collecting architectural specimens, making lists and plotting histories, erecting roadside markers and establishing a few national parks or house museums. We not only must expand our way of thinking to recognize the significance of Black heritage, but also help reframe the field more broadly to apply lessons discussed in this paper to other forms of heritage. The past must be activated, not just collected. Heritage is constructed, not just found.

### What is a civil rights site?

Black American experiences in the United States are diverse and varied, not monolithic. Thus, preservation professionals must be explicit in defining “Black heritage” and “civil rights sites” before delving deeper into identifying new types of heritage sites to better preserve the legacy of Black American experiences. Articulations of “Blackness” in the United States reflect the historical struggle of Black Americans in challenging racist assumptions envisaged to deny their humanity. As Alexander G. Weheliye writes, “Blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot.”<sup>12</sup> Black heritage, then, is the celebrated documented

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye, “Introduction,” *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies Research* 44, no. 2 (2014): 6.

accumulation of changing cultural values over time that reflect, challenge, or bolster articulations of Blackness in built environments dominated by a system of unequal power structures. This paper recognizes that Blackness in the United States also intersects with other areas of inequality, such as class, gender, sexuality, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, the concept of “civil rights” is amorphous. The types of sites discussed below are not limited to the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 1960s in American history. The “long civil rights movement” relates to recognizing the humanity and liberties often denied to historically marginalized people living in the United States before and since its founding. Yet, for present purposes discussed in this paper, the term “civil rights” allows for a further temporal and spatial redefinition of civil rights and even further, a redefinition of “type” itself, including aspects of Black American experiences from the onset of colonization to the present.<sup>14</sup> These experiences also intersect with other avenues of civil rights in American history such as the women’s rights movement and the LGBTQ+ movement.

Reframing the way civil right sites are preserved relies primarily on understanding what forms Black heritage takes, or what constitutes a “Black heritage site”—the cultural, historical, spatial, material contexts of a site that provokes its consideration as “heritage” of Black

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<sup>13</sup> Hugo Canham and Rejane Williams, “Being Black, Middle Class and the Object of Two Gazes,” *Ethnicities* 17, no. 1 (February 2017): 23 – 46; Derek Conrad Murray, “Mickalene Thomas: Afro-Kitsch and the Queering of Blackness,” *American Art* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 9 – 15. Huey Copeland, *Bound to Appear: Art, Slavery, and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Charles L. Davis II, “Blackness in Practice: Toward an Architectural Phenomenology of Blackness,” *Log* 42, *Disorienting Phenomenology* (Winter/Spring 2018): 43 – 54; Shona N. Jackson, “Risk, Blackness, and Postcolonial Studies: An Introduction,” *Callaloo* 37, no. 1 *Postcoloniality & Blackness: A Special Section* (Winter 2014): 63 – 68; Lauren McLeod Cramer, “Building the Black (Universal) Archive and the Architecture of Black Cinema,” *Black Camera* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 131 – 145.

<sup>14</sup> See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1235. Dowd argues that placing civil rights movements in a longer temporal context that begins with political efforts in the 1930s and extends geographically beyond the South will challenge efforts in distorting the meaning of civil rights and its gains. See also the National Historic Landmarks Program’s *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* whose methodological approach begins with studying heritage sites established from 1776 to 1976 to include a diversity of cultural American heritage. United States Department of the Interior, 2002. Revised 2008.



American culture. These sites include the obvious examples of “site” (i.e., buildings, designed landscapes, etc.) and extend well beyond the physical built environment—including intangible heritage or places not immediately visible—that address the legacy of civil rights for Black Americans.

The basis for this reframing should rely on methods outside of the field; as Saidiya Hartman writes, relying on traditional documents that tell one perspective is counterintuitive to the effort of correcting historical injustices.<sup>15</sup> Thus, it is urgent that the field reinterpret how Black heritage sites are preserved by re-examining forms of heritage, such as Black-owned newspapers, burial records, oral histories, cultural landscapes, etc., while also reconceptualizing new methods that address a wider range of heritage sites. Although we must acknowledge that these sources are also shaped by class politics, as elite classes historically would have had the most direct access to such material, reinterpreting primary sources and heritage sites provides a starting point for reframing and widening the preservation of Black heritage.

### Reframing our approach to preserving civil rights sites

This paper approaches the subject of “civil rights sites” of Black heritage through a historiographic lens: what do we know about the history of built environments and processes of producing, shaping, and activating places that today should be regarded as Black heritage sites? Presently, there are several traditional types of sites that have been mainstays in preserving the legacy of civil rights heritage. These typically include mostly architectural works, such as churches, houses, schools, burial grounds, slave plantations, museums, and street and public

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<sup>15</sup> Saidiya V. Hartman, “A Note on Method,” from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

places named after historic Black figures.<sup>16</sup> Heritage sites associated with specific periods in Black American history, such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the institution of slavery, also make up a significant portion of preserved sites recognizing Black American contributions.<sup>17</sup> Forms of commemoration such as historic markers, listings on a preservation register at the national and local levels, and public stewardship of a “park” or “historic site” are also considered standard expressions of heritage.

These traditional heritage types have served collectively as an influential foundation in bringing to the foreground issues concerning Black Americans’ place in the larger context of American history and how preservationists can adapt standard tools to adequately preserve and interpret these places. They constitute a part of the “official memory” endorsed by powerful and mainstream institutions. And though it is important that these sites remain a part of the framework of preserving Black American heritage, it is crucial to consider how preservation professionals reinterpret these sites or include “unconventional” types not yet recognized as important to legacy of civil rights to create a more rounded appreciation for Black heritage.<sup>18</sup>

The preservation field can take cues from other disciplines that have reoriented their scholarship and practices to address historical injustices. For example, vernacular architectural historians have long positioned “non-monumental” architecture at the center of historical analysis. Though there is much to discuss on the prevalent, archaic use of the term “vernacular” to describe certain non-Western cultures, recentering heritage of the historically marginalized

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<sup>16</sup> McInnis, Maurie. “Mapping the Slave Trade in Richmond and New Orleans.” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 102-125.

<sup>17</sup> “African American History Month,” National Register of Historic Places, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/african-american-history-month.htm>; “Projects of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org/action-fund-projects>.

<sup>18</sup> See current work by UNESCO in interpreting “unconventional” types of heritage, “What is UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage? And what’s on it?” <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/unesco-cultural-heritage-list/>.

will lead to new avenues of research and methods.<sup>19</sup> The incorporation of vernacular architecture studies has been used to challenge traditional art historical approaches to studying built environments. It is thus perhaps more useful to view the vernacular, especially in the American context, as a “process”—the ways people engage with built environments daily, over time, or during monumental projects and discourses—as opposed to referring to specific building types or styles. A vernacular approach to architectural history relies on the belief that “buildings have lives,” allowing for the continued study of a place, site, landscape, or region, and the cultural and historical values attached to that certain place. These patterns of change also challenge the notion that everyday buildings are “non-academic,” acknowledging that both builders and professional architects learn their trade through experience and education. The built environment is therefore both an aesthetic object and a document of changing cultural values.

In addition to reviewing the wealth of classic studies that recover histories of built environments associated with Black American culture and incorporating work from across disciplines, preservation scholarship would also benefit in identifying and documenting heritage sites in which historically marginalized groups contributed to the wider dominant culture of building in the United States, acting as architectural agents themselves rather than passive objects. This methodological approach falls in line with Catherine Bishir’s foundational work in documenting Black builders’ contributions to building practices in North Carolina and Mabel O. Wilson’s study on Black Americans participating in exhibitions and expositions.<sup>20</sup> This scholarly

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011); Adams, Anne Marie and Sally McMurry, eds. *Exploring Everyday Landscapes: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VII* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Thomas Carter and Elizabeth C. Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> For these classic studies see John Michael Vlach, *Back of the House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1993); Dell Upton, *America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that*

direction builds on previous work focused on introducing traditional heritage types while offering new ideas for methods that look at alternative means of heritage making.<sup>21</sup>

### “Traditional” types of civil rights heritage

Before defining these unconventional examples of Black civil rights heritage, it is important to review the “traditional” types of heritage at the core of preservation work. One example of traditional heritage types are buildings and places associated with the Black Church, which include church buildings and churchyards, or burial sites, schools, universities, and parsonages attached to or founded by a church. These types are also regarded as “canonical” within preservation practice because they are often readily apparent (either in physical appearance or association) and are agreed upon as standard forms of heritage within and outside of Black American culture. Scholarship on this type includes Carol V. R. George’s landmark study on the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; W.E.B. Du Bois’ lesser-known study, *The Negro Church*; and Gary B. Nash’s *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840*.<sup>22</sup> Examples of Black Church subtypes include

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*Built America* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation, Press, 1986); Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, eds. *Slavery in the City: Architecture and Landscapes of Urban Slavery in North America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2017); Amber Wiley, “The Dunbar High School Dilemma: Architecture, Power, and African American Cultural Heritage,” *Buildings & Landscapes* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 95-128; Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> This new scholarly direction had been influenced by new cultural Black studies. See Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” *Journal of Social and Cultural Geography*, 12:8 (2011): 947-963; Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); McKittrick and Clyde Woods, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* (Toronto, Ont. and Cambridge, Mass.: Between the Lines and South End Press, 2007); McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Brandi Thompson Summers, *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a post Chocolate City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019)

<sup>22</sup> Carolyn V. R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church; report of a social study made under the direction of Atlanta university; together with the Proceedings of the eight Conference for the study of Negro problems, held at Atlanta university, May 26th, 1903* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903); Tara A Dudley, *Building Antebellum New Orleans: Free People of Color and Their Influence* (Austin: University of Texas

buildings associated with denominations started by people of African descent including the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; and burial grounds such as the African Burying Ground in New York City and Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, Pennsylvania.<sup>23</sup>

Other conventional sites of Black heritage include those associated with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s such as the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee; the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama; the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama; and the Lincoln Memorial which was the site of 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The Lorraine Motel, previously known as the site of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968, is now the National Civil Rights Museum. Its mission is to “share the culture and lessons from the American Civil Rights Movement and explore how this significant era continues to shape equality and freedom globally.”<sup>24</sup> Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, the site of an infamous Ku Klux Klan bombing in 1958 that killed four Black girls, was added to the NRHP in 1980 and was the subject of documentation surveys conducted by the Historic American Building Survey in 1993. Taking a cue from Craig Barton’s edited volume *Sites of Memory*, which includes essays that explore well-known civil rights sites while also including previously unconsidered sites and alternative methodologies to preserve and interpret them, these

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Press, 2021); and Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Recognition of these important episodes in Black American history include the 1972 NRHP register nomination of Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, #72001166, that recognizes the 1889 church building and the land on which it is built as significant in the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the 1999 NRHP register nomination of Morning Chapel Colored (Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, Texas, #99001049, which recognizes the building’s Late Gothic Revival architectural style and its foundations on a former connection to the Underground Railroad; the 1993 NRHP register nomination for the African Burying Ground in New York, #93001597; and the 2010 NRHP register nomination for Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, Pennsylvania, #10001031.

<sup>24</sup> “About the Museum,” National Civil Rights Museum, <https://www.civilrights museum.org/about>.

aforementioned sites also offer opportunities for reinterpretation, a possible “alternative” type of Black Civil Rights heritage that will be explored later in this paper.<sup>25</sup>

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other educational institutions associated with Black American experiences are also traditional type of civil rights sites that have been explored in work by K. Ian Grandison and his essay titled, “Negotiated Space: The Black College Campus as a Cultural Record of Postbellum America,” in which Grandison articulates the physical difference between earlier HBCUs and predominately white institutions (PWIs), rooting the unconventional planning patterns and designs of the first Black colleges and universities in the historical context of Jim Crow discrimination and limited resources due to racism and violence against Black Americans.<sup>26</sup> In a similar vein, educational networks such as the Rosenwald Schools built for Black American children are another example of conventional civil rights sites.<sup>27</sup> Though these types are orthodox in their association with historic events or people, as will be explored in the section on alternative types these sites can also be reframed as cultural landscapes that speak to abstract values of cultural memory reflecting the limitations Black Americans felt after the abolition of slavery and during the Jim Crow Era.<sup>28</sup>

Other forms of conventional heritage include monumental projects designed by Black architects. This includes grants commissioned by the National Trust to preserve “Black Modernism” and works designed by well-known architects such as Paul R. Williams, Robert R.

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<sup>25</sup> Craig Barton, ed. *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Kenrick Ian Grandison, “Negotiated Space: The Black College Campus as a Cultural Record of Postbellum America,” *American Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (September 1999): 529 – 579.

<sup>27</sup> “African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund: Rosenwald Schools,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools#.YHhJpOhKhR0>.

<sup>28</sup> This paper also recognizes that several Black heritage sites span the conventional and nonconventional, such as the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House in Washington, D.C.; the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site; the Selma Montgomery Historic Trail and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Trail.

Taylor, and Vertner Woodson Tandy.<sup>29</sup> Although the preservation of these sites is crucial to understand how the existence of such works challenges racist, latent Enlightenment notions of aesthetic practices (or lack thereof) of non-Western, non-White individuals, buildings designed by famous (or lesser known) Black architects should be interpreted alongside by architectural works produced by non-professionals to demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of Black Americans as architectural protagonists, as would be the case for architectural history in general.

While this list is not limited in its types, these are the places that have been typically recognized and preserved by national and local efforts. In addition, they serve as a guideline into issues regarding the preservation of both “everyday” and monumental heritage sites associated with historically marginalized peoples. Preservationists should valorize, promote, and continue to seek out the methods used to preserve these sites. These civil rights sites serve as a foundation to explore new methodologies to interpret alternative sites that can only enrich our understanding of Black American heritage. Although this foundation is important, professionals in the historic preservation field would also benefit from revisiting definitions of “integrity” and “intangibility” by broadening interpretations of historical retention and significance and from attempting to rectify the absence of voices and narratives in well-established sites. The alternative approaches proposed in this paper attempt to address these lingering issues as they are important in re-evaluating criteria and the field’s standards for what constitutes “heritage.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “Conserving Black Modernism,” <https://savingplaces.org/conserving-black-modernism>; “Three Influential African American Architects You Should Know About,” <https://savingplaces.org/stories/three-influential-african-american-architects-you-should-know>; “Nine Places that Illustrate the Life of Trailblazing Black Architect Paul R. Williams,” <https://savingplaces.org/stories/nine-places-that-illustrate-the-life-of-trailblazing-black-architect-paul-r-williams>

<sup>30</sup> See examples such as work conducted by Monument Lab in Philadelphia, <https://monumentlab.com/projects>; the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art Monuments and Markers, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/monuments/index.page>; and Paper Monuments in New Orleans, <https://www.papermonuments.org/>.

### New/Alternative types of civil rights heritage

The following section will offer several alternative or unconventional types that seek to add to the landscape of Black American heritage. These alternative types include both built/tangible heritage that is typically the focus in preservation criteria and policy, and the abstract or intangible, which are sometimes excluded from preservation policy, practice, and discourse, yet bears great cultural significance.

### *Other types of landscapes*

Landscapes ranging from parks to burial grounds, as our first example of a reconsidered type of civil rights site, represent an area of Black heritage in which the “built” aspect may not be readily apparent. This category also includes academical villages and university campuses, especially ones established by Black Americans during the Reconstruction Era.<sup>31</sup> Although these places educated the newly freed, many of these presently known Black HBCUs are in areas that were deemed unacceptable for a “proper,” traditional campus at the time of their planning after the American Civil War.<sup>32</sup> Landscapes also include more “conventional” types of heritage such as burial grounds and religious landscapes, most notably seen in places such as the recently

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<sup>31</sup> Institutions like the National Trust already have projects in place like the HBCU Cultural Heritage Stewardship Initiative to address preserving this cultural resource yet is applicable to review through a contemporary lens how present conditions of Black education have been informed by the first HBCUs challenging racist assumptions about Black Americans and how their architectural design was impacted by such discrimination.  
<https://savingplaces.org/hbcus>.

<sup>32</sup> Kenrick Ian Grandison writes that Black colleges and universities adapted to the property/land they had access to build upon, and as a result created a cultural landscape of Black self-determination addressing racial discrimination, Grandison, 532.



discovered African Burial Ground in New York and Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia which sits on the oldest parcel of consistently Black-owned land in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Beyond burial and religious grounds, other examples of alternative landscape types include those that might not be perceived as historically significant due to blight and declining economic status. This includes famous neighborhoods, such as the Seventh Ward in Philadelphia, where W.E.B. Du Bois conducted his 1899 sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, or Harlem which was the epicenter for a twentieth-century Black cultural renaissance.<sup>34</sup> This landscape type also includes Freedman towns or all Black-Towns—communities established by freed Black Americans after the Civil War, like the Nicodemus National Historic Site.<sup>35</sup> And finally, this type also includes specific regions historically associated with unique Black experiences, like the Gullah-Geechee Corridor, the Mississippi Delta Region, the Black Belt, and even the entire city of New Orleans.<sup>36</sup>

Within the lexicon of preservation terminology, these campuses, burial grounds, neighborhoods, towns, and regions can be adequately defined as cultural landscapes because they include social and cultural context driving the spatial manifestations, creating an abstraction that

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<sup>33</sup> “History and Culture,” African Burial Ground, the National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/afbg/learn/historyculture/index.htm>. For an example on fieldwork, see Sarah Lane, “African American Civil War Veterans: Historical Documentation and Preservation In Cemeteries.” *Black History Bulletin* 80, No. 2, African Americans in Times of War (Fall 2017): 27-30.

<sup>34</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Ltd., 1899 [1973]).

<sup>35</sup> “Black Town In Kansas? Poem Explains Epic Story,” Nicodemus National Historic Site, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=E821D9DB-ACD3-8EA3-DA70D2866131A379>.

<sup>36</sup> The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, <https://gullahgeecheecorridor.org/>; “History and Culture of the Mississippi Delta Region,” The National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/locations/lowermsdeltaregion/history-and-culture-of-the-mississippi-delta-region.htm>; “Parks Group Champions Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area,” National Parks Conservation Association, February 28, 2020, <https://www.npca.org/articles/2470-parks-group-champions-alabama-black-belt-national-heritage-area#:~:text=The%20proposed%20Alabama%20Black%20Belt%20National%20Heritage%20Area%20would%20consist,%20Washington%20and%20Wilcox%20Counties>; see works such as Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) and T. DeWayne. Moore, “‘Ripped Spike, Tie and Rail from its Moorings’: Blues, Tourism, Racial Reconciliation, and the ‘Yellow Dog’ of the Mississippi Blues Trail,” *The Public Historian* 42, no. 2 (May 7, 2020): 56-77.

often precedes practical considerations. Dell Upton's definition of cultural landscapes, however, allows preservationists to interpret their abstract significance by "emphasiz[ing] the fusion of the physical with the imaginative structures that all inhabitants of the landscape use in constructing and construing it."<sup>37</sup> Conceptually, these landscapes of civil rights heritage reflect the struggle many Black Americans have faced and continue to face by demonstrating Black Americans' agency in the wake of discrimination and violence that sought to malign their culture by establishing separate enclaves that cultivated a robust Black institution network.

Although Upton's mode of thinking about built environments as cultural landscapes is valuable, policies influenced by this methodology need to caution against "vernacularizing" Black American culture, or inadvertently creating a second-class history of building and architectural history not considered "Architecture" due to associations with marginalized creators. Rather, this approach should ask vernacular questions that could be applied to both monumental and "everyday" built works. These questions include how do changing cultural, political, and economic processes influence built environments, both in terms of aesthetic theories or concepts and building projects affected by access to resources? Abstract values of landscapes and their effects on the culture responsible for the cultural landscape must be understood and considered when preserving these heritage types.

### *Sites of Black displacement*

Scaling downward from landscapes, the preservation of sites of Black displacement presents another avenue for defining alternative types of civil rights heritage. In this type, we can reframe what we mean by "intangible" as many of these sites have been destroyed or

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<sup>37</sup> Dell Upton, "Architectural History or Landscape History?" *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 4 (August 1991): 198.

demolished. Sites of Black displacement include neighborhoods that have been historically redlined and communities composed of people who have been denied a loan or insurance due to banks labeling certain neighborhoods a financial risk. Documents of this type of discrimination and displacement exist in the form of maps where neighborhoods were color-coded to reflect their financial viability and often the places marked as “red” or “at risk” were and continue to be Black and Brown.

Traditionally, the preservation of towns and neighborhoods has been recognized through historic districts listings on the NRHP and mostly treated as collections of buildings. Some sites that have been recognized for their historical significance include New Philadelphia in Illinois, which the NRHP recognized for its significance as the first town in the United States established by a person of African descent, Free Frank McWorter, in 1836. The settlement included both Black and White residents, yet services were still segregated, such as the cemeteries.<sup>38</sup> Other sites that are part of a larger architectural history of displacement include the New Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The congregation rebuilt the building several times at different locations during the nineteenth century however the overall history of the building and congregation holds important significance as being associated with Denmark Vesey’s enslaved uprising in Charleston in 1822 before its first building was razed by White authorities in response to the plot.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “New Philadelphia: A Multiracial Town on the Illinois Frontier (Teaching with Historic Places)” the National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/new-philadelphia-a-multiracial-town-on-the-illinois-frontier-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>. Paul A. Shackel, ed. *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).; Kristyn Scorsone, “Invisible Pathways: Public History by Queer Black Women in Newark,” *The Public Historian* 41, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 190-217.

<sup>39</sup> Douglass R. Egerton, “‘Why They Did Not Preach up This Thing’: Denmark Vesey and Revolutionary Theology.” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 100, no. 4 (October 1999): 305-306; Bernard E. Powers, “Seeking the Promised Land: Afro-Carolinians and the Quest for Religious Freedom to 1830,” in *The Dawn of Religious Freedom in South Carolina*, edited by James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006): 127; From the *Charleston Courier* on the razing of Emanuel in 1822: “By Wm. A. Caldwell. On Friday afternoon, at four o’clock, will be sold by the order of the Trustees of the African Church, on their Lot in

With this in mind, it is worth exploring how conventional tools like historic district designation can be reframed to include communities and places that fall outside of established criteria for designation. These unconventional communities include “intangible” neighborhoods, like the Black Bottom Neighborhood in West Philadelphia. Many of the residences and businesses originally a part of this neighborhood were either demolished or rehabilitated when the University of Pennsylvania expanded into West Philadelphia in the 1960s as part of a larger national trend of urban renewal which had reached its peak in the mid-twentieth century. However, members and descendants of the community still gather annually to fellowship, effectively keeping their neighborhood spiritually intact with yearly meetings.<sup>40</sup>

### *Reinterpreted sites*

Reinterpreting established sites of memory to reflect the evolution of cultural values is a process that can aid in reimagining present civil rights sites. Preservation work at the University of Virginia offers an example of reinterpretation at established sites. Along with its connection to Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, the newly established Memorial to Enslaved Laborers highlights enslaved individuals’ role in managing operations at the university. Similarly, scholars such as Mabel O. Wilson have called on the National Civil Rights Museum to reinterpret the 1960s Civil

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Hampstead, ALL THE LUMBER, Which comprised the said Church, in lots to suit purchasers. Conditions: cash, and the Lumber, to be taken charge of immediately, after the sale and removed the next day.” *Charleston Courier*, Wednesday, August 14, 1822. An 1856 article in *Methodist History* surmises the cause and the fate of Emanuel AME in connection to the 1822 uprising: “The schismatics combined, and, after great exertion, succeeded in erecting a neat church building at the corner of Reid and Hanover Streets. Their organization was called the African Church. They, however, were never permitted to worship in their own building. They dragged out a miserable existence until the year 1822. In that year, upon the discovery by the authorities of an intended insurrection among the blacks, the church building was demolished by their order, and a deserted burial-place is all that is left to mark this singular movement...”

<sup>40</sup> See “The Black Bottom” community website, <https://theblackbottom.wordpress.com/communities/blackbottom/history/> and the “West Philadelphia Collaborative History” Project <https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/places/other-neighborhood-definitions/places/black-bottom>.

Rights Movement within a contemporary lens. These concerns include questions surrounding class and privilege that are not typically considered when discussing Black American culture. As Wilson writes, “monuments that resist transformation risk losing their significance to future generations,” and we run the risk as preservationists if we freeze a site in one historical period rather than treating the site as an evolutionary object that responds to its times.<sup>41</sup>

The reimagined interpretation of sites can also include memorials already established or those yet to be built, highlighting a need for preservation to adopt new measures that are more culturally and historically inclusive, while also acknowledging historical episodes that the nation is continuing to grapple with. Examples of memorials that have worked to reinterpret cultural memory and historical legacy include the Equal Justice Initiative’s Legacy Museum, which maps the sense of place of American slavery throughout the United States, and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, which serves as the nation’s first memorial dedicated to victims of racial terror lynching in the United States.

### *Sites of upheaval*

Along with reinterpreting historic sites, sites of upheaval—including places associated with protests and violence—should also be considered a part of the evolving lexicon of civil rights sites. Though the National Trust and current fieldwork efforts recognize, document, reinterpret, and protect such sites of upheaval such as the Stonewall Inn heritage site, preservation professionals can do more to preserve already established sites in connection to present issues that address one’s own positionality to civil unrest or the perception of such

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<sup>41</sup> Mabel O. Wilson, “Between Rooms 307,” *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, edited by Craig Barton (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001): 19.

affecting Black American daily life.<sup>42</sup> In addition, though there is developing scholarship determined to broaden our understanding of Black civil rights sites as sources to understand modern day discrimination and violence, scholars and preservationists still need to address gaps that may aid in further expanding the historical record and effectively preserving these sites of upheaval. For example, how do we reconcile the preservation of “nationalism” or “national historic significance” at a Black heritage site when many of these sites either challenge or complicate American nationalism and its history? How do we avoid isolating historically significant Black heritage sites from other sites associated with the larger dominant narrative in American history? How do we reconcile class and race when interpreting Black heritage sites to avoid categorizing Black American experience as a monolithic? Contending with the legacy of Black American upheaval and how that is manifested in the built environment will aid in addressing these questions that are also concerns in with other marginalized people’s histories in the United States; the intersection of cultural, political, and economic circumstances that lead to the upheavals further contextualized the experience of a community and they choose to commemorate the response to such challenges.

Some examples of sites that do this work include the sites associated with historic uprisings. Considering contemporary rampant police violence against marginalized individuals and communities, recognition of the so-called “Columbia Avenue Riot” in Philadelphia in 1964 in response to police brutality is not only emblematic of Black Americans’ historical struggle with violence, but an important historical lesson for calls today in defunding or abolishing the police force and carceral state. Timothy Lombardo writes, “[T]hese urban uprisings shattered the

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<sup>42</sup> “The Stonewall Inn,”

<https://savingplaces.org/places/stonewall#:~:text=Located%20in%20the%20heart%20of,LGBT%20patrons%20to%20dance%20together>. Also see the “NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project,” <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/>.

myth that recent court decisions, landmark legislation, and social policies had succeeded in alleviating the conditions that created endemic racial inequality in the nation's cities. As a result, they hastened a move to a more militant push for civil rights."<sup>43</sup> Another example includes "Mapping the LA Uprising," a brief project supported by Curbed Los Angeles, where important events, sites, and court cases in connection to the 1991 police brutalization of Rodney King are documented and interpreted to create a cultural landscape demonstrating the complexity of this historic uprising against racial injustice.<sup>44</sup> Examples of interpreting sites of upheaval and American nationalism include the Equal Justice Initiative's "Reconstruction in America: Racial Violence After the Civil War" project, which maps nearly 2,000 confirmed sites of lynching across the United States twelve years after the end of the Civil War.<sup>45</sup> Another example of this type is the Southern Poverty Law Center's Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, that records the names of those who sacrificed their lives during the active years of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>46</sup> A site that perhaps straddles as both a site of protest and a site of violence would be the previously mentioned Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia. As a protest site, it challenges the often-pristine perception associated with figures like Thomas Jefferson and the university campus in general, while as a site of

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<sup>43</sup> Timothy J. Lombardo, "Civil Rights and the Rise of Frank Rizzo in 1960s Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Legacies* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 15.

<sup>44</sup> See "Mapping the 1992 LA Uprising: Following the Unrest and Violence, from Rodney King to Koreatown," Curbed Los Angeles, <https://la.curbed.com/maps/1992-los-angeles-riots-rodney-king-map> and Alison B. Hirsch, "Restoring Los Angeles's Landscapes of Resistance," *Journal of Architectural Education* 72, no. 2: Preserve (2018): 248 - 272; Robert Gooding-Williams, *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> "Reconstruction in America: Racial Violence after the Civil War," The Equal Justice Initiative, 2021. <https://eji.org/reports/reconstruction-in-america-overview/>.

<sup>46</sup> "Civil Rights Memorial," Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial>.

violence it recognizes the toil many experienced as forced laborers in the wake of conversations regarding nationalism and states' rights.<sup>47</sup>

### Re-evaluating the types of tools used to preserve Black heritage

The broad category of mutable knowledge includes material culture that reflects written or unwritten codes of conduct that change over time. For example, late nineteenth-century etiquette books or “pedagogical” books were issued to help formerly enslaved persons transition to a life of freedom after the end of the Civil War. These books also perpetuated White paternalism by assuming that the Black recipients were incapable of becoming respectable citizens on their own.<sup>48</sup> However, these how-to-books also included hair grooming guides Madame C. J. Walker promoted for her business and pattern books used by Black artisans active in American building culture before and after the Civil War.

This type of mutable knowledge is also exhibited in the project to document sites associated with the Negro Motorist Green Book travel guide, commonly referred to as the Green Book.<sup>49</sup> Currently the National Trust, under the direction of Brent Leggs, is working to preserve sites associated with the historical legacy of the Green Book, published and used between 1936 and 1967 as an “essential [guide] for the survival of thousands of [B]lack Americans in an era of segregation cemented into the American legal system through Jim Crow laws, sundown towns where Black Americans were under threat of violence after sunset, and a sharp increase in

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<sup>47</sup> “Memorial to Enslaved Laborers,” President’s Commission on Slavery and the University, University of Virginia, <https://slavery.virginia.edu/memorial-for-enslaved-laborers/>.

<sup>48</sup> Hartman writes: “The full privileges of citizenship awaited those who realized the importance of proper conduct and applied the principles of good management to all aspects of their lives, from personal hygiene to household expenditures.” Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America. Race and American Culture*

<sup>49</sup> Erin Krutko Devlin. “Navigating the Green Book/The Negro Travelers’ Green Book Interactive Map.” *The Journal of American History* 104, no. 1 (June 2017): 312-313.



lynchings and other forms of hate crimes.”<sup>50</sup> Reevaluating the dissemination of mutable knowledge is useful in reframing the field’s approach to preserving Black American culture. In addition, although the main form of documentation and interpretation for preservationists is a site or building itself, preserving mutable knowledge as a heritage site is like the preservation of “intangible” heritage supported by UNESCO.

### *Laws and regulations*

Laws and regulations that have been instrumental in the foundation of civil rights are another source of Black heritage that could be considered an “alternative” mode of preservation, as both a method and a reconsidered heritage type. Presently, the National Trust is funding a mapping project that preserves sites directly connected to the landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, including Howard High School of Technology in Wilmington, Delaware, R.R. Moton Museum in Farmville, Virginia, and the *Brown v. Board* National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas.<sup>51</sup> This project demonstrates the physical reality of the ruling while also showing its geographic extent. *Loving v. Virginia*, which decided that laws banning interracial marriages violated the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, and *Shelley v. Kraemer* in which the Supreme Court decided that restrictive real estate covenants based on race cannot be enforced by a court under the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause, could also provide a basis for future mapping

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<sup>50</sup> “Green Book Sites: A Historic Travel Guide to Jim Crow America”, National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org/green-book-sites#.YCWs9GhKhR0>. Add books by Mia Bay and Gretchen Sorin?

<sup>51</sup> Linda Reed, “The Brown Decision: Its Long Anticipation and Lasting Influence.” *Journal of Southern History* 70, no. 2 (2004): 337-342; Claude Weathersby, “School Conversions in the Segregated St. Louis Public Schools District Prior to the Historic Brown v. Board of Education Ruling: An Urban School System’s Response to the Migration of African Americans from the Rural South,” *Journal of Urban History* 43, no. 2 (April 7, 2015): 294-311.

or other preservation projects.<sup>52</sup> When considering how to approach preserving these cases, preservationists should ask the following questions: Where or what are the places that have been directly or indirectly impacted by the decisions of these cases? What are other ways preservationists could incorporate this intangible history into physical efforts? Reframing how to preserve these seemingly abstract historical episodes only further aids in widening the landscape of civil rights heritage, as they directly affected the way in which the nation viewed the legal status of an historically marginalized person which continues to be an issue today.

### *Foodways*

Although not a new concept when discussing and interpreting Black American culture, foodways—food and the way food is created, valued, and consumed by a community, and the construction and preservation of Black-owned restaurants and eateries—offer another type and methodological approach similar to laws and pedagogical/etiquette books that preservationists can utilize to preserve intangible heritage. In addition, exploring current research on foodways exposes preservationists to new or modified tools more effective in preserving sites of Black American heritage.

Foodways, as Alexandra Crowder writes, act as both “a mechanism and a product of community development and persistence.”<sup>53</sup> A cross section of scholars broaden and explore our understanding of food traditions and their historical and cultural relationship to Black American experiences in Anne L. Bower’s edited volume, *African American Foodways*.<sup>54</sup> Other

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<sup>52</sup> “Missouri: The Shelley House,” <https://www.nps.gov/places/missouri-the-shelley-house-1.htm>. The Shelley House was included in the African American Civil Rights Network in May 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander Crowder, “Community Development and Cultural Creolization Through Food: The Oval Site at Stratford Hall Plantation,” *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* (March 2021): 20.

<sup>54</sup> Anne L. Bower, ed. *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *Getting What We Need Ourselves: How Food has Shaped African American Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

contemporary works on foodways, such as Rafia Zafar's *Recipes for Respect: African American Meals and Meaning*, explores not only the importance of food practices in Black American culture but how these foodways are also manifestations of civil rights by achieving dignity in cultural memory and representation.<sup>55</sup>

Questions for further consideration and new directions for preservation teaching and practice

While this list provides opportunities for preservationists to explore beyond conventional types and methods to address the preservation of Black American culture, this paper also acknowledges that there are many more types that still need to be included and highlighted. Other examples include music, thematic studies of Black architects/designers, dance, costumes and fashion, cinema, video games, and science fiction. This list is not exhaustive; it only serves as a foundational underpinning that could develop conversations on exploring different types of heritage and ways of preserving them. In that regard, questions that may help frame an approach to learning about or discovering types associated with Black heritage include the following: How do preservationists define nationalism in the context of American history as it relates to Black experiences? How are racial differences reflected in built environments? How do these spaces sometimes upend the American ideal of democracy when Black Americans have been historically denied access to it? How does the role of an historically Black institution fit within the context of American history? Finally, what are the implications for preservation education and practice when considering these new approaches?

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<sup>55</sup> See Michael Twitty's *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African Americana Culinary History in the Old South* (New York: Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2017). *The Cooking Gene* is work of "narrative nonfiction" that involves the author, a culinary historian, doing his own public history into his genealogy; his family association with food and the cultural and historical origins of the ingredients and techniques included in the work. This serves as an excellent example of a non-traditional approach to identity and placemaking, especially among Black Diasporic communities.

Andrea Roberts writes that professionals and institutions who are seeking to “authentically engage” with correcting historical injustices should challenge current preservation policy and regulation that continues to perpetuate these injustices.<sup>56</sup> How do we reform education to not only address representation but also encourage all educators and students to address social issues in their work? Thus, representation as a political and pedagogical tool is paramount, especially when training a new field of preservation professionals from varying backgrounds. Reevaluating the types of sites that are used as examples in preservation education will better engage students, allowing students to connect with a field determined to preserve all types and forms of heritage. And reframing the tools used to preserve this heritage—thinking critically about the intersectionality of past tools, methodologies, and approaches—will reinvigorate the field and redirect it from implicit and explicit biases that often appear when preserving sites of historically marginalized peoples.

How can institutions work more effectively with local communities and preservationists to create action plans that are not only accessible but also sensitive to historical injustices and trauma? And most importantly, how do institutions and professionals address power imbalances while also using their skills to preserve and not “other” new or reconsidered heritage sites? Reevaluating the authority of stakeholders is not only standard practice, but vital; including the community in which the heritage site is located cannot be performative. Preservationists are mediators between policy and the community and need to function as educators in helping the public navigate the minutia of historic designation. Likewise, preservationists should be willing to learn from community involvement and knowledge, as personal experiences are facets of the

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<sup>56</sup> Andrea Roberts, “When Does It Become Social Justice? Thoughts on Intersectional Preservation Practice,” Preservation Leadership Forum, National Trust for Historic Preservation. [Forum.savingplaces.org](https://forum.savingplaces.org), July 20, 2017. <https://forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/special-contributor/2017/07/20/when-does>.

accumulation of heritage. As we look to reinvigorate the field and include more heritage indicative of diverse histories and experiences, these are just some of the questions and possible solutions we should consider when approaching new forms and methods for preservation.