

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Myrtle-Highview Historic District

Other names/site number: Arthur Bussey Historic District

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 16209 to 16408 Highview Drive and 16200 to 16409 Myrtle Avenue; Roughly bounded by Lee Road to the east, southern boundary of yards on the south side of Myrtle Avenue, northern boundary of yards on the north side of Highview Drive, and dead end to the west.

City or town: Cleveland State: OH County: Cuyahoga

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A B x C D

DSHPO Inventory & Registration

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Ohio History Connection

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District

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Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>43</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>43</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Ranch

MODERN MOVEMENT: Split Level

TUDOR/ENGLISH REVIVAL

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____

Foundation	CONCRETE
Roof	ASPHALT
Walls	BRICK, STONE, WOOD, ALUMINUM, VINYL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Myrtle-Highview Historic District is located thirteen miles southeast of Downtown Cleveland in the Lee-Seville neighborhood. In Lee Seville, there are areas of light industrial development along Lee Road and Miles Avenue. The residential neighborhoods are a mix of developments that occurred after the Second World War and earlier houses. North of Miles Avenue is the Lee-Harvard Neighborhood. Lee-Seville and Lee-Harvard make up Ward 1. This corner of the City of Cleveland is surrounded by the suburbs of Shaker Heights to the north, Warrensville Heights to the east, and Maple Heights to the south. The boundaries of the Myrtle-Highview district are to the north: the northern boundary of the lots on the north side of Highview Drive; to the east: the western edge of the vacant lots facing Lee Road; to the south: the southern boundary of the lots on the south side of Myrtle Avenue; and to the west: the western edge of 16200 Myrtle Avenue; the dead end of Myrtle Avenue; the western edge of 16201 Myrtle Avenue and 16217 Highview Drive.

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There are forty-three contributing resources and three non-contributing resources. The non-contributing resources are all garages built in recent years to replace original garages. The district illustrates the changes that occurred in Cleveland and in the surrounding neighborhood during the decades following the Second World War. The earliest houses, built between 1949 and 1954 were in the English Revival style. In the mid-1950s, large ranch-style houses became popular. By the early 1960s, the larger neighborhood—and even some neighboring suburbs—had integrated. Therefore, Myrtle-Highview as an African American “suburb in the city” no longer had the same cache that it had previously enjoyed. Smaller ranches were built on smaller lots. The last houses are the simplest and were built by a White developer catering to the African American buyer, after the larger neighborhood had flipped to majority Black. The three African American builders who developed Myrtle-Highview learned from, and, in some cases, worked for, two other African American developers who were building in the area during the same time period. Each attempted, in his own way, to make home ownership more accessible to African Americans. The Myrtle Avenue-Highview Drive district has historic integrity conveying its historic significance as a well-planned suburban neighborhood of masonry houses marketed to middle-class African Americans at mid-century.

Narrative Description

The Myrtle-Highview district is located off of Lee Road at the southeastern border of the City of Cleveland and the suburb of Maple Heights. South of a busy intersection and an industrial area, there is a lot of vacant land along this stretch of Lee as several houses, warehouses, and commercial businesses have been demolished. Highview Drive is a one-way street on the west side of Lee Road (Photo #1). The neighborhood is well-maintained and has street trees lining the sidewalks. The northern side of Highview has larger yards and eight houses along the full length of the street. The south side of the street—half as long as the north side because the diagonal, “wishbone” cut of the road—has eight houses on narrow lots. All of the houses on Highview—except for the split-level at 16221, are ranches. At Myrtle Avenue, the houses are larger and are mostly oriented horizontally facing the street (Photo #2). As one turns left on Myrtle and drives to the east, the ranches give way to English Revival style houses with a mixture of brick and stone—the first houses built in the neighborhood (Photo #3). The last two houses as one approaches Lee Road again are the simpler ranches. The district overall includes thirty-three houses, each of which is well maintained and exists largely in the style and layout of the original plans. Five houses, built between 1949 and 1955, are essentially streamlined Tudor/English Revival in style; fifteen, built between 1957 and 1966, are ranches on larger lots; twelve, built between 1956 and 1967, are ranches—built on smaller, narrower lots oriented with the entrance in one end and the housing running front to back on the lot; and finally, there is a split-level built in 1962.

All are contributing resources. Buildings were determined to be contributing based on age and appearance. All of the contributing resources are fifty years old or older and maintain their original character-defining features. Detached garages at 16408 and 16312 Myrtle Avenue and 16312, 16316, 16320, 16324, 16400 16407, 16408, and 16313 Highview are also contributing

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resources. The detached garages at 16409 Myrtle, 16404 Highview and 16217 Highview are less than fifty years old and are considered non-contributing resources.

The Myrtle-Highview District continues to be well-maintained. The sidewalks are lined with street trees. Vacant land and community gardens on Lee Road give the entrance to the district a somewhat rural feel similar to when Arthur Bussey first began developing here in 1949.

Descriptions of the buildings are as follows: (a district map identifies their location)

1. 16200 Myrtle Avenue, 1961; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #4) (Original owners Reverend Willie J. and Virgie Reese. It is still in the same family that built it in 1961.) This ranch is brick and has decorative wrought iron portico posts and railings. It is 1269 square feet.
2. 16201 Myrtle Avenue, 1966; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #5) (Original owners Samuel and Dorothy Jean Spears.) This buff brick ranch has small stoop from the driveway and original aluminum awnings over the two tripartite windows on the front facade. It is 1464 square feet.
3. 16204 Myrtle Avenue, 1957; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #6) (Original owners John and Hattie Reed.). This brick ranch has a gabled roof and an inset porch. It is 1921 square feet.
4. 16216 Myrtle Avenue, 1961; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #7) (Original owners William A. and Lossie Weems.) This simple brick ranch has a projecting garage bay and a simple stoop with wrought iron railing. It is 1421 square feet.
5. 16217 Myrtle Avenue, 1959; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #8) (Original owner Jesse C. and Richardean Covington.) This simple red brick ranch occupies the wedge-shaped lot at the intersection of Highview Drive and Myrtle Avenue. There is a picture window in the living room and windows and the front door are accentuated by stone banding. The front stoop has a decorative wrought iron posts and rails. The house is 1196 square feet.
6. 16300 Myrtle Avenue, 1961; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #9) (Original owners Wheeler and Maude Mardis.) This brick ranch is "L" shaped due to the projecting garage. The front door is reached via a small stoop. It is 1166 square feet.
7. 16301 Myrtle Avenue, 1958; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #10) (Original owners Thomas C. "Connie" & Elizabeth Bryant "Francis" Walker. Mrs. Walker still resides there.) The brick on this larger ranch is a golden yellow color, like that used on many of the other Woodridge-built houses. The garage, sited to the front, forms an L-shape and 16309 mirrors it, creating a courtyard of the front yards. The Walkers were friends with the McNairs at 16309 and lived in their basement while their home was being completed. The two families jointly landscaped

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their back yards, as well; the back yards continue to be attractive (Figure 5). The house is 1616 square feet.

8. 16304 Myrtle Avenue, 1957; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #11) (Original owners Harry R. and Thelma G. Powell.) One of the largest of the earlier English Revival style houses, this home has two steeply-pitched gables with a bow window in the center. Original diamond paned sash are extant in the gables, but the bow has been replaced in recent years with vinyl. The house is 1529 square feet.
9. 16309 Myrtle Avenue, 1958; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #12) (Original owners Mack and Ophelia McNair.) This yellow brick, L-shaped ranch mirrors 16301 Myrtle. It is 1616 square feet.
10. 16312 Myrtle Avenue, 1953; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #13) (Original owners Gary F. and Mildred West.) One of the earlier English Revival style houses, this brick home has a steeply pitched central gable and decorative stone trim around the front door. It is 1484 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1957 and is a contributing resource.
11. 16315 Myrtle Avenue, 1958; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #14) (Original owners Orié and Julia Merritt.) Yellow brick like the neighboring Woodridge houses, this ranch has two hipped-roofed wings forming a U-shape. It is 1548 square feet.
12. 16318 Myrtle Avenue, 1951; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #15) (Original owners William W. and Queen Esther Wade.) Similar to the other English Revival style homes in the district, 16318 has stone trim around the front door and covering the front bay. The home also features a large, stepped chimney to the side and original windows and aluminum awnings. It is 1684 square feet.
13. 16321 Myrtle Avenue, 1957; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #16) (Original owner H.Q. Rucker). Red brick ranch with cross-gabled garage, large picture window in the living room, and higher windows in the bedroom wing to the right. It is 1250 square feet.
14. 16400 Myrtle Avenue, 1949; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #17) (Original owners Arthur and Emma Bussey.) This is the first home that Arthur Bussey constructed in the neighborhood. It is English Revival style with decorative stone banding around the front windows, a stone bay, and aluminum awnings. The screen door still features a "B" for Bussey. The house is 1229 square feet and has an attached garage to the rear.
15. 16405 Myrtle Avenue, 1955; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #18) (Original owners Roscoe and Louise Hall.) This early house is a combination of English

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Revival style and Cape Cod. It is red brick, but the front façade is stone and there are symmetrical gables on the second floor. The house is 2231 square feet.

16. 16408 Myrtle Avenue, 1962; architect unknown; builder Federal Homes (Photo #19) (Original owners George and Rose Dorsey.) One of the homes built by Federal Homes in the neighborhood, this ranch is oriented with the short side facing the street and the long side going front to back in the narrow lot. The house is aluminum sided with just the lower half of the front being brick. It is 1405 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1967 and is a contributing resource.
17. 16409 Myrtle Avenue, 1967; architect unknown; builder Federal Homes (Photo #20) (Original owners Elijah H. and Juanita McCall. Mrs. McCall still lives here.) Although built five years later, this home is almost an exact replica of 16408. It is oriented running front to back in the lot and has been vinyl sided. It is 1,008 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1996 and is not a contributing resource.
18. 16209 Highview Drive, 1957; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #21) (Original owners Charles and Maude Lee Johnson.) Three bay brick ranch with hipped roof has an attached two-car garage with original starburst pattern garage door. Windows and doors on the front façade have decorative stone detailing. The house is 1053 square feet.
19. 16217 Highview Drive, 1962; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #22) (Original owners Joseph and Rita Kennedy.) This brick ranch has a picture window to the left of the front door. The front facade has been somewhat changed in that a stoop was enlarged into a full covered porch and a tripartite window was replaced with a vinyl bay. The house is 1196 square feet. The house is a contributing resource, but the detached garage was built in 2006 and is non-contributing.
20. 16221 Highview Drive, 1962; architect unknown; builder Burt Realty Company (Photo #23) (Original owners Jack E. and Lula A. Beane. Mrs. Beane still lives there.) This home is different from everything else in the district. Split-level, it has a beige brick skirt and vinyl siding covering what had been vertical boards on the upper section. The house is 1523 square feet and it was constructed by The Burt Realty Company. They sold houses throughout the east side at mid-century, primarily as a Realtor, but seem to have been the developer of this property. Little else is known about them.
21. 16307 Highview Drive, 1965; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #24) (Original owners Ernest and Ida Laney. The house is still in the Laney family.) Similar to other brick ranches in the neighborhood, it has a cross-gabled, hipped roof and the garage projects from the front façade. It has a simple stoop and a built-in planter under a picture window. The house is 1570 square feet.
22. 16308 Highview Drive, 1961; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #25) (Original owners Willie and Esther Jones. The Jones still reside here.) Three bay brick

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ranch with decorative trim around windows and doors. A small breezeway leads to a two-car garage completed in 1964. The house is 1190 square feet.

23. 16312 Highview Drive, 1962; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #26) (Original owners Willis and Estella Williams.) It is 980 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1962 and is a contributing resource.
24. 16313 Highview Drive, 1961; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #27) (Original owners James and Pauline Snead.) A brick ranch with gabled roof. The gable is aluminum sided, and the houses is turned to run front to back—deep on the lot. It is 1236 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1969 and is a contributing resource.
25. 16316 Highview Drive, 1956; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #28) (Original owners Durward G. and Ruth L. Hughes.) Three-bay brick-clad ranch with a hipped roof. The front façade features a picture window and decorative stone trim around the front door and windows. A small siding-clad gable pierces the roof above the picture window. It is 1116 square feet. The garage was built in 1965 and is a contributing resource.
26. 16319 Highview Drive, 1963; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #29) (Original owners Charles and Maude Johnson.) Brick ranch with yellow brick, this home has a small stoop and, unlike the other Woodridge ranches, a fairly flush front facade. It is 1529 square feet.
27. 16320 Highview Drive, 1956; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #30) (Original owners Oliver N. and Janet S. Lucas.) Symmetrical, three-bay ranch with decorative stone trim around the front door and windows, this home is similar to those on either side of it. It is 1850 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1956 and is a contributing resource.
28. 16324 Highview Drive, 1958; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #31) (Original owners Walter W. and Mattie Williams.) Asymmetrical three-bay ranch with hipped roof and decorative stone trim around the front door and windows. It is 1144 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1958 and is a contributing resource.
29. 16400 Highview Drive, 1956; architect unknown; builder Arthur Bussey (Photo #32) (Original owners Garry and Dorothy Washington.) Symmetrical, three bay brick ranch with hipped roof. It has stone trim around the front door and windows and is similar to the houses at 16320 Highview and 16316 Highview. It is 1132 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1962 and is a contributing resource.
30. 16401 Highview Drive, 1957; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #33) (Original owners Albert and Elizabeth Turner. The house is still in the Turner family). Asymmetrical, brick ranch with a hipped roof. Two

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large picture windows form a horizontal band across the front façade between the front stoop and the one-car garage. The home is 1842 square feet.

31. 16404 Highview Drive, 1961; architect unknown; builder Rufus Ranaldson, Economy Homes (Photo #34) (Original owners James and Lillie Mae Nunley.) Although built by Rufus Ranaldson, the design of this one-story brick with hipped roof house was clearly influenced by the neighboring homes built by Arthur Bussey, although with unique stylistic differences. The door is to the side of the central projecting bay and an octagonal window faces the street. The window on the east front of the house and the east side meet at the corner. The house is 1173 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1981 and is not a contributing resource.
32. 16407 Highview Drive, 1960; architect unknown; builder William Woodridge, Engineering Enterprises (Photo #35) (Original owners Andrew T. and Mary Nichols.) This home is somewhat unusual in that it is built with a gabled roof with a small projecting gable over the front stoop. A built in stone planter runs across the front façade under a picture window. It is 1995 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1959 and is a contributing resource.
33. 16408 Highview Drive, 1962; architect unknown; builder Federal Homes (Photo #36) (Original owners Grant and Dorothy Turner.) Another very simple ranch built with aluminum siding and a half-wall of brick on the front façade. It is 980 square feet. The detached garage was built in 1965 and is a contributing resource.

Historic Integrity Assessment

The Myrtle-Highview Historic District exhibits a tree-lined neighborhood of masonry house designs in styles and types popular from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s. The district has historic integrity conveying its location and feeling as a “suburb in the City,” surrounded by other suburbs with similar mid-century architecture; its materials (primarily masonry) that gave the neighborhood its status among middle-class African American home buyers; the craftsmanship incorporated into the neighborhood by the original developers, including a trained mason and engineer; and its historic significance as a well-planned suburban neighborhood that is reflective of the aspirations of the middle-class African American homebuyer and changing dynamics and demographics in the neighborhood during the prosperous decades following the Second World War. During this time period, veterans had access to mortgages through the GI Bill and jobs in Cleveland’s booming manufacturing industries were plentiful. Segregation confined most African Americans to inner city neighborhoods of older homes, but here in Lee-Seville, African American developers were able to gain a foothold to create the type of housing otherwise denied them.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1949-1967

Significant Dates

1949, 1957, 1962

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

BUSSEY, ARTHUR

WOODRIDGE, WILLIAM, Engineering Enterprises

RANALDSON, RUFUS, Economy Homes

FEDERAL HOMES

THE BURT BUILDING COMPANY

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The district is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for its association with African American suburbanization and several African American developers who built houses in this area during the mid-20th Century—specifically 1949-1967. Areas of significance include Ethnic Heritage and community planning for its association with midcentury suburban developments and African American builders and realtors. The district is also nominated under Criterion C as an example of a post-World War II suburban development of housing primarily associated with the Modern Movement in architecture—ranches and split levels. The period of significance is 1949 to 1967. 1949 is the year Arthur Bussey laid sewers and constructed his personal residence. 1967 is the year the last house was built in the district.

Cleveland's African American population grew tremendously during the first several decades of the 20th Century with the growth of industry and the mass exodus of Southern Blacks to northern industrial cities, like Cleveland. As the African American population grew, prejudice and segregation grew, with an expanding Black population confined to Cleveland's Cedar-Central neighborhood. There existed only a few Black enclaves outside of this one over-crowded neighborhood. One such enclave existed in Lee-Seville, which had been formed when the integrated Village of Miles Heights was annexed into Cleveland in 1932. The African American population of Lee-Seville grew with the development of the Seville Homes, temporary housing for war workers in 1946. In this area, a unique "surrogate suburb" or "suburb in the city" developed for African Americans. The Myrtle-Highview Historic District developed as part of this effort. Arthur Bussey, a southern migrant trained as a mason, personally funded roads and sewers to make his development of a high-class neighborhood of all brick homes a reality for himself and others. He was joined in his efforts by other developers—William Woodridge and Rufus Ranaldson—who built homes in Myrtle-Highview. Woodridge and Ranaldson had worked for Albert Taborn and Carr & Dillard, respectively—other African American developers working in the same neighborhood at the same time. Of all of their efforts, Myrtle-Highview demonstrates the best quality and consistency of housing in the Lee-Seville area.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

African Americans in Cleveland

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

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family quickly gravitated outward, and to the West Side, at that.¹ Since then, African Americans as much as anyone else have aspired to own property and live in pleasant surroundings, despite the manifold discriminatory barriers historically placed in their way.² This nomination documents and celebrates a success story, a Cleveland case of Black community-building that has parallels elsewhere but which is little known among the general public. The development of the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood of Lee-Seville unfolded under remarkable circumstances and against considerable odds, thereby offering an instructive example of the life possibilities that some Black Americans in earlier generations were able to create at the city's outskirts.

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

Despite this early history, the vast majority of Black Clevelanders trace their family origins not to the 19th century but to the Great Migration out of the South, beginning during World War I and continuing into the 1960s. On the eve of this transformation in 1910, although about 8,500 African Americans lived in the city, they represented less than 2 percent of its population. With the wartime cutoff of immigration from Europe – which had been the primary labor supply for the city's growing heavy industries – employers suddenly became willing to hire Black workers, even engaging in recruitment efforts in the South in some cases. However, while African American men were offered work in Cleveland's steel mills and on railroads, they were almost entirely relegated to the lowest-paid, most dangerous and dirty positions like foundry labor; even so, the wages were far higher than what was available in the South, where the vast majority had worked as sharecroppers. Most black women, on the other hand, remained stuck in domestic

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

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

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

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service, although some gained access to the lowliest industrial jobs, such as sweeping out railroad cars. Besides higher wages in the North, migrants coming to Cleveland and other cities were additionally motivated by a desire for better schooling, or to escape racial oppression in the Jim Crow South – and as this population shift continued after the war, more relocated to reunite with family and friends who had earlier made the journey. As a result, from 1910-1920, Cleveland's Black population grew by over 400 percent – to more than 34,000, with African Americans now making up over 4 percent of the total. Their population would double yet again by 1930, to some 72,000, nearly 8 percent of the city total.⁴

This rapid and dramatic population increase had some far-reaching effects, as historian Kenneth Kusmer has shown. White antagonism toward African Americans increased dramatically, and was expressed in discriminatory treatment of Black customers in public accommodations like restaurants, theaters, department stores, and amusement parks to mention a few examples. Even more consequential was the emergence of racial segregation in housing. Already before World War I, Black Clevelanders lived mostly on the East Side, but interspersed among Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the “Central Areas” beyond downtown. However, as early as 1917 pockets of all-Black settlement were becoming evident in the blocks off the two main thoroughfares, Cedar and Central Avenues. With their options frequently limited by low wages and the growing opposition of White residents in outlying areas of the city, many migrants crowded into the aging housing of the Cedar-Central district's westernmost portion, with landlords dividing up single- and double-family housing into “kitchenette” apartments that typically lacked cooking and bathroom facilities, for which they nonetheless charged exorbitant rents. Already by 1930, this part of the district had a population density twice the city average.⁵ To avoid such living conditions, more affluent families began moving eastward past East 79th to as far as East 105th Street, meaning this emerging Black residential area was becoming segregated not just by race but also by class. Even this proved no escape, however, because the demolitions that accompanied the construction of two public housing complexes in 1935 (Cedar Apartments and Outhwaite Homes) displaced large numbers of less well-off residents into the eastern reaches of Cedar-Central, where similar conditions of overcrowding soon ensued.⁶ Public schools in the area also became increasingly segregated by race.

These developments increased the attractiveness of the urban periphery for some African Americans who sought an alternative to ghettoization, initiating a push toward suburbanization that forms the subject of this nomination. It is important to note, however, that as of 1930, Cedar-Central still housed nearly 90 percent of Cleveland's Black population. On the bright side, this concentration led to the election in 1915 of the first African American city councilman, Thomas W. Fleming, to be joined in 1927 by Eugene J. Gregg and Clayborne George. The membership of Cleveland's NAACP branch also grew during the 1920s, along with organizations like the

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

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

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

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Negro Welfare Association (the city's Urban League affiliate) and Phillis Wheatley Association which had initially aimed to "re-socialize" the migrants to northern norms. Instead, in the words of historian Kimberley Phillips, the newcomers effectively "Southernized" Cleveland's Black culture. They formed new organizations – notably the Future Outlook League, established by Alabama-born John O. Holly in 1935, which utilized boycotts to pry open job opportunities and press for better housing. Perhaps the most visible impact of the Great Migration was a jump in the number of Black churches from just fourteen in 1910 to 132 by 1930.⁷ To serve the growing population, a number of successful Black-owned businesses were also founded during this era, such as the House of Wills, E.F. Boyd Funeral Home, and the Empire Savings & Loan Co.

However, the onset of the Great Depression devastated both Black business owners and families. While overall unemployment averaged 45 percent in Cleveland at its peak, the figure ran as high as 85 percent in the poorest sections of Cedar-Central. African Americans were forced out of the industrial workforce and even some service jobs that Whites had previously disdained, like elevator operators and janitors. As their customers' spending power decreased, Black-owned businesses struggled, with six of the city's Black undertakers going bankrupt, for example. As discussed below, of direct relevance to the topic at hand was the collapse of businessman Herbert Chauncey's Empire Savings & Loan, along with his People's Realty Co. which had enabled dozens of Black families to acquire houses at the suburban periphery during the relatively prosperous 1920s.⁸

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

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

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

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Black families lived in the northeasterly, heavily Jewish Glenville neighborhood by 1940, a disproportionate number of them professionals and clerical workers who had begun arriving as early as 1915. Still others lived in an enclave that emerged in the 1920s on the city's West Side – consisting of three streets off Bellaire Avenue – or in even further outlying suburban clusters established around the same time in Maple Heights, Chagrin Falls, Woodmere, and Berea. While much of this outward movement occurred without violent retaliation from angry White neighbors, there were several high-profile cases of harassment and even a bombing when individual African American families moved in the 1920s and 1930s to the University Circle area, Shaker Heights, and Cleveland Heights.⁹

The Village of Miles Heights

Perhaps the most remarkable story of an outlying Black enclave taking shape around this time concerns the one located just to the west of the Lee and Seville Roads intersection. By establishing a foothold here in Cleveland's far southeastern reaches, African Americans laid the successful groundwork for this vicinity to develop as a Black "suburb in the city" over the following decades. In November 1920, the People's Realty Co., founded earlier that year by Cleveland's leading Black businessman Herbert S. Chauncey, purchased just over a hundred lots in the already-subdivided "Bella Villa Allotment," located in what at the time was Warrensville Township. Born in Georgia and educated at Talladega College, Chauncey was a former railway postal clerk who had traveled throughout Ohio and decided to settle in Cleveland around 1918. The next year he had founded the Empire Savings & Loan Co. after raising \$100,000 in working capital, with the goal of lending to Black families who aspired to buy homes outside the confines of Cedar-Central. Although he himself chose to purchase on Glenville's Pierpont Avenue in 1923, Chauncey envisioned that on the earlier Mount Pleasant model, families would buy lots in Bella Villa and then save to build their houses. As many as twenty houses may have already stood on the development's streets when the People's Realty Co. acquired the allotment, and the company began selling its lots the following spring, with sales picking up especially after 1925 – the same year that the enclave's first church, Canaan Missionary Baptist, was built. In 1927, the People's Realty Co. was reportedly successful enough to pay a dividend to its shareholders, and was described as "perhaps the largest realty organization managed by colored people in the City of Cleveland." That same year, enclave residents, along with voters in the nearby vicinity, successfully petitioned the State of Ohio to be incorporated as the Village of Miles Heights, thereby becoming a bona fide suburb¹⁰ (Figure #6).

Some even more unexpected turns lay on the horizon for the Lee-Seville enclave and Miles Heights, however. In February 1929, Miles Heights' mayor died unexpectedly in office, which meant that the president of the village council, Arthur R. Johnston, ascended to the mayoralty to serve out the remainder of the term. Johnston – a Jamaican immigrant, county road foreman, and homeowner in the Lee-Seville enclave – thereby became Cuyahoga County's first African

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

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

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American mayor and one of the first in the state. Since Miles Heights' population was only about one-third Black, Johnston had been elected to the council (and before that the school board) with White support; in fact, when he sat in that year's November election, he was backed by about half the village's Whites and received two-thirds of the vote total, trouncing his White challenger. Cleveland's Black community considered Johnston's election a huge success, throwing him an inaugural ball at Elks Hall on East 55th Street attended by some 3,000 people.

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

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

Meanwhile, other developments were affecting the Lee-Seville enclave in particular. In June 1930, Herbert Chauncey died suddenly of heart failure at the age of forty-three. In the wake of his premature death – and with the Great Depression deepening – the Empire Savings & Loan was hit by depositor withdrawals and an embezzlement scandal, after which it went into state receivership. With about forty of its original lots still unsold, the People's Realty Co. subsequently folded, unable to pay its mortgage on the Bella Vista landholding. Despite this misfortune for the investors, the community continued to sink roots. With Miles Heights unable to fund the construction of sewers or paved roads, self-sufficient early settlers made due with outhouses and sometimes even without electricity. Many of them being recent southern migrants,

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

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

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they knew how to provision themselves, growing supplementary food, raising chickens, and even hunting or foraging in the surrounding, semi-rural area. According to the 1930 census, 135 Black families lived in the Lee-Seville enclave, making up 95 percent of the total; two interracial families also lived there, as well as five White families, four of them Italian. More than a third of the Black family heads were laborers, mostly working in road or housing construction, or at steel, foundry, or coal companies. Others were employed as cooks, furnace tenders, truckers, auto mechanics, plasterers, or porters; there were also three business owners, two clerks, a musician, a minister, and a policeman. Fully 90 percent of the Black families in the enclave owned their own houses, many of which they had built themselves on the earlier Mount Pleasant pattern. And remarkably, despite the hardships of the Great Depression, approximately forty more families moved to the Lee-Seville enclave between 1930 and 1940. Residents referred to their settlement fondly as “The Village,” or else as the “Beehive” after the local elementary school, and sometimes even jokingly as “Mudville” due to the unpaved streets.¹³

While African Americans and Whites had coexisted interracially in early Miles Heights, by the late 1930s some White observers were coming to think disparagingly of the Lee-Seville enclave. One employee in the local real estate industry labeled it “Little Africa” on a plat map, and in 1939 government workers with the Home Owners Loan Corporation designated the settlement a “shantytown,” redlining it as a supposedly bad investment while claiming, “this community has had a very detrimental effect on surrounding area property values.” An overdramatic 1945 newspaper article referred to the area as “Cleveland’s Tobacco Road.” The thinly-disguised racism and unfairness of such assessments is borne out by the fact that many working-class Whites in the vicinity had also built their own homes, and initially lacked adequate sewerage; 1940 census statistics show that less than a fifth of the enclave’s homes needed repairs, and only a third were mortgaged (meaning most were paid off). This uptick in racial intolerance would continue into the World War II era, with the resumption of the Great Migration as Cleveland became a major center for war industry production. With a severe housing shortage in already-overcrowded Cedar-Central, officials at the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority in late 1943 filed for the right to lease forty-nine acres of vacant land at the intersection of Seville Road and East 153rd Street, in order to build a so-called “temporary war housing” project for Black foundry workers arriving from the South. Called the Seville Homes, it would ultimately house more than 2,000 people in over a hundred low-rise buildings with a total of 440. Although the Lee-Seville enclave was an already established fact, White residents of Southeast Cleveland and the adjacent suburbs of Garfield Heights and Maple Heights fought to stop the Seville Homes project, filing a taxpayers’ lawsuit that delayed construction until March 1944.¹⁴ These sorts of tactics deployed in an attempt to impede African American access to Southeast Cleveland were part of the history that makes the work of African American builders like Arthur Bussey and the successful establishment of Lee-Harvard and Lee-Seville as a Black “suburb in the city” an even more incredible story.

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

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

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

Integration of Lee-Harvard

By 1960, with the Great Migration still going strong, the Black population had jumped again, to almost 251,000 or nearly 29 percent; census data from that year revealed that one out of every five African Americans living in Cleveland had not lived in the metropolitan area five years earlier, implying a heavy influx from the South. With many White residents still resistant to sharing living space with African Americans, the earlier pattern seen in Cedar-Central spilled over into nearby established Black residential areas as well as some new ones. Overcrowding and the “conversion” of housing for multifamily occupancy took its toll on housing stock in Glenville, Hough, and to a lesser degree in Mount Pleasant. Especially for the city’s upwardly mobile Black middle class which was growing in the 1950s and 1960s, the deterioration of living conditions in closer-in neighborhoods raised the stakes in their quest for better housing, as they increasingly looked to the city outskirts in the hopes of achieving the American Dream.¹⁵

Between Mount Pleasant and Lee-Seville lay the Lee-Harvard area, which had been undeveloped farmland until it was subdivided in the 1920s. While developers of the section abutting Shaker Heights’ southern border imagined an upper-class residential area – complete with racial restrictions written into the deeds, forbidding sale to Black people – much of the rest of the area took shape along lines similar to Miles Heights, as White families on their way out of the working class purchased vacant lots to build individual houses, instead of buying in already finished subdivisions. Fully one-third of the families in the area were of Southern and Eastern European origin, mainly Hungarians, Czechs, and Italians. Two-thirds of the neighborhood’s houses were built after 1950 as developers erected single-family ranches and colonials, thereby quite literally providing a suburban atmosphere despite Lee-Harvard’s location within the city limits. In July 1953, the first African American family moved into this previously all-White neighborhood, gradually followed by other African American families. Although problems of obtaining credit remained, Black buyers found creative workarounds like purchasing through a supportive White intermediary, arranging mortgages with individual owners instead of banks, or borrowing through the Quincy Savings & Loan, which since 1952 had been under African American ownership.¹⁶ Black buyers typically had to pay more for housing or insurance coverage, but they shouldered this unfairness as a price they were willing to pay in order to better their circumstances. They felt similarly about “blockbusting,” the practice used by both White and Black real estate operators that played on White racial fears of falling property values to generate rapid and high-volume turnover. Starting in 1961, real estate agents fanned out to the

¹⁵ Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 137-165, 200-212.

¹⁶ Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 165-166, 181-185.

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east of Lee Road and south of Harvard, hoping to convince White residents to relinquish their houses so they could be sold at a markup to Black buyers whose housing options were otherwise limited. These tactics worked because many Whites believed the myth – promoted by the federal government itself with its 1930s redlining maps – that the presence of African Americans inevitably led to declining property values, and furthermore because most were unwilling to keep living in areas that became increasingly Black.

Lee-Harvard's demographics shifted quickly, as it – along with the adjoining sections of Lee-Seville – became the city's Black middle-class preserve and a center for civic pride and achievement. A 1967 assessment had declared the neighborhood “unique in the high percentage of professional folk who make their homes in Lee-Harvard, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, dentists, teachers, engineers, social workers, ministers, school principals and many others.” Among the wide variety of occupations, other residents held unionized jobs in the city's manufacturing firms. ¹⁷Already by 1965, African Americans made up 75 percent of Lee-Harvard's population, and by the early 1970s only a handful of (mostly elderly) Whites remained. The local Urban League determined that Southeast Cleveland was the highest-income area inhabited by African Americans in the entire state of Ohio, with the 1970 census indicating that Lee-Harvard's median income was more than double the city average. The Myrtle-Highview neighborhood was indicative of this historic trend.

History of Myrtle-Highview Historic District

The Myrtle-Highview District's initial land development dates to the 1920s and the early subdivisions creating the Lee-Seville area and Miles Heights. Although there were attempts to sell home lots off of Lee Road in the early decades of the 20th Century, they were unsuccessful because of the lack of paved roads and utilities. Originally part of Warrensville Township, the area became part of Miles Heights Village in 1927. The Myrtle-Highview neighborhood was platted by The Reliance Company as Homestead Gardens in the 1920s, although not developed (Figures #1 & #2).

In July 1947, Arthur Bussey, an African American mason and contractor, purchased a substantial parcel of land near the city's southern border at Lee and McCracken Roads (Figure #3). The following year, he personally financed the construction of sewers for Myrtle Avenue and Highview Drive, on which he went on to build two dozen houses for middle class African Americans, including a new one for his wife Emma and himself¹⁸ (Figure #4)

Between 1949 and 1958, Bussey built twelve houses in the district. In 1956, he began to build smaller ranches turned to run with the short side facing the street and the longer side going front to back in the narrow lots. It might be that demand was higher for smaller houses, as the neighboring Lee-Harvard neighborhood—located north of Lee-Seville and south of the prestigious suburb of Shaker Heights—had opened up to African American buyers. Or it could

¹⁷ Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 193-194, 197-199.

¹⁸ Property Deed, July 24, 1947 (AFN#194707240046) Cuyahoga County Recorders' Office.

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be that Bussey built smaller houses in order to complete the neighborhood faster. He had built one house a year from 1949 to 1955, but he completed three houses in 1956 and three in 1958. In 1957, another African American developer, William Woodridge, built a large yellow brick ranch house on Highview and began to develop three lots on the north side of Myrtle as well. An October 11, 1958, issue of the African American newspaper *Call & Post* related the controversy that arose out of the construction of 16301 Myrtle Avenue. The foundation had been poured and the home was under contract to a school teacher, Mrs. Sterling Jamison. At issue was the fact that the garage was being constructed on the left side of the house and heretofore all of the garages had been built to the right of the house. "This means that two houses will have driveways adjacent to each other which, residents claim, will break up the order thus far achieved in construction of earlier building on the street."

The article describes the neighborhood: "The homes are all-brick and when building is completed there will be about 20 similar, well-manicured residences in the \$32,000 and up range." "Residents boast that it is one of the few if not the only street in the city completely Negro-owned and Negro built which conform to each other." Lack of any formal zoning restrictions covering the area made it possible to place a driveway on either side of the house, and this foundation had already been laid. Because of the animosity of her neighbors protesting her house, Mrs. Jamison backed out of the deal, and the home was purchased instead by Mr. and Mrs. Connie Walker. The article concludes: "Quiet, well-built Myrtle Avenue is an impressive street. But residents are afraid that the garage built out of place may well mean the end to their plans for a perfectly built community."¹⁹

The homes built by William Woodridge of Engineering Enterprises and Realty are distinguished by their yellow brick color. They are some of the larger houses in the neighborhood and are often "L" or "U"-shaped. Woodridge built six homes in total. Arthur Bussey built nine more homes between 1958 and 1965. In 1961, Rufus Ranaldson built the modest, all brick home at 16404 Highview Drive. In 1957, Ranaldson had built the neighboring Kollin Avenue, across Lee Road. Although that street has uniform designs, they are simpler ranches with siding largely of wood or compressed board and little brick detail. The split-level home at 16221 Highview Avenue, which is unusual in a neighborhood of predominantly ranches, was built in 1962 by the Burt Building Company. Very little is known of this company other than the fact that they advertised homes in east-side neighborhoods, predominantly in the *Call & Post*. For this reason, it is assumed that William Burt, the owner, was African American. Finally, four very modest homes with just a half wall of brick were built by Federal Homes between 1962 and 1967. Federal Homes was founded by four Jewish friends who attended Glenville High School together in the late 1940s. They formed a housing development company and sold predominantly to African American buyers in the southeastern section of Cleveland and the suburbs, before going out of business in 1970.²⁰ With so much pre-existing housing becoming available in the surrounding Lee-Harvard neighborhood on the border of Shaker Heights, the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood and other similar neighborhoods built by African Americans south of Miles Avenue were no longer as

¹⁹ Cleveland *Call & Post*, "Myrtle Avenue Group Protests Garage," October 11, 1958.

²⁰ *Call and Post*, July 20, 1963. "Federal Homes Sells 400 Houses in 5 Years."

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highly desired. Therefore, the last homes developed by Arthur Bussey on Highview Avenue, although all brick ranches, are positioned on more narrow lots, as are the homes mentioned earlier developed by Federal Homes.

The Myrtle-Highview District is also being nominated as a distinctive example of a Post War suburban development of housing popular both before and after the Second World War. The homes built first are located at the eastern end of Myrtle Avenue, beginning with the home Bussey built for himself and Emma at 16400 Myrtle Avenue. Brick, with stone in the gable, the house has a steep gable and prominent side chimney, similar to the English Cottage style popular before the War. This style flourished between the First World War and the late 1930s. These modest Tudor-inspired homes had typically been built with clapboard, shingles or stucco siding. The style “expanded explosively in popularity during the 1920s and 1930s as masonry veneering techniques allowed even the most modest examples to mimic closely the brick and stone exteriors seen on English prototypes.”²¹ The popularity of the style quickly faded, and it is unusual to see examples such as these on Myrtle Avenue built in 1949-1954. It might be that Bussey was influenced by the proximity of the exclusive planned suburb of Shaker Heights, just a few miles to the north. While the Shaker Heights developers allowed English, French and American Colonial homes to be built there, it is the Tudor style that predominates. It may be that English-inspired designs were to Bussey a sign of a well-planned community. 16405 Myrtle Avenue is also unusual in that it lacks the steep roof pitch of neighboring houses and has second story dormers characteristic of the popular Cape Cod house type, and yet is clad in stone and has a rounded bay. What all of these early houses in the district and the ranch houses that began to be built in the mid-1950s have in common is that they were all masonry. That is what distinguished Myrtle-Highview the most as a “high-class” neighborhood. Other homes in the area being built beginning in 1949 by Carr & Dillard, were also all masonry, although they lacked the ornamentation of Bussey’s houses.

The predominant house type in the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood is the ranch, which had become the most popular house type nationally by the mid-1950s and continued to be popular through the 1960s. The type is loosely based on early Spanish Colonial houses of the American southwest. Asymmetrical, with low pitched roofs, these homes typically have a moderate to wide eave overhang. Again, the most elaborate ranch houses in the Myrtle Highview neighborhood are the earliest examples built on Myrtle Avenue. An exception would be 16401 Highview Drive, one of the largest ranches in the neighborhood and built by William Woodridge in 1957. Woodridge’s ranches overall are somewhat more elaborate. Built primarily of yellow brick, they have “L” and “U” shapes.

The final ranches in the neighborhood are much simpler and are built on more narrow lots, although these, too, are masonry. As discussed earlier, these homes represent the changing dynamics in the neighborhood and the larger area became integrated and Myrtle-Highview was no longer the exclusive neighborhood it had been.

²¹ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990) 358.

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African American Builders

Arthur Bussey

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Arthur Bussey was a formally-trained bricklayer and building contractor who ultimately built several dozen houses for Black middle-class families in Cleveland, most of them on Myrtle Avenue and Highview Drive in the southeastern corner of the city. Bussey was born in Augusta, Georgia, around February 1894 to Jasper and Anna Bussey, the fifth of their nine children. His parents hailed from Edgefield County, in South Carolina's cotton belt. Arthur's father, Jasper – born around 1855, most likely into slavery – appeared in the 1880 Census working as a field hand in Meriwether Township, living with his grandmother and two younger siblings. He married Anna shortly thereafter. In pursuit of greater economic opportunity, and with a worsening of race relations in Edgefield County after Reconstruction – the brief period of Black political empowerment following the Civil War – Bussey's parents decided to relocate around 1889 across the Savannah River to Augusta, Georgia. A railroad hub, the city employed African Americans as laborers on the docks as well as in sawmills and industrial works, and also had a small but growing Black middle class of business owners and skilled and white-collar workers. In 1900, the family (including young Arthur) owned a house on Gwinnett Street, in the heart of the city's Black community.²² Jasper was a day laborer, hard and insecure work but likely less backbreaking than the sharecropping he had left behind. The family's economic situation improved over the next ten years. By 1910, Arthur's father worked as a driver for a lumber company; this job would have been less arduous and entailed unsupervised responsibilities, far preferable to the menial positions that most Black men were consigned to at the time. Anna worked as a laundress (the most common Black women's paid employment), contributing her earnings along with those of the other household members to bolster the family's overall economic security. A typical strategy among upwardly-mobile Black families, Arthur's twenty seven year-old brother Malachi likely also contributed his earnings as a member of the household. Malachi's chosen profession as a bricklayer undoubtedly inspired Arthur's own career path.²³

As of 1910, Arthur did not yet have a job and was likely still pursuing his education, prior to his enrollment at the all-Black Georgia State Industrial College (later Savannah State University). Augusta had quite a strong tradition of African American education, even sponsoring the first

Black high school in Georgia from 1880 until 1897, when hostile Whites succeeded in having it closed by court order. The city also was home to the privately-run Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, established by Lucy Craft Laney in 1883 with the assistance of the Presbyterian Church. Laney's school became the first in Augusta to offer kindergarten classes, and it enrolled approximately 900 African American students by 1912, not long after Arthur graduated from

²² 1880 U.S. Census, Edgefield County, SC, Enumeration District 55, p. 62, available through www.ancestry.com; 1900 U.S. Census, Richmond County, GA, Enumeration District 68, pp. 9A-9B, available through www.ancestry.com; *Augusta City Directory* (1889), available through www.ancestry.com. On Edgefield County after the Civil War, see Vernon Burton, "Race and Reconstruction: Edgefield County, South Carolina," *Journal of Social History* 12 (Autumn 1978): 31-56.

²³ 1910 U.S. Census, Richmond County (Georgia), Enumeration District 76, p. 6A, available through www.ancestry.com.

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what would have been one of just three possible institutions to have prepared him for the next stage of his education. A recent inquiry at the Haines Institute was inconclusive, so if he was not enrolled there, he must have been educated at either the Walker Baptist Institute or the Paine Institute, the only other schools serving African Americans in Augusta at the time.²⁴

Located in Savannah, the Georgia State Industrial College was founded in 1890, and like most Black higher educational institutions in the South at the time, conformed to the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, the era's most influential Black leader. Washington believed that educational institutions serving African Americans should emphasize "practical" skills like the crafts, an adaptation to the racialized labor market and developing Jim Crow system that followed in the wake of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. Thus it should come as no surprise that Arthur chose to pursue the building trades, which since 1899 had been separated out into a specialized, three-year curriculum intended to produce craftsmen. Since Bussey's first appearance was in the 1913 Augusta City Directory as a bricklayer, he likely began his studies in the fall of 1910. Students learned their trades for half the school day and during the other half completed the "Normal" track's regular academic requirements, leading to the equivalent of a high school degree. Furthermore, in the Washingtonian tradition all students were required to work at least one hour a day on the college grounds or farm, and many worked longer hours for pay to help offset the boarding and tuition fee of \$50 per year. Enrolled in what was the most popular of all the trade programs at the school, Bussey would have learned not only bricklaying, but also plastering. Following a tradition of students erecting college buildings with their own hands, begun at Washington's own Tuskegee Institute, in 1913 Georgia State Industrial College's masons-in-training manufactured concrete blocks which they used to build a steam laundry designed by faculty members.²⁵

There is some confusion as to when Bussey first arrived in Cleveland. His World War I draft card from 1917 listed him as a laborer at the International Harvester Company, the largest employer in Springfield, Ohio. Most likely he had answered one of that company's ads recruiting Black Southern migrants amid the wartime labor shortage, or else heard about job openings there by word of mouth or through the African American press. Already a minor automobile manufacturing center, Springfield was in the midst of a wartime industrial growth spurt and had a small but growing African American population approaching one-sixth of the total 60,000 residents as of 1920.²⁶ It also had a fraught history of racial conflict. In 1904, Whites had lynched a Black man accused of shooting a police officer, then burned the small "Levee" section where most of the town's African Americans lived. In 1906 Whites rioted and again burned

²⁴ June Odessa Patton, "Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr. and Black Higher Education in Georgia, 1880-1920," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago, 1980), 135-40, 144-145; June O. Patton, "The Black Community of Augusta and the Struggle for Ware High School, 1880-1899," in *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, ed. Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson (Boston, 1978), 45-59.

²⁵ Clyde W. Hall, *One Hundred Years of Educating at Savannah State College, 1890-1990* (East Peoria, IL, 1991), 3-18, 20-23; *Augusta City Directory* (1913), available through www.ancestry.com.

²⁶ Draft registration card, June 5, [1917], available through www.ancestry.com; Mahavira Prasada Shreevastava, "The Industrial Development of Springfield, Ohio: A Study in Economic Geography," Ph.D. dissertation (Ohio State University, 1956), 164-165; Tom Dunham, *Springfield, Ohio: A Summary of Two Centuries* (Bloomington, IN, 2012), 106; <http://www.springfieldohiohistory.net/historyofspringfield.htm>.

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buildings – and in 1921 only an organized, armed Black self-defense effort prevented a third such occurrence. Springfield’s racial tensions would worsen further with the presence of an active Ku Klux Klan chapter and a boycott of the city’s racially segregated schools by Black residents.²⁷ Understandably, Bussey, like many migrants did not remain there long, but rather moved quickly on to Cleveland, a larger urban center with better opportunities and the strength in numbers of a growing Black population that quadrupled between 1910 and 1920 to nearly 35,000.²⁸

The first definitive evidence of Bussey’s arrival in Cleveland is his purchase of a bond in June 1919, documented in the books of the Bricklayers Union No. 5. Although Bussey became a lifelong member of the local, African Americans in the North pursuing this trade – along with masons and plasterers also belonging to the union – often experienced discrimination in employment and had more difficulty acquiring training through apprenticeships, although in Cleveland as elsewhere these two lines of work were relatively more accepting of Blacks than some of the other trades. Ironically, migrants like Bussey had faced less competition under the Southern Jim Crow system; his formal training meant he likely did not have to spend time working his way up through the “trowel trades” as a “helper” (for example as a hod carrier). Because the 1920 Cleveland City Directory listed him as a bricklayer, Bussey had almost surely already completed his apprenticeship in Augusta and most likely belonged to that city’s all-Black bricklayers union, which probably furnished him with credentials to ease his way in Cleveland.²⁹

The 1920s were a relatively prosperous decade, in which some African Americans including Arthur Bussey were able to participate, despite the realities of job discrimination and increasing segregation for most Black Clevelanders. He remained employed and even developed more specialized expertise over time, with the city directory listing his work variously as “cement contractor” (1922), “bricklayer contractor” (1923), and “cement finisher” (1925). For the first few years, Bussey boarded at several different addresses in the western portion of Cedar Central, the vast residential district running from East 30th to East 105th Streets which housed 90 percent of Cleveland’s African American population by 1930. In January 1923, he married Emma Jackson, a fellow migrant from Greenville, South Carolina, and in 1925, the couple was renting on East 51st Street. From 1926-1928 the Busseys did not appear in the Cleveland City Directory, and it was probably during this time that Arthur earned a certificate in architectural drafting from

²⁷ Darnell Edward Carter, “The 1902, 1906, and 1921 Race Riots in Springfield, Ohio and the Hoodlum Theory,” M.A. thesis (Ohio State University, 1993), esp. 61-79; Ida L. Williams, *One Hundred Seventy-Five Years of Struggle: History of Black People in Springfield, Ohio* (Springfield, OH, 1976), esp. 15-79; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York, 1967), 239; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, “Early Boycotts of Segregated Schools: The Case of Springfield, Ohio, 1922-23,” *American Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1968): 744-758.

²⁸ Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, IL, 1976), 10; Jack S. Blocker, *A Little More Freedom: African Americans Enter the Urban Midwest, 1860-1930* (Columbus, OH, 2008), 69-83.

²⁹ Dues ledger book, June 18, 1919 entry, p. 151, Bricklayers Union, Local #5 Records, container 11, folder 125, Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS); Arthur Bussey obituary, *Plain Dealer*, February 15, 1972; *Cleveland City Directory* (1920), available through www.ancestry.com. On discrimination faced by African Americans in the building trades in Cleveland, see Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana, IL, 1999), 115-118. On the national situation including the South, see Herman D. Bloch, “Craft Unions and the Negro in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Negro History* 43 (January 1958): 10-33, and Herbert R. Northrup, *Organized Labor and the Negro* (1944; New York, 1971), 38-41.

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Chicago Technical College, almost surely in night school; Bussey's obituary states that he earned high honors in his coursework there. When the Busseys reappeared in Cleveland in 1929, they likely had ambitious dreams – that year they purchased a home at 2364 East 88th Street, and the next year's census listed Arthur's profession as "architect." At the time, the far eastern reaches of Cedar-Central where the Busseys bought contained the largest concentration of African American homeowners and also sustained a rich institutional life. However, changes were on the horizon not just for the Busseys, but for Black Clevelanders on the whole.³⁰

The Great Depression devastated Cleveland's economy and hit African Americans particularly hard, who as a group were relegated to the bottom of the occupational structure. While unemployment for Whites approached 50 percent, Black unemployment ran as high as 85 percent in the poorest part of Cedar-Central. As the housing market collapsed, African American building tradesmen were passed over in favor of White workers for what little work was available; tellingly, Bussey listed his occupation as "laborer" in the 1931 city directory. Starting in 1932, however, Bussey resumed describing his work alternatively as "architect" and "mason contractor." Some of the scarce available construction work would have been on Black institutions like churches, and in 1940, Bussey served as general contractor for the rebuilding of the church to which he and Emma belonged, Emmanuel Baptist, which had been destroyed in a 1939 fire. Meanwhile, the eastern portion of Cedar-Central was becoming increasingly overcrowded as a result of public housing-related demolitions that displaced poorer residents from its western portion eastward, and continuing Southern migration that surged during World War II (Figure #7). This worsening situation motivated upwardly-mobile and middle-class African American families like the Busseys to leave Cedar-Central for further outlying neighborhoods like Glenville, Mount Pleasant, and the still partly-undeveloped Lee-Seville section in Cleveland's southeastern corner.³¹

As discussed earlier, African American settlement in Lee-Seville dated to the 1920s, but had increased substantially during the 1950s as people spread outside of the historic enclave and Seville Homes into the surrounding areas. African American-owned and a few White firms were just beginning to build new housing for Black families in the vicinity, and Arthur Bussey wanted to take advantage of this growing opportunity. In July 1947, he purchased a substantial parcel of land near the city's southern border at Lee and McCracken Roads, the area associated with the Myrtle-Highview Historic District, and the first of forty-seven more transactions he would make

³⁰ *Cleveland City Directory* (1922, 1923, 1925), available through www.ancestry.com; Marriage license, Cuyahoga County (Ohio), Application #176122, January 17, 1923, available on microfilm at WRHS; Bussey obituary, *Call & Post*, February 28, 1972; *Cleveland City Directory* (1929), available through www.ancestry.com; 1930 U.S. Census, Cuyahoga County (Ohio), Enumeration District 108, page 10A, available through www.ancestry.com.

³¹ *Cleveland City Directory* (1931), available through www.ancestry.com; 1930 U.S. Census; *Cleveland City Directory* (1932), available through www.ancestry.com; *50th Anniversary, Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1916-1966* (commemorative program, 1966), p. 6, on file at the church; *Call & Post*, May 7, 1949. On forces driving migration out of Cedar-Central, see Christopher G. Wye, "The New Deal and the Negro Community: Toward a Broader Conceptualization," *Journal of American History* 59 (December 1972): 621-639.

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over the next twenty years, as he like many other of the city's building tradesmen expanded the scale of their business to cater to the booming postwar housing market.³²

Bussey went on to become one of a handful of African American developers in Cleveland, and by 1959 had built approximately forty new houses for interested clients, mostly upwardly mobile middle class Blacks but of whom approximately a fifth were White. In 1948, Bussey personally financed the construction of sewers for Myrtle Avenue and Highview Drive, on which he went on to build several dozen houses, including a new one for Emma and himself on the front door of which he incorporated a decorative "B" into the grillwork (Figures 8 & 9). In late 1949, the couple sold their old house and moved into their new home at 16400 Myrtle Avenue, holding a housewarming party in January 1950 to celebrate the occasion. Having been active in their old neighborhood – Emma was the secretary of the East 88th Street Neighborhood Club – the Busseys continued to attend events there like the annual holiday dinner of the "House Keepers Art and Study Club." Before long, they were joined by other former Cedar-Central residents, and by 1955, the Busseys were sponsoring Emmanuel Baptist's annual Lottie Strange Circle tea at their house – an indication that upwardly-mobile African American families like the Busseys often kept their former church affiliations even as they moved into new accommodations on the city outskirts.³³

The Busseys were socially active and must have been doing quite well financially in these early postwar decades. In 1949, Arthur along with four other Black craftsmen completed \$125,000 worth of work on the Emmanuel Baptist Church where he and Emma belonged (Figure #10). In 1953, Bussey spoke out along with several other Black homeowners against a public housing project planned for McCracken Road; this brought them into temporary alliance with nearby Whites who also opposed the plan, and earned them the ire of the local NAACP, of which they were nonetheless longtime members. By 1959, Emma was president of the Lee-McCracken Community Club, and the Busseys went on to sponsor its annual gala events at their house almost every year until 1963. Such block clubs and community council organizations were the primary vehicles whereby middle-class African Americans sought to maintain acceptable living conditions in their neighborhoods, and which were active around a range of issues from housing upkeep to enforcing zoning regulations, lobbying the city for regular services, maintaining the quality of education, and keeping an eye on juvenile behavior.³⁴

Arthur Bussey died in February 1972 at the age of 78. He and Emma never had children, although one obituary described him as the "uncle of many nieces and nephews." The Bricklayers and Masons Union Local No. 5 which Bussey joined as early as 1919 ran an obituary

³² Property Deed, July 24, 1947 (AFN#194707240046), Cuyahoga County Recorders Office (CCRO); the rest of the transactions are easily identified by searching the in-house database.

³³ Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 117; Property Deed, November 23, 1949 (AFN#194911230160), CCRO; *Call & Post*, January 7, 1950; *Call & Post*, August 5, 1950; *Call & Post*, January 13, 1951; *Call & Post*, August 2, 1952; *Call & Post*, August 20, 1955.

³⁴ *Call & Post*, May 7, 1949; *Call & Post*, January 17, 1953; *Call & Post*, November 14, 1964; *Call & Post*, July 18, 1959; *Call & Post*, January 23, 1960; *Call & Post*, February 4, 1961; *Call & Post*, February 10, 1962; *Call & Post*, July 27, 1963. On the reform agenda pursued by Black middle-class residents in neighborhoods like Lee-Harvard, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 213-255.

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commemorating his membership (Figure 11). The E. F. Boyd Funeral Home on East 89th Street handled funeral arrangements, and a service was held at the nearby Emmanuel Baptist Church where he and Emma were longtime members.³⁵

Carr & Dillard (Southeast Builders Inc.)

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

John T. Thomas had previously lived in Birmingham, Alabama, where he actually operated a small coal mine. John B. Harmon hailed from Atlanta, Georgia, where according to the *Call & Post* "he had been a house-man-chauffeur-butler, but was known far and wide in North Georgia for his unique ability at cooking." Finally, Leslie Ephraim was a former schoolteacher from Camden, Alabama. Of the three men, only Ephraim is readily traceable in the public record. He was born on August 29, 1914, into a large family, the second-oldest of seven siblings. Ephraim's parents worked as sharecroppers, and in 1940 he was still living with them but already had a job with the Wilcox County Board of Education, as did one of his younger sisters. He married Magnolia Griffith in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1940, before they migrated to Cleveland around 1942. The three men together first built Ephraim's house at 4666 East 162nd Street, completing it in just three months. Carrying through on their agreement, they then turned to work on Thomas's house at 16221 Bryce Avenue, and Harmon's at 4656 East 162nd Street.³⁶ The efforts of Thomas, Harmon, and Ephraim attracted the notice of two of their neighbors, Leroy Ballard and his younger brother Brunston, who offered to help them complete the remaining two houses. Leroy, who had some carpentry experience, had just completed building his own home at 16215 Elberta Avenue. The Ballard brothers were from Columbia County, Arkansas, where their father had owned his own farm. For two years Leroy attended the historically-Black Philander Smith College in Little Rock, then taught mathematics before relocating to Cleveland in 1932. He married Willie Belle Brown the following year and held various jobs during the Depression,

³⁵ Bussey obituaries, *Call & Post*, February 28, 1972, and *Plain Dealer*, February 15, 1972.

³⁶ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; U.S. World War II Draft Cards, Young Men, 1940-1947, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2011); 1940 U.S. Census, Camden, Wilcox County (Alabama), Enumeration district 66-2B, p. 9B, available through www.ancestry.com; Alabama, County Marriage Records, 1805-1967, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2016).

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including working at a barrel factory and a bakery; in the 1940 census, he was listed as living with Willie Belle on East 142nd Street in Mount Pleasant, working as a junior clerk in Cleveland City Hall. In 1942 he got a job as a conductor with the Cleveland Transit System.³⁷

Also building houses for upwardly-mobile Black families in the Lee-Miles area were two professional bricklayers, James Dillard and Tillman Carr. The *Call & Post* stated they both hailed from Chattanooga, Tennessee, but Carr was actually born in Lafayette, Alabama, on October 2, 1913. Like the Ballards, Carr came from a large family and his father owned his own farm. Tillman married Meeta Bush in Shelby County, Alabama, in 1932; by 1935 the couple had moved to Chattanooga where Carr held a series of jobs over the next several years – from janitor, to butler, to a truck loader at Sears, Roebuck & Co. In 1942, he was working there as a laborer at the U.S. Pipe and Foundry Co., so the couple may have decided to relocate to Cleveland with the increased demand for Black foundry workers during World War II, and possibly even lived in the Seville Homes. The *Call & Post* states that both Carr and Dillard arrived in Cleveland in 1944, and that the two bricklayers “worked together for a construction company for two years before ‘hitting it for themselves.’” Where they learned their trade (unless on the job) is unclear; most likely they had some training before their arrival, because such skills were much more difficult to acquire in the North, where White-dominated building trade unions tightly restricted Black access. In any case, the paper in 1952 described Carr as “a master bricklayer,” mentioning he had “won a Union card ‘the hard way’ after years of contracting for masonry work himself with his partner”³⁸ (Figure #12).

On April 5, 1952, the Carr & Dillard Construction Company incorporated with its board consisting of nine members. Lending the company their names were the two professional bricklayers, James Dillard and Tillman Carr who served as foreman and president; the three original friends who had built each other’s houses, Leslie Ephraim and John Harmon who served respectively as secretary-treasurer and general manager, as well as board chairman John Thomas who by now was a fulltime carpenter; Leroy Ballard, the neighbor with carpentry skills who had initially helped, as well as Eugene Burns, another carpenter from Birmingham, Alabama, who served as vice president; and finally plasterers Robert Narlie of Miami, Ohio, and Eugene Bush of Chattanooga who was probably Tillman Carr’s brother-in-law. The company was said to have eighteen employees, yet still had to subcontract its plumbing and electrical work because these trades almost totally excluded African Americans. It also was constructing its new headquarters

³⁷ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; Ohio Death Records, 1908-1932, 1938-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); 1910 U.S. Census, Moss, Columbia County (Arkansas), Enumeration District 0071, p. 3A, www.ancestry.com; Leroy Ballard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, April 27, 1994; 1940 U.S. Census, Cleveland, Ohio, Enumeration District 92-783, p. 10B, www.ancestry.com.

³⁸ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 1915); 1920 U.S. Census, Faulks, Barbour County (Alabama), Enumeration District 24, p. 15B, available through www.ancestry.com; Alabama, County Marriage Records, 1805-1967, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2016); *Chattanooga City Directory* (1935), p. 707, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1936), p. 563, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1937), p. 587, *Chattanooga City Directory* (1942), p. 723, all available through www.ancestry.com. On the recruitment of African American foundry workers during the war, see Todd M. Michney, “Constrained Communities: Black Cleveland’s Experience with World War II Public Housing,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (Summer 2007): 933-956.

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at 4461 Lee Road and had contracted with Ranaldson and Smith Realty as the sole agent to sell their new homes. However, that partnership was short-lived, as Rufus Ranaldson started his own construction company in 1953. By that August, the company had changed its name from Carr & Dillard to “Lee Road Builders” and announced a \$50,000 stock issue to raise the capital for “dozens of homes for ‘modest income’ families” in Mount Pleasant and the Lee-Seville area. By then it reportedly had eighteen homes under construction, for a grand total of fifty undertaken since the firm’s inception.³⁹

But like many Black-owned businesses, the company experienced difficulty with financing, hence the stock offering. Construction companies had to front much of the expense for building materials and labor on the houses they were building before they were able to sell the finished homes at a profit, which advantaged larger firms that could absorb these costs. Despite securing credit with one of the area’s largest lumber suppliers at unprecedentedly fair rates “in keeping with what the white competition has been using indefinitely,” Ephraim complained in early 1954 that banks directed much of the available loan money toward “preferred builders” – larger firms that could more precisely estimate their budgets for the entire year. These financial difficulties seem to have shaken the unity of the original business partners; by that point only Ephraim, Harmon, and Burns were still working together under the name “Union Home Builders Inc.” and had picked up two new building tradesmen as partners, Theron Thomas and David Elmore. In August, the partners signed an agreement with two White attorneys who agreed to supply them with capital, in exchange for bonus payments from the profits. As part of the agreement, the company agreed to reorganize as Southeast Builders, Inc. At first this financing arrangement seemed to be working nicely. In December 1954, the firm announced plans for “Tarkington Heights,” a project of one hundred colonial and ranch-style homes in the \$15,000–\$16,000 range, described by Southeast’s sales manager Wilbert H. Smith as “the largest, most modern development of Negro Housing in the city.” Having built eighty homes to date, the firm was said by the *Call & Post* to be making a new departure in developing this entire neighborhood of new housing on vacant land adjacent to Kerruish Park. By January 1955, Southeast had purchased 130 lots for the development off Lee Road and claimed it had an “unusually large” backlog of house orders; in April, it bought a second bulldozer and was reportedly acquiring milling equipment to produce doors and cabinets more affordably.⁴⁰

But some danger signals were already apparent as eight Southeast customers with a combined total of nearly \$5,000 in down payments, dissatisfied with lengthy building delays, lodged a complaint with Cleveland’s Better Business Bureau. In the resulting hearing before the city’s police prosecutor, Southeast got a “clean bill of health” and was assumed merely to have “bit off more than they could chew.” Southeast Builders’ primary customer base was Black World War II veterans whose financing was guaranteed through the VA, but after the delays pushed beyond the contract-specified ninety days, these buyers were no longer able to demand refunds. Unfortunately, the prosecutor’s positive assessment proved premature. Southeast Builders ceased

³⁹ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; *Call & Post*, August 22, 1953; *Call & Post*, August 15, 1953.

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

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all construction in May 1955, so Tarkington Heights was never completed. By that fall, the company was under investigation for a rash of new complaints. When Southeast Builders, Inc. officially went under in March 1956, the firm owed some ninety-six customers a combined total of nearly \$50,000—and to make matters worse, five home purchasers were facing foreclosure suits filed by subcontractors seeking to collect liens on the bankrupt company's unpaid debts.⁴¹

Little else is known about the directions that the various partners took after their time during the firm's brief and complicated history. Of the two professional bricklayers who lent their names to the initial iteration of the company, Tillman Carr continued to live in his house in the historic West Park enclave on St. John Avenue; he died on January 15, 2000. James M. Dillard actually died young, in February 1968, and at the time of his death was still living in a house on Elberta Avenue that he almost certainly built for himself. Leroy Ballard, who was also involved in the company before it became Southeast Builders, taught carpentry in the federally-funded AIM Jobs program during the 1960s. His obituary states that he built twenty-eight homes in the Lee-Miles area in total, including one for each of his three children. He died on April 22, 1994.⁴²

Albert L. Taborn

Albert Taborn also began to build houses in 1949, although he primarily worked as a Realtor until 1954, when he began home-building full time. Albert Taborn was a formidable presence in real estate and construction in Cleveland from 1946 into the early 1960s. Taborn was also politically active, perhaps more so than the average real estate broker or builder, especially concerning himself with planning and policy decisions that directly affected Cleveland's majority-Black or racially integrating neighborhoods. Taborn was additionally a frequent author of articles in the *Call and Post* as they related to real estate or building concerns.

Albert Lorenzo Taborn was born on June 10, 1920, to Vera Mae White and Raymond Dow Taborn. He had an older brother, Raymond, and an older sister, Virginia. His parents divorced in 1921, after which his father relocated to Cleveland around 1925. The 1930 census indicates that Vera Mae White remarried Fred Hughes, an office building janitor, by the time Albert was nine. He and his siblings lived with their mother and stepfather in two different houses they owned in

Kalamazoo, Michigan. Virginia passed away from bronchopneumonia in May 1932.⁴³ As of 1940, nineteen year-old Albert still lived at home with Fred and Vera Hughes, along with Vera's mother, Fannie White, and three younger wards of the State of Michigan – Geraldine Coleman, Lois Coleman, and Katie May Coleman. Jazz singer Abbey Lincoln (born Anna Marie

⁴¹ *Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1955; *Plain Dealer*, April 15, 1955; *Call & Post*, March 10, 1956; *Plain Dealer*, November 23, 1955; *Plain Dealer*, March 3, 1956; *Plain Dealer*, March 6, 1956.

⁴² *Call & Post*, November 9, 1957; U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2015); James Dillard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, February 16, 1968; Leroy Ballard obituary, *Plain Dealer*, April 27, 1994.

⁴³ Michigan Department of Vital and Health Records, Michigan Death Index, 1971-1996, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 1998); Michigan Deaths and Burials Index, 1867-1995, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2011); 1930 U.S. Census, Kalamazoo, MI, Enumeration District 0017, p. 7B, available through www.ancestry.com; Lansing, MI, Divorce records; *Call & Post*, September 25, 1965.

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Wooldrige) also lived as a ward at Vera's home for a time during Albert's youth. Albert worked as a janitor while enrolled in his first year at Western Michigan College, where he majored in Business Administration; he later attended Wilberforce College, a historically-Black institution founded before the Civil War in southern Ohio, and joined the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. Before moving to Cleveland in 1946, Albert was employed as a social worker in a large community house in Michigan.⁴⁴

Taborn first worked for the city's leading Black real estate salesman, John W. Carmack, and around the same time married Jeannette Tyler, who was highly active in African American women's social groups (Figure #13). By 1947, Al established the Taborn Realty Co., first headquartered at 7807 Cedar Avenue.⁴⁵ During its more than a decade of activity in Cleveland, he ran Taborn Realty largely as a family enterprise, with Jeannette's brother Ralph Tyler serving as a building engineer and Jeannette occasionally modeling in advertisements for homes. At this time the Taborn family lived on Lipton Avenue in Southeast Cleveland, in the vicinity of several Taborn Realty properties.

In February 1948, the first meeting of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) was organized in Detroit, Michigan. It was the first national-scale organizing effort taken up by African American real estate brokers to establish a professional organization, because at the time Whites barred them from joining the National Association of Realtors and even trademarked the term "realtor," forcing African Americans to coin the somewhat awkward term "realist." The Cleveland Real Estate Board would not allow African-American members until 1963.⁴⁶ Therefore, the Cleveland Association of Real Estate Brokers (CAREB) organized as an affiliate organization of NAREB shortly after its inaugural meeting in Detroit. Taborn was a charter member of CAREB and in 1949 served as its president.

That same year, Taborn began to experiment with building houses, releasing an advertisement in the *Call & Post* for a one- or 1.5-story colonial revival house to be constructed on the buyer's property with a \$500 down payment (approximately \$5,300 in 2018 dollars considering inflation). The ad claims that "an exciting new mode of home construction enabled the building of a \$10,000 home for \$7,000" (or \$74,000 in 2018 dollars) and mentioned the home met minimum FHA requirements. Taborn Realty also offered financing, with the only qualification being that the household must earn \$250 or more per month⁴⁷ (Figure #14).

⁴⁴ 1940 U.S. Census, Kalamazoo, MI, Enumeration District 39-27, p. 5B, available through www.ancestry.com; *Plain Dealer*, July 3, 1955; *Call & Post*, November 3, 1951. Al Taborn was elected Keeper of the Records of Cleveland's Kappa Alpha Psi alumni chapter in 1947 and his wife Jeanette remained involved in the Kappa Wives group through the 1960s.

⁴⁵ *Call & Post*, December 28, 1946; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, August 23, 1947. On Carmack, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 153, 186.

⁴⁶ *Call & Post*, October 9, 1948; Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 186-187. On racial exclusion in the real estate profession, see Jeffrey M. Hornstein, *A Nation of Realtors®: A Cultural History of the Twentieth Century American Middle Class* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), esp. 75-79.

⁴⁷ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, July 16, 1949.

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Two years later, the company was growing. Taborn expanded his realty business into Akron, Ohio, though he continued to live and work in Cleveland. In March 1951, Selmer G. Prewitt purchased interest in the Taborn Real Estate Co., changing its name to the Taborn-Prewitt Co. Prewitt was an Arkansas native who moved to Cleveland in 1932 to attend Fenn College (later Cleveland State). The following year, Taborn-Prewitt moved to a new office on East 105th Street in Glenville and Taborn was appointed to Mayor Thomas A. Burke's Council on Housing, indicating the growing significance of African American access to good-quality housing as an important issue.⁴⁸

In February 1952, Taborn was elected president of the newly-formed Cuyahoga County Real Estate Brokers Association, a separate organization from CAREB whose name signaled a look beyond the city to the suburbs as well as expressed more concern with the larger patterns of urban development affecting African Americans. In September of that year, the Cuyahoga County Association organized a luncheon attended by thirty Black brokers at the Hotel Allerton with Richard Hopkins, the special assistant to Mayor Burke in charge of the Cleveland redevelopment program. The purpose of the meeting was for White city officials "to listen to the views of the [Black] real estate men and to help map out a program of Negro participation in the plan." The fear of most members present was that Cedar-Central – and majority-Black East Side neighborhoods more generally – would be first to be redeveloped, a suspicion fed by Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority director Ernest H. Bohn's naming of an appraisal team consisting entirely of members from the Whites-only Cleveland Real Estate Board. Besides getting owners in redevelopment areas fair compensation for their hard-earned homes, the Black organizations present sought to place at least one African American real estate broker in a top executive position as well as multiple appraisers on the ground in these familiar neighborhoods where they did most of their business. Taborn distinguished himself by expressing enthusiasm for redevelopment, so long as Cleveland officials upheld their promise of fair representation throughout the process. Although Hopkins and other members of Burke's administration agreed that the Cuyahoga County Association's demands were reasonable, an official statement announcing the inclusion of African American real estate experts in the so-called "urban rehabilitation" of Cedar-Central and the East Side was not made until February 1953.⁴⁹

While the Cuyahoga County Real Estate Brokers Association took the lead in getting African-Americans involved in city-wide planning and development decisions, its establishment resulted in the creation of two competing associations for Black brokers, potentially weakening the power of an already marginalized group. When the National Urban League held their 1952 annual conference in Cleveland, NAREB president and the country's largest Black builder Walter H. "Chief" Aiken suggested that CAREB join forces with the Cuyahoga Real Estate Brokers Association before his organization's annual conference, which was also scheduled to take place in Cleveland in October of that year.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Call & Post*, March 24, 1951; *Call & Post*, April 19, 1952; *Call & Post*, November 3, 1951. Taborn's Akron operations were managed by W.U. Colvin.

⁴⁹ *Call & Post*, February 16, 1952; *Call & Post*, September 6, 1952; *Call & Post*, February 14, 1953.

⁵⁰ *Call & Post*, September 20, 1952. On Walter Aiken, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 177-182.

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CAREB president L. Roy Terry stated he was “in favor of anything that will place the Negro real estate brokers of the city in a stronger position for their vital work” and expressed his desire to make the 1952 NAREB conference the “biggest thing in Cleveland history.” Taborn, looking beyond the conference, stated that his Cuyahoga organization believed “the whole local picture we face would be bettered materially by a strong unity of our forces” in the face of the pending “tremendous advantages or stern hardships of a vast redevelopment program.” However, attempts to unite the two organizations before the NAREB meeting were unsuccessful, after the memberships of both organizations surprisingly rejected a compromise merger agreement brokered by Aiken. Not until December 1953 did the Cleveland Board of Real Estate Brokers reorganize as a unified body, under the new leadership of Wendell E. Catlin and with a new committee leadership structure. Taborn became one of the six members of the new organization’s finance and research committee in that inaugural year.⁵¹

In 1954, the Cleveland Home Builder’s Association accepted Taborn’s application, thus making him the first Black member of that organization. He attended the National Association of Home Builders’ convention in Chicago, a gathering of over 2,000 delegates of which he was apparently the only African American member present, although other Black builders from around the country participated on a special panel concerning issues around homebuilding for African Americans. A write-up on the panel went on to explain how stereotypes about African American homeowners and neighborhoods were proving false around the country – that new homes were being beautifully maintained by Black homeowners and there was no statistically significant difference in the likelihood of loan delinquency between African American and White borrowers. African American “income has tripled since the pre-war era,” the article went on to say, accurately predicting the homebuilding boom soon to be experienced by upwardly mobile African American families in Cleveland, exactly the clientele served by Taborn.⁵²

In order to “expand their services,” the Taborn-Prewitt Co. split into two real estate companies in December 1953. The Prewitt Realty Co. stayed in the 7807 Cedar Avenue office while the Taborn Realty Co. retained the 821 East 105th Street office. The split appeared to be amicable, with both men wanting to focus on different aspects of real estate development. While Prewitt was more interested in handling sales of residential and commercial lots, Taborn announced that his main concern would be “developing new sources of housing for Negroes in Cleveland” and that he already had plans and ideas for how to make that happen. In fact, in early 1954 Taborn released a statement that he was quitting real estate to exclusively focus on home building, and would leave the management and sales of his remaining inventory to two business associates, Warren Blount and Frank Campbell, who remained at the East 105th Street address. Taborn would move to an office on Carnegie Avenue, and specialize in the building of moderate-cost homes “with down payments as low as \$600,” to be built in the Lee Road and Mount Pleasant areas.⁵³

Taborn dubbed his new home design the “Lorenzo,” using his own middle name. The first Lorenzo built was at 16606 Langly Avenue, south of Miles Avenue and just east of Lee Road in

⁵¹ *Call & Post*, September 20, 1952; *Call & Post*, October 4, 1952; *Call & Post*, December 12, 1953.

⁵² *Call & Post*, June 20, 1953; *Call & Post*, January 30, 1954.

⁵³ *Call & Post*, December 12, 1953; *Call & Post*, April 3, 1954.

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the vicinity of the still-standing Seville Homes (Figure #15). The open house for this model home was on July 4, 1954, and received extensive publicity in the *Call & Post*. True to Taborn's word, Lorenzos offered a three-bedroom brick house for \$11,900 (about \$111,500 in 2018 dollars). Taborn Home Builders partnered with twelve other Black-owned organizations to construct and finance Lorenzos. Architects and engineers for the Lorenzo homes were from Dubin Housing Corporation, a White-owned company that would later go on to build nearly 600 homes for African American families further to the south off Lee Road and Tarkington Avenue. From the beginning, Lorenzos were designed for moderate income families. Taborn sought to create a home that was both beautiful and modern, while affordable for individual families. The large scale production of the Lorenzo, which would further offset the cost of production, hinged on a positive public image. Enthusiasm at the prospect of "mass home building for Negroes in the Lee Road area" was said to be high, with construction financing initially provided by the Black-owned Quincy Savings & Loan; even White-owned banks were relatively cooperative with lending because as a largely undeveloped area, there was less risk of racial controversy. The following winter, a month-long series of articles in the *Call & Post* featured many satisfied Lorenzo homeowners (Figure #16). A Lorenzo could be built in a matter of days, and on January 15, 1955, there were thirty-three homes under construction. Amid the massive success of the Lorenzo homebuilding project, Taborn returned to selling real estate but continued as a builder, advertising his firm as offering a "full home service" able to accommodate any sort of buyer. In 1954 and 1955, Taborn built and sold over 250 new homes. Then in 1956, The Taborn Co. moved to a large new office at 10526 St. Clair Avenue, more fitting for the company's comprehensive services targeted at anyone looking to buy or sell an existing home, build a new or improve an existing home, or even find a rental property. By 1959, the Taborn Company had another model open for viewing on East 176th Street, south of Miles and east of Lee Road in an area promoted as "Lee Heights." As the company's newest residential development, the homes here were designed to be in the \$15,000 to \$30,000 price range – although these houses did not receive the same amount of publicity as the Lorenzo homes did years before, perhaps because Taborn was now a well-established and recognized name in Black real estate.⁵⁴

Al Taborn took on new roles and gained further recognition into the later years of the decade. He was a project manager for the Longwood Project, the first Urban Redevelopment and Renewal plan to be completed in Cleveland, into which the first two families moved in December 1956. Longwood consisted of six buildings with eleven apartment suites in each, with "ample off-street parking, play areas for children and adults, automatic laundry facilities, and incinerator garbage disposal service." The buildings were constructed by the Private Enterprise Redevelopment Corp., in which Taborn was a shareholder. Taborn received national recognition as one of fifty-four recipients of the Blue Ribbon Award for home-building excellence from the *Saturday Evening Post*, which recognized builders that use "the finest building materials and equipment available today." Taborn was the only builder from Cleveland to be recognized in this way (Figure #17). Specifically, Taborn and Associates were awarded for their recent construction of housing on East 178th Street, in "Lee Heights." Then on Memorial Day of 1958, Taborn presented at the inaugural meeting of the Lee Heights Non-Partisan Voters League. The purpose

⁵⁴ *Call & Post*, July 3, 1954; *Call & Post*, January 15, 1955; *Call & Post*, December 8, 1956; *Call & Post*, March 3, 1956; *Call & Post*, May 9, 1959.

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of the league was to address problems of voter registration in the Black community, with a goal to have 3,000 new voters by that November's elections. Two years later, Taborn would run as a Republican in his district to represent them in the Ohio House of Representatives, although he lost the election.⁵⁵

In 1961, Al was once again elected president of CAREB, which during his term would go on to open a school of real estate in their East 88th Street headquarters, with Taborn as its first head administrator. CAREB offered courses for students looking to enter real estate as a profession and for people more casually interested in "making more lucrative real estate investments." Also in 1961, Taborn was a featured speaker on radio and television programs that focused on Cleveland planning and real estate issues. He was frequently approached to speak on the impact of Urban Renewal on Black neighborhoods and the practice of "blockbusting" – an aggressive sales tactic in which real estate agents played on White homeowners' racial fears to generate high-volume turnover at discount prices, so that the homes could be sold to Black buyers at a markup. During these engagements Taborn appeared alongside the Urban League's fair housing specialist K.C. Jones and Glenville Councilman Leo Jackson who was fighting deteriorating living conditions in that neighborhood.⁵⁶

The last advertisement for Taborn's real estate services ran in the *Call & Post* in 1962, with his office now located at 10547 Euclid Avenue. Albert and Jeanette Taborn subsequently left Cleveland for Los Angeles in an attempt to duplicate his success at building housing for Black families there, but unfortunately he was unable to break into that market. By 1971, Al and Jeanette had relocated to Paw-Paw, Michigan, where his uncle's widow lived, and for the remainder of his life, Al bought, sold, and rented properties in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He retained ownership of Taborn Realty, always working for himself until his death on February 5, 1994.⁵⁷ In Cleveland and Kalamazoo, Albert Taborn left a legacy of providing quality new homes for Black homeowners that warrants recognition in America both today and into the future.

William Errol "Woody" Woodridge

William E. Woodridge was active as a builder, contractor, and real estate agent in the Lee-Harvard area beginning in 1955, first with Taborn & Company Builders and then with his own firm, Engineering Enterprises and Realty, from 1958 to 1963, during which time he built several of his distinctive yellow brick ranches in the Myrtle-Highview Historic District. He built several houses in the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood, all relatively large, yellow brick ranches.

Woodridge was born on August 2, 1925, in Risco, Missouri. He earned a Bachelor's degree in engineering from the historically-Black Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, and then went on to work as an engineering aide at the U.S. Finance Center in Saint Louis for two years, and with the Universal Match Company as an engineer for two years. As a side pursuit,

⁵⁵ *Call & Post*, December 29, 1956; *Call & Post*, May 17, 1958; *Call & Post*, June 7, 1958; *Call & Post*, April 30, 1960.

⁵⁶ *Call & Post*, April 15, 1961; *Call & Post*, November 11, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, May 25, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, August 29, 1961; *Plain Dealer*, September 17, 1961.

⁵⁷ *Call & Post*, December 29, 1962; *Call & Post*, August 28, 1971; Michigan Deaths and Burials Index, 1867-1995, www.ancestry.com.

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Woodridge also sold real estate during his time in Missouri. In 1952, he married Geraldine Juanita Sanders in Kansas City, though they separated before having children and before Woodridge made his move to Cleveland.⁵⁸

Woodridge was hired as an engineer for the Cleveland-based Taborn & Co. Builders in 1955 (Figure #18). His tasks included “designing, supervising, and expediting the construction of homes in the rapidly-expanding Taborn operations in Mt. Pleasant.” In 1955, Woodridge married Clara A. White in Cook County, Illinois. They lived on East 174th Street in a growing area of new homes that Taborn & Co. was building for Black middle class families south of Miles Avenue and east of Lee Road. The couple belonged to St. Andrews Episcopal Church, a prestigious congregation founded in 1890 and located in Cedar-Central, home to many of Cleveland’s historic Black institutions. William and Clara had one son, Harold, who became the first African-American child to attend kindergarten at the Hawkins School and who later attended Washington University in Saint Louis, in his father’s home state.⁵⁹

Engineering Enterprises and Realty (EE&R) was Woodridge’s first and only known home-building company, initially having headquarters at 13205 Union Avenue in Mount Pleasant. The company advertised their services to African-Americans through the *Call & Post*. One of the earliest advertisements for EE&R building and real estate services, appearing in 1958, was for a property at 16401 Highview Avenue near the city’s far southeastern border (Figure #19). Incorporating an illustration of the front façade and a first floor plan, the asking price for this three-bedroom ranch with large picture window and garage was \$15,000 (around \$130,000 today). The ad stated further that the company was offering for sale “several choice lots in the

Mt. Pleasant-Miles Avenue-Lee Road Vicinity,” though EE&R was also willing to build “your ranch home to your specifications on your own lot.” Another 1958 ad additionally praised the skills of Woodridge’s firm, stating it handled “the entire cycle of home building to home-ownership.” The company specialized in custom-built single-family homes, erecting them not just on Cleveland’s East Side, but also in the city’s sole Black West Side enclave, as well as in a few suburbs to which African Americans were just beginning to gain access. Features in EE&R-designed homes included built-in fireplaces, acoustical ceilings, exposed beams, full basements, multi-colored walls, and kitchens with gas and electrical appliance hookups. By August of that same year, EE&R had completed ten new homes, had five more under construction, and had “plans to start about 15 more new homes before the years’ end.” Additional model homes – which were also available for purchase – were located at 11921 Guardian Avenue, 3764 East 153rd Street, 4808 East 173rd Street, and 16315 Myrtle Avenue.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Woodridge obituary, *Plain Dealer*, November 11, 2007; *Call & Post*, March 5, 1955; Missouri Marriage Records 1805-2002, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2007).

⁵⁹ *Call & Post*, March 5, 1955; Illinois Marriage Index, 1930-1960, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2008); *Call & Post*, January 7, 1978.

⁶⁰ *Call & Post*, August 9, 1958; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, February 15, 1958. Homes built by Engineering Enterprises & Realty in the proposed Myrtle-Highview National Register Historic district are 16315 Myrtle Avenue, 16309 Myrtle Avenue, 16301 Myrtle Avenue, 16401 Highview Drive, 16319 Highview Drive, and 16308 Highview Drive.

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An advertisement in an August 1958 issue of the *Call & Post* advertised three more properties being sold by EE&R. The first property on East 137th Street in Mount Pleasant was a “six room single, [with] aluminum siding, storms, screens, full basement, new hot water tank, beautiful fireplace, wall-to-wall carpeting, garage, [and] tiled recreation room.” The second house on East 173rd Street in Lee-Miles was a one-year-old, three-bedroom ranch with a tile kitchen and bath and an asking price of \$16,500. The third property was a six-year-old three bedroom, two bath house also on East 173rd Street. This last one came with a “basement, 1½ car garage, GE refrigerator, Tappan gas range, Washer, Dryer, acoustical tile ceiling in the living and dining area.”⁶¹ Because the six-year-old property was built before Woodridge relocated to the Cleveland area, this offering indicates that his firm did not deal exclusively in new construction, but also acquired relatively new houses built by other firms, in this case likely the Taborn Co.

In 1960, EE&R moved to an office at 10616 Euclid Avenue. This office was located in the University Circle Building, on which Woodridge served as the architect on a \$250,000 modernization completed that same year. In addition to Woodridge’s firm, the building housed McGhee & Co., founded by Norman L. McGhee in 1952 and one of just two Black-owned stock brokerage firms in the country at the time.⁶² After relocating offices, EE&R advertised “2 New Colonial Houses” in the “Shaker School District,” most likely off Milverton Road within the Cleveland City limits, in the Ludlow neighborhood which still had some vacant lots available.⁶³ Woodridge did not continue advertising in the *Call & Post* after May 1960, and sometime around 1962 or 1963 stopped all building and real estate activity, although he remained in Cleveland.

In his later life, Woodridge took up additional pursuits. The 1965 City Directory indicates that by then he was living with his family at 2993 Ludlow Road in Shaker Heights, and working as a contractor for an unspecified company. In 1974, Woodridge became the owner of Pat’s Lounge, a bar located in the Jud-Lee Shopping Plaza (4145 Lee Road). He also found a new way to share his skills as a teacher in the Cleveland Public Schools, as a faculty member responsible for teaching drafting at Max S. Hayes Vocational High School on the West Side.⁶⁴ In 1975, William and his wife Clara divorced. He married Janice E. Rawls in 1977, and they remained married until his death in Cleveland on November 3, 2007.⁶⁵

Rufus Ranaldson

⁶¹ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, August 30, 1958.

⁶² Advertisement, *Call & Post*, May 7, 1960; *Plain Dealer*, July 18, 1960; “McGhee, Norman L. Sr.,” Encyclopedia of Cleveland History, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/m/mcghee-norman-l-sr>. McGhee had earlier served as general counsel for Herbert Chauncey’s People’s Realty Co. and Empire Savings & Loan, which acquired the Bella Vista allotment in 1920.

⁶³ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, May 7, 1960.

⁶⁴ *Cleveland City Directory* (1965, 1974), available through www.ancestry.com; *Max S. Hayes Vocational School Yearbook* (1974), pp. 24-25, and *Max S. Hayes Vocational School Yearbook* (1975), p. 56, in Cleveland School Memories, Cleveland Public Library Digital Collections, <https://cdm16014.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15034coll1>.

⁶⁵ Ohio Divorce Index, 1962-1963, 1967-1971 and 1973-2007, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); *Call & Post*, March 8, 1975; Ohio Marriage Index, 1970 and 1972-2007 www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010); Woodridge obituary, *Plain Dealer*, November 11, 2007.

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Rufus Ranaldson was born into a large family on October 22, 1922, in Tunnel Spring, Alabama, and later moved to Pensacola, Florida, where he attended three years at Booker T. Washington High School. Ranaldson was working as a bellman at the San Carlos Hotel in Pensacola when, in November 1942, he enlisted as a Private in the U.S. Army, serving for the duration of World War II plus six months. After the war, Ranaldson moved North like many other African Americans in the Great Migration. In 1950, he married Imogene Arnold in Cleveland, and their first son was born later that year. During his initial years in town, Ranaldson worked for the U.S. Post Office and attended the Cleveland School of Meat Cutting – a skill that would serve him well when he opened a grocery store at 868 East 105th Street in early 1950. For a time, the young Ranaldson family lived in the Harvard Apartments at 866 East 105th Street, right next door.⁶⁶

The *Call & Post* described Ranaldson’s new venture as “one of the best known food shops in the Glenville section.” He soon joined with ten other Black Cleveland grocers to form Atomic Foods, a chain of grocery stores “conceived as the best means of pooling the buying power and selling efficiency of the Negro food merchant.” The strategy here, called the “ATOMIC Plan,” involved the eleven stores pooling their money to purchase products for all the partner stores at bulk rates, thereby enabling them to offer better-quality products for lower prices. This method of pooling capital to buy bulk goods at wholesale prices would seem to have inspired the collaborative approach to homebuilding that Ranaldson later deployed, when his career in real estate took off. And even while managing his grocery store, he was already thinking of his next career move, as he enrolled in real estate and property management courses at the city’s Griswold Institute. Ranaldson and two other Black Griswold graduates passed the Ohio State Real Estate Board Exam in November 1951.⁶⁷ He would soon go on to partner with one of them, James Smith, in forming a real estate brokerage.

In 1952, Ranaldson and Smith joined with nine other African American investors to purchase the Quincy Savings & Loan Company, initially founded by Czech immigrants in 1919. Located at 8309 Quincy Avenue, this “thrift” focused on making loans to prospective homeowners, and represented a revival of the tradition of Black-owned banks not seen since the collapse of Herbert Chauncey’s Empire Savings & Loan during the 1930s Great Depression. The effort to purchase the previously White-owned bank was led by local insurance broker M. C. Clarke, and among the other investors in the venture were prominent Lee-Harvard real estate developers and contractors Albert Taborn, James M. Dillard, and Tillman Carr. Within the first year under its new ownership, Quincy was approved for insurance by the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation and admitted to the Federal Home Loan Banking System, meaning that individual savings accounts opened there were insured against loss up to \$10,000. Though not an advertisement, one article in the *Call & Post* urged its readership to save at Quincy, stating “the amount of future capital to thus be made available to Cleveland Negroes is directly dependent on

⁶⁶ 1920 U.S. Census, Tunnel Spring, Monroe County, AL, Enumeration District 142, pp. 17A-17B, available through www.ancestry.com; U.S. World War II Draft Cards, 1940-1947, www.ancestry.com (Lehi, UT, 2011); *Call & Post*, April 21, 1951; U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2005); Ohio County Marriage Records, 1774-1993, www.ancestry.com, (Lehi, UT, 2016); *Cleveland City Directory* (1951); *Cleveland City Directory* (1955), available through www.ancestry.com.

⁶⁷ *Call & Post*, April 21, 1951; *Call & Post*, November 24, 1951.

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the amount of new savings deposits” and “the more we save . . . the more money becomes available to ourselves, our friends, and neighbors, for the unrestricted purchase of homes so badly needed in a community which cannot boast a proud record in the matter of encouraging Negro ownership.” Within five years, Quincy’s assets exceeded \$3 million, as it focused on underwriting purchases that mainstream, White-owned banks refused to consider. Such alternative sources of financing were especially important considering that the typical loan arrangement available to many African Americans at the time was the installment land contract – in which the buyer built no equity until the contract was paid in full, and creditors could seize the property if so much as one single payment was missed.⁶⁸

Smith and Ranaldson worked together as realists under the name Ranaldson and Smith Realty starting in 1952, with offices initially located at 923 Parkwood Drive in Glenville. While starting out by selling existing properties to Black customers, they soon switched to selling new homes through their exclusive partnership with the Carr & Dillard Construction Company. In seeking buyers for these houses, one *Call & Post* article described their “broad vision” of African American homeowners being able to reduce the amount of time they commuted to work, since many worked in the Chevrolet, Ford, and General Motors plants on Cleveland’s East Side. The partners set their sights on the “vast, untouched areas” that still characterized the southern end of Lee Road during the 1950s, one of the few places in the city where African Americans could build new housing with relative ease. In addition to Carr & Dillard’s finished houses, Ranaldson and Smith also sold lots upon which middle-income families could later build homes. Advertisements claimed “you can build today for prices no higher than those being asked for older homes in greater Cleveland.” In sum, Ranaldson and Smith handled the real estate transactions, while Carr & Dillard provided the construction expertise⁶⁹ (Figure #20).

In October 1952, Ranaldson and Smith moved their operations into the new headquarters of Carr & Dillard, just south of the major intersection at Miles Road and highly visible to the public because many upwardly-mobile Black families were beginning to build houses in the surrounding area. According to the *Call & Post*, the modern office building set a precedent on Lee Road as “the first Negro company to occupy its own building.” Ranaldson and Smith were described as “sole agents” for the many new Carr & Dillard homes going up in the vicinity. Despite this seemingly promising partnership, however, advertisements for Ranaldson and Smith ceased by the end of 1952, and the two men would not work together again until years later under a different name. Instead, Ranaldson struck out on his own and in early 1953 founded Economy Homes and Builders, later the Economy Realty Company. This venture proved quite successful as Ranaldson continued operating under this name into the 1970s.⁷⁰

Ranaldson’s early success with Economy Realty can be partially attributed to his involvement with The Cleveland Co-Operative Homes program. This initiative began in 1954 and involved a partnership between Ranaldson’s Economy Realty Co., William O. Walker with the *Call & Post*,

⁶⁸ *Call & Post*, December 13, 1952; *Call & Post*, November 22, 1952; *Call & Post*, October 24, 1953. For more on Quincy Savings & Loan and land contracts, see Michney, *Surrogate Suburbs*, 181-185.

⁶⁹ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952.

⁷⁰ *Call & Post*, September 27, 1952; *Cleveland City Directory* (1955, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1968, 1970-71, 1972, 1977), available through www.ancestry.com.

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and M.C. Clark with the Black-owned Dunbar Life Insurance Co. It was an effort to make home-owning more accessible to African Americans and the organizers held a number of promotional events at the historic Black YMCA branch on Cedar Avenue.

Ranaldson had operated a grocery store in Glenville, and he had organized all the independent Black grocers to join together and promote themselves as the Atomic Food Chain, helping each of them cross promote and compete with the big chains. Adapting this concept into real estate, in 1954, he started promoting the idea of “Cooperative Building.” If a group of African American homebuyers built in one area and pooled their resources, they together could be like a single developer and bring the costs down for everyone. All of the basements would be dug at one time, foundations poured at one time, plumbing and electrical done, etc. helping each of them get work done for less money. This is how he was able to facilitate the development of Kollin Avenue in 1957. The proposed strategy was to build entire neighborhoods at once, utilizing economies of scale in order to bring down the cost of building materials – a serious consideration because Black companies generally had greater difficulties accessing credit to buy supplies in bulk than White-owned ones. The cooperative or “group building” approach had the support of DeHart Hubbard, one of the Federal Housing Administration’s Race Relations Advisers at the time. The method had been previously tested in Warren, Ohio, as well as a few other low-income communities in Ohio, and had actually been outlined by the federal government under the terms of the 1954 Housing Act.⁷¹

The Cleveland Co-Operative Model Homes, later called the Inland Homes, were prefabricated houses designed to be assembled quickly. Most had three bedrooms and cost between \$13,500 and \$15,000, with the higher price point including a full finished basement. The lowered lot and materials prices, along with the Veterans Administration’s backing of reduced-cost mortgages, enabled people to purchase homes with a down payment of about \$1,500 (around \$14,000 in today’s dollars). Provided that enough veterans bought in the proposed new developments, the favorable interest rate and monthly financing provided to GI’s for their service was also promised to buyers not otherwise eligible for GI Bill benefits. The Co-Operative’s model home is located at the corner of Glen Park and Lee Roads and was unique for two reasons – it was the first new street to be constructed for primarily African American occupancy, and early buyers into the new development on Glen Park included both Black and White Clevelanders.⁷² Economy Realty and Builders continued as a successful business for at least the next twenty years. Following his involvement in the Glen Park project, Ranaldson announced in July 1957 that his company was opening a new development along Kollin Avenue, even further south off Lee Road near the city’s border with Maple Heights (Figure #21). Houses in the new development were three-bedroom ranch homes, priced between \$15,900 and \$17,500. All the homes featured full basements, all-copper plumbing, and forced-air gas furnaces, and Economy Realty and Builders advertised that a home could be occupant-ready in 90 days. By 1961, Ranaldson had moved his own family to 16801 Kollin Avenue – at which time he apparently aspired to run for political office because he was collecting petition signatures to represent Ward 30 in City Council that same year. In 1965, Ranaldson signed up with Fair Housing Associates, a

⁷¹ *Call & Post*, September 11, 1954; *Call & Post*, September 4, 1954.

⁷² *Call & Post*, September 4, 1954.

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cooperative that enabled participating real estate brokers to share their listings, thereby reaching a wider pool of potential buyers.⁷³ Economy Realty Company continued in business through the 1980s, although advertisements for their services in the *Call and Post* (and listings with Fair Housing Associates) were discontinued after 1965. Whether Rufus Ranaldson himself continued operating Economy Realty himself or passed the company on to an associate or one of his children is unknown.

Rufus Ranaldson passed away on May 24, 2008, in Cleveland, Ohio.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The Myrtle-Highview Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A for its association with African American suburbanization and several African American contractor-developers who built houses in this area during the mid-20th Century—specifically 1949-1967. The district is also being nominated under Criterion C as an example of a post-World War II suburban development in greater Cleveland area. Arthur Bussey, a southern migrant trained as a mason, personally funded roads and sewers to make his development of a high-class neighborhood of all brick homes a reality for himself and others. He was joined in his efforts by other developers—William Woodridge and Rufus Ranaldson—who built homes in Myrtle-Highview. Woodridge and Ranaldson had worked for Albert Taborn and Carr & Dillard, respectively—other African American developers working in the surrounding larger neighborhood at the same time.

Myrtle-Highview Historic District is a significant example of mid-20th century housing reflecting African American settlement patterns in the greater Cleveland area. The district reflects the combined work of several notable African American builders working in Cleveland. In comparison to the Myrtle-Highview neighborhood, the Carr & Dillard development began on E. 162nd Street in 1949 with brick homes the principals built for themselves. They would go on to build frame houses along Clearview, Bryce and Elberta, where older existing houses already stood. Albert Taborn's first Lorenzo and Sportsmen homes were also built among pre-existing houses on Langley Avenue in 1954, just south of the railroad tracks and some associated industrial development on Miles Avenue. Rufus Ranaldson's most complete collection of "cooperative" houses on Kollin Avenue—built in 1957-- have a consistency of design. There are a few brick houses among the frame houses, but the street itself dead-ends at a gate that accesses a large land mass along the Mill Creek. Myrtle-Highview has the most bucolic setting and the most consistent and highest quality housing from all of these developments.

The Myrtle-Highview neighborhood reflects a unique time and place—the decades following the Second World War when Cleveland industries were at their greatest and jobs were plentiful. An African American middle class was growing, but was constrained by racial segregation and discrimination. Because Miles Heights Village had been integrated in the early decades of the

⁷³ Advertisement, *Call & Post*, July 20, 1957; *Cleveland City Directory* (1961); *Call & Post*, August 26, 1961; Advertisement, *Call & Post*, October 23, 1965.

⁷⁴ U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014, www.ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2014).

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20th century, a nucleus of an African American community existed in a place where land was still available for development. Thus grew a “Suburb in the City.”

The district stands out for its overall brick construction and distinct house plans and designs associated with the specific African American builders represented. The brick housing stock, ranging from examples of modest 1940s period revival designs to several variations and interpretations of the ranch type and plan, significantly contributes to an understanding of the work of mid-century African American home-builders and illustrates their individual navigation of postwar construction techniques, real estate practices, and housing development to make home ownership possible for other African Americans.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 8

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 452530 | Northing: 4586216 |
| 2. Zone: 17 | Easting: 452739 | Northing: 4586216 |
| 3. Zone: 17 | Easting: 452739 | Northing: 4586034 |
| 4. Zone: 17 | Easting: 452530 | Northing: 4586034 |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Myrtle-Highview Historic District consists of the following Cuyahoga County real estate parcels:

14304001, 14304002, 14304003, 14304004, 14304005, 14304006, 14304007, 14304008, 14304009, 14304010, 14304011, 14304012, 14304013, 14304014, 14304015, 14304016, 14303026, 14303027, 14303028, 14303029, 14303030, 14303031, 14303032, 14303033, 14303034, 14303035, 14303036, 14303037, 14303038, 14303039, 14303040, 14303041, 14303042, 14303043, 14303044, 14303045, 14303046, 14303047, 14303048, 14303049, 14303050, 14303051, 14303052, 14303053, 14303054, 14303055, 14303056, 14303057, 14303058, 14303059, 14303065.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was chosen since it is the historic boundary of the neighborhood as platted by The Reliance Company as the Homewood Gardens development.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael Fleenor, Director of Preservation Services, Cleveland Restoration Society; Dr. Todd Michney, visiting assistant professor in the School of History and Sociology at the Georgia Institute of Technology; Carolyn Gimbal, Cornell University Intern, CRS.

organization: Cleveland Restoration Society

street & number: 3751 Prospect Avenue

city or town: Cleveland state: OH zip code: 44115

e-mail: mfleenor@clevelandrestoration.org

telephone: 216-426-3109

date: January 31, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Myrtle-Highview Historic District
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- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Myrtle-Highview Historic District

City or Vicinity: Cleveland

County: Cuyahoga

State: OH

Photographer: Michael Fleenor

Date Photographed: April 16, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 36. Highview Drive, west of Lee Road, looking west.
- 2 of 36. Myrtle Avenue, near intersection with Highview Drive, looking east.
- 3 of 36. Myrtle Avenue, west of Lee Road, looking southwest.
- 4 of 36. 16200 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing south.
- 5 of 36. 16201 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing northeast.
- 6 of 36. 16204 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing southeast.
- 7 of 36. 16216 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing southwest.
- 8 of 36. 16217 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing north.
- 9 of 36. 16300 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing south.
- 10 of 36. 16301 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing northwest.
- 11 of 36. 16304 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing southeast.

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- 12 of 36. 16309 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing northeast.
- 13 of 36. 16312 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing southeast.
- 14 of 36. 16315 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing northwest.
- 15 of 36. 16318 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing south.
- 16 of 36. 16321 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing north.
- 17 of 36. 16400 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing southeast.
- 18 of 36. 16405 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing north.
- 19 of 36. 16408 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing south.
- 20 of 36. 16409 Myrtle Avenue, camera facing northeast.
- 21 of 36. 16209 Highview Drive, camera facing north.
- 22 of 36. 16217 Highview Drive, camera facing northwest.
- 23 of 36. 16221 Highview Drive, camera facing northwest.
- 24 of 36. 16307 Highview Drive, camera facing northwest.
- 25 of 36. 16308 Highview Drive, camera facing southwest.
- 26 of 36. 16312 Highview Drive, camera facing southwest.
- 27 of 36. 16313 Highview Drive, camera facing northeast.
- 28 of 36. 16316 Highview Drive, camera facing southwest.
- 29 of 36. 16319 Highview Drive, camera facing northwest.
- 30 of 36. 16320 Highview Drive, camera facing southwest.
- 31 of 36. 16324 Highview Drive, camera facing southwest.
- 32 of 36. 16400 Highview Drive, camera facing southeast.
- 33 of 36. 16401 Highview Drive, camera facing northeast.
- 34 of 36. 16404 Highview Drive, camera facing southeast.
- 35 of 36. 16407 Highview Drive, camera facing northwest.
- 36 of 36. 16408 Highview Drive, camera facing south.

FIGURES:

Figure 1: Plat Map for Reliance Companies Proposed Homestead Garden Subdivision. Cuyahoga County Maps, Book 27, 1927-1942.

Figure 2: Homestead Gardens in relation to larger neighborhood.

Figure 3: Mr. Arthur Bussey, 1972.

Figure 4: Myrtle Avenue, showing Arthur & Emma Bussey's home to the far left, 1959. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

Figure 5: Backyards of 16301 Myrtle Avenue and 16309 Myrtle Avenue, showing coordinated landscaping, ca. 1970s. Mrs. Francis Walker.

Figure 6: Miles Heights Village Hall, nd; Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

Figure 7: Cedar-Central Neighborhood, 1953; These houses were demolished as part of slum clearance for the construction of the Cedar-Central Apartments Extension. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

Figure 8: Bussey Ad, Cleveland *Call & Post*, April 7, 1956.

Figure 9: Bussey Ad, Cleveland *Call & Post*, June 8, 1957.

Figure 10: Emmanuel Baptist Church, n.d. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

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- Figure 11: Arthur Bussey Tribute. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 15, 1972.
Figure 12: *Call & Post* article about Carr & Dillard, February 15, 1952.
Figure 13: Albert and Jeanette Taborn, 1940s. Courtesy of Karen Taborn.
Figure 14: *Call & Post*, June 26, 1954.
Figure 15: 16606 Langley Avenue. The original "Lorenzo" model home, September 14, 1954. Cleveland Public Library Photographic Collection.
Figure 16: *Call & Post* article about Perkins family's new home constructed by Albert Taborn, January 22, 1955.
Figure 17: Albert Taborn receives national citation from *Saturday Evening Post*, 1959. Courtesy of Karen Taborn.
Figure 18: *Call & Post* article about William Woodridge joining the Albert Taborn Company, March 5, 1955.
Figure 19: *Call & Post* ad featuring 16401 Highview Drive, February 15, 1958.
Figure 20: *Call & Post* ad for Ranaldson & Smith, September 27, 1952.
Figure 21: *Call & Post* ad featuring Ranaldson development on Kollin Avenue, September 27, 1957.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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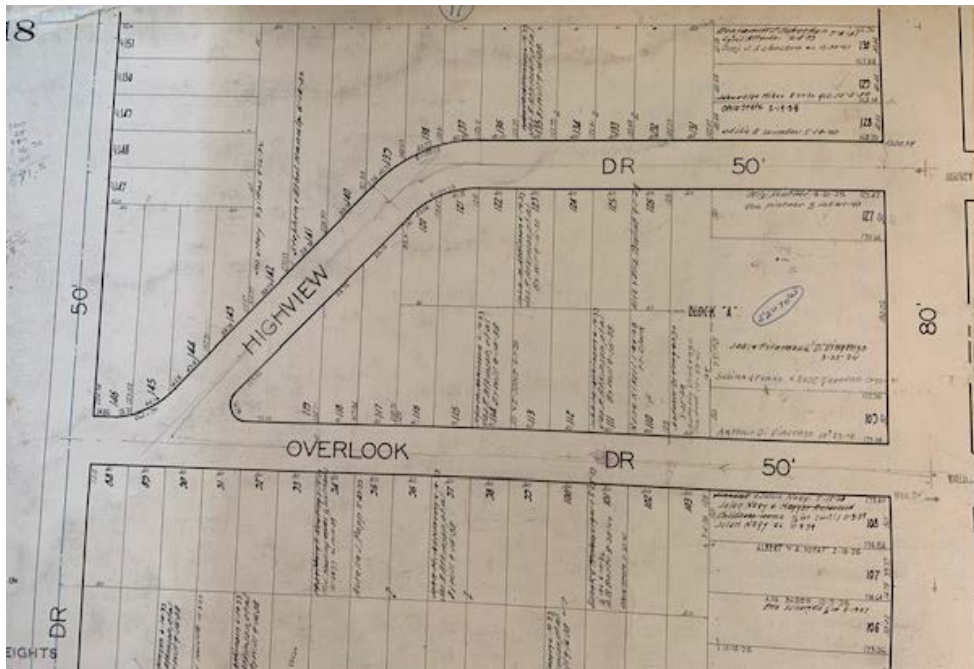


Figure 1: Plat Map for Reliance Companies Proposed Homestead Garden Subdivision. Cuyahoga County Maps, Book 27, 1927-1942. The name Overlook Drive was changed to Myrtle Avenue.

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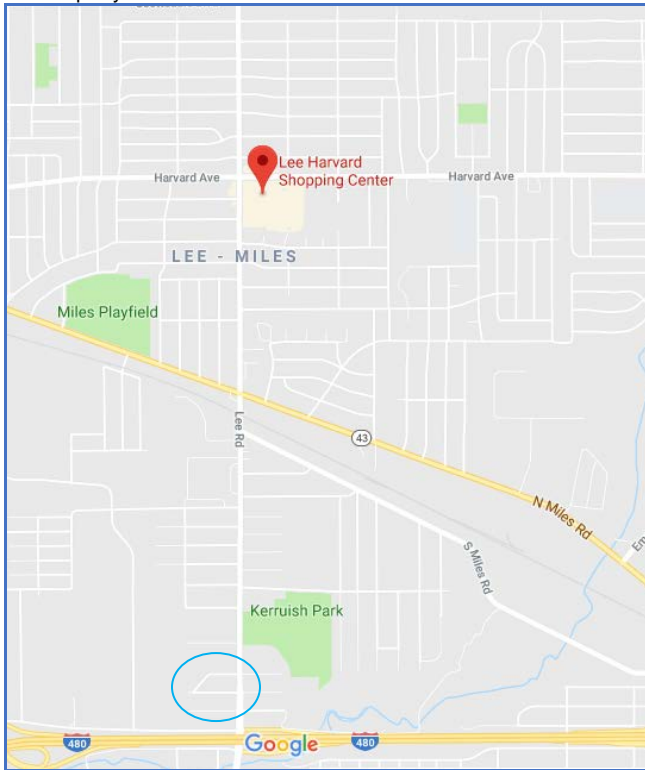


Figure 2: Homestead Gardens in relation to larger neighborhood.

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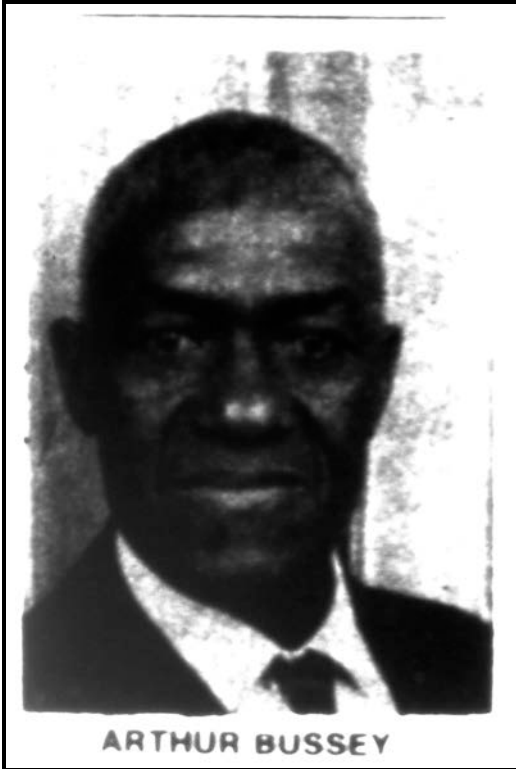


Figure 3: Mr. Arthur Bussey, Call & Post 2-28-72.

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Figure 4: Myrtle Avenue, showing Arthur & Emma Bussey's home to the far left, 1959. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

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Figure 5: Backyards of 16301 Myrtle Avenue and 16309 Myrtle Avenue, showing coordinated landscaping, ca. 1970s. Mrs. Francis Walker.

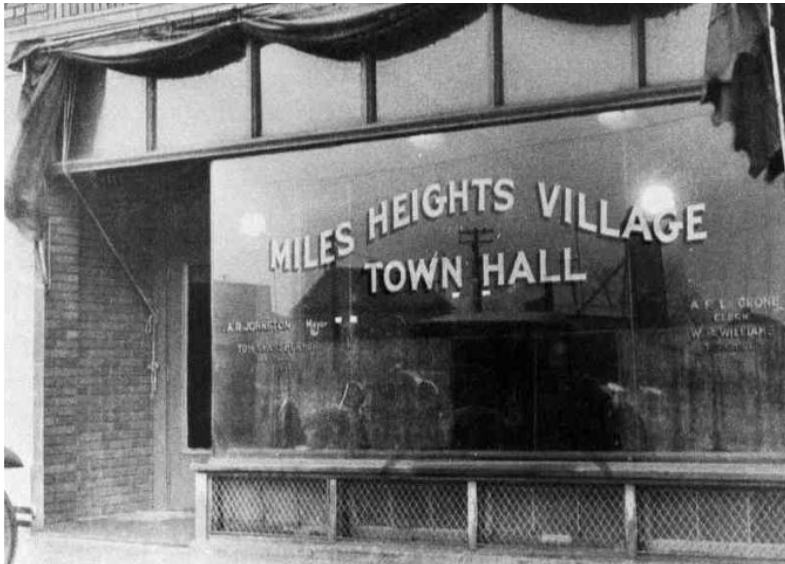


Figure 6: Miles Heights Village Hall, nd; Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

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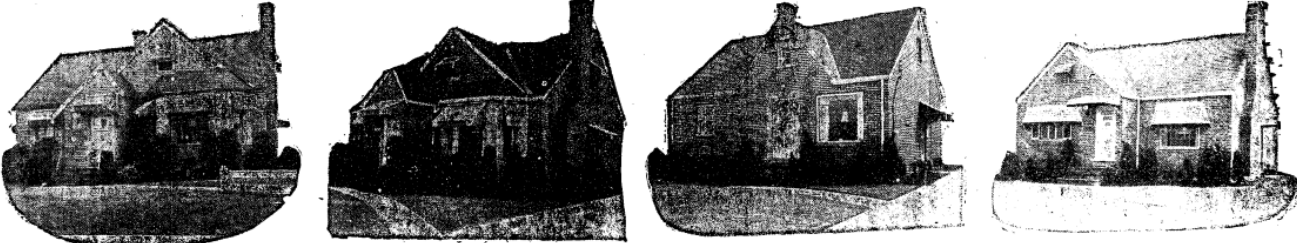


Figure 7: Cedar-Central Neighborhood, 1953; These houses were demolished as part of slum clearance for the construction of the Cedar-Central Apartments Extension. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.

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Do You Want A Better Home? **Come On Out To Highview .. A New Street**
Now Under Construction On The East Side



The Arthur Bussey Company will build for you on Highview Ave., an entirely new, extremely beautiful home for as little as \$16,000, and up. The homes shown above were built by Arthur Bussey on Myrtle Ave., and all are sold and occupied. They are photographed here to illustrate the work of Arthur Bussey. Above, four homes already landscaped. Below, at left, the most recently completed of the Myrtle Ave. houses.

PRICES — \$16,000 and up
FHA and G. I. TERMS

Every Home Custom Built With 3 Bedrooms
The ARTHUR BUSSEY Company

Forty Years Experience In Better Building—Constructor Of Emmanuel Baptist Church And Hundreds Of Homes; Pioneer Of The Beautiful Home Developments On Highview And Myrtle Aves.

CALL LU.1-2498 For Appointment: 6 to 9 P.M.
Highview Is Four Blocks North Of McCracken Rd., West Of Lee Rd.

Brick Homes ONLY
Full Basements With All Modern Conveniences

Figure 8: Bussey Ad, Cleveland *Call & Post*, April 7, 1956.



LOOK BRICK 2 & 3 BEDROOM BUNGALOW
With all modern Conveniences at Highview Drive, four streets north of McCracken west off Lee Rd.

PRICES FROM
\$17,500 up

ARTHUR BUSSEY
BUILDER
CALL FOR APPOINTMENT **LU 1-2498**

Figure 9: Bussey Ad, Cleveland *Call & Post*, June 8, 1957.

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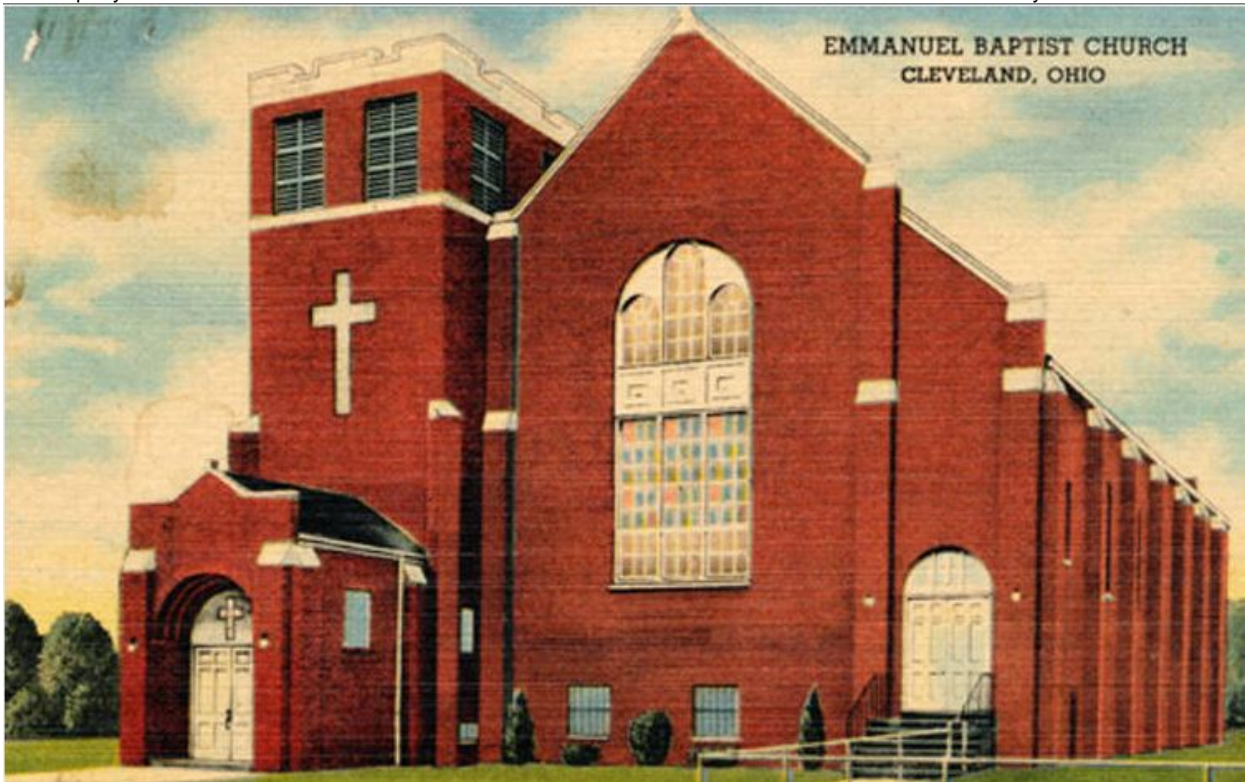


Figure 10: Emmanuel Baptist Church, n.d. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University.



Figure 11: Arthur Bussey Tribute. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 15, 1972.

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CLIVELAND CALL AND POST SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1952

Busy Building Concern Tackles Shortage Of Negro Housing

Bold Program of Building Will Open New Areas

A Bold Program of Building Will Open New Areas



The Carr and Dillard Story:
Vision and Foresight Spur Builders' Unity

Of all the things that have been done in Cleveland's great housing field, perhaps the most dramatic was the story of the Carr and Dillard story, the vision and foresight of two men who built up the Carr and Dillard Construction Company.

The Carr and Dillard story is a story of vision and foresight. It is a story of two men who saw the need for housing for the Negro population in Cleveland and who set out to build it. Their vision and foresight were the driving force behind the Carr and Dillard Construction Company, which has built some of the finest housing in Cleveland.

The Carr and Dillard story is a story of vision and foresight. It is a story of two men who saw the need for housing for the Negro population in Cleveland and who set out to build it. Their vision and foresight were the driving force behind the Carr and Dillard Construction Company, which has built some of the finest housing in Cleveland.

New Headquarters Of Carr - Dillard

The Carr and Dillard Construction Company has moved its headquarters to a new building at 1234 East 12th Street. The new building is a modern, two-story structure with a large office space and a parking lot. The building is a testament to the company's growth and success.

Unusual Men On Company Board

The Carr and Dillard Construction Company has a board of directors consisting of eight members. The board is composed of men from various backgrounds and professions, including business, law, and education. The board's diverse composition is a reflection of the company's commitment to serving the community.

 WILLIAM CARR PRESIDENT	 LOREN DILLARD VICE PRESIDENT	 WILLIAM DILLARD VICE PRESIDENT	 LOUIS DILLARD SECRETARY
 JOHN DILLARD DIRECTOR	 ROBERT DILLARD DIRECTOR	 ARCHIE DILLARD DIRECTOR	 LOUIS DILLARD DIRECTOR
 JOHN DILLARD DIRECTOR	 JOHN DILLARD DIRECTOR	 JOHN DILLARD DIRECTOR	 JOHN DILLARD DIRECTOR

OWN A NEW HOME!

Residential & Smith Realty

Figure 12: Call & Post article about Carr & Dillard, February 15, 1952.

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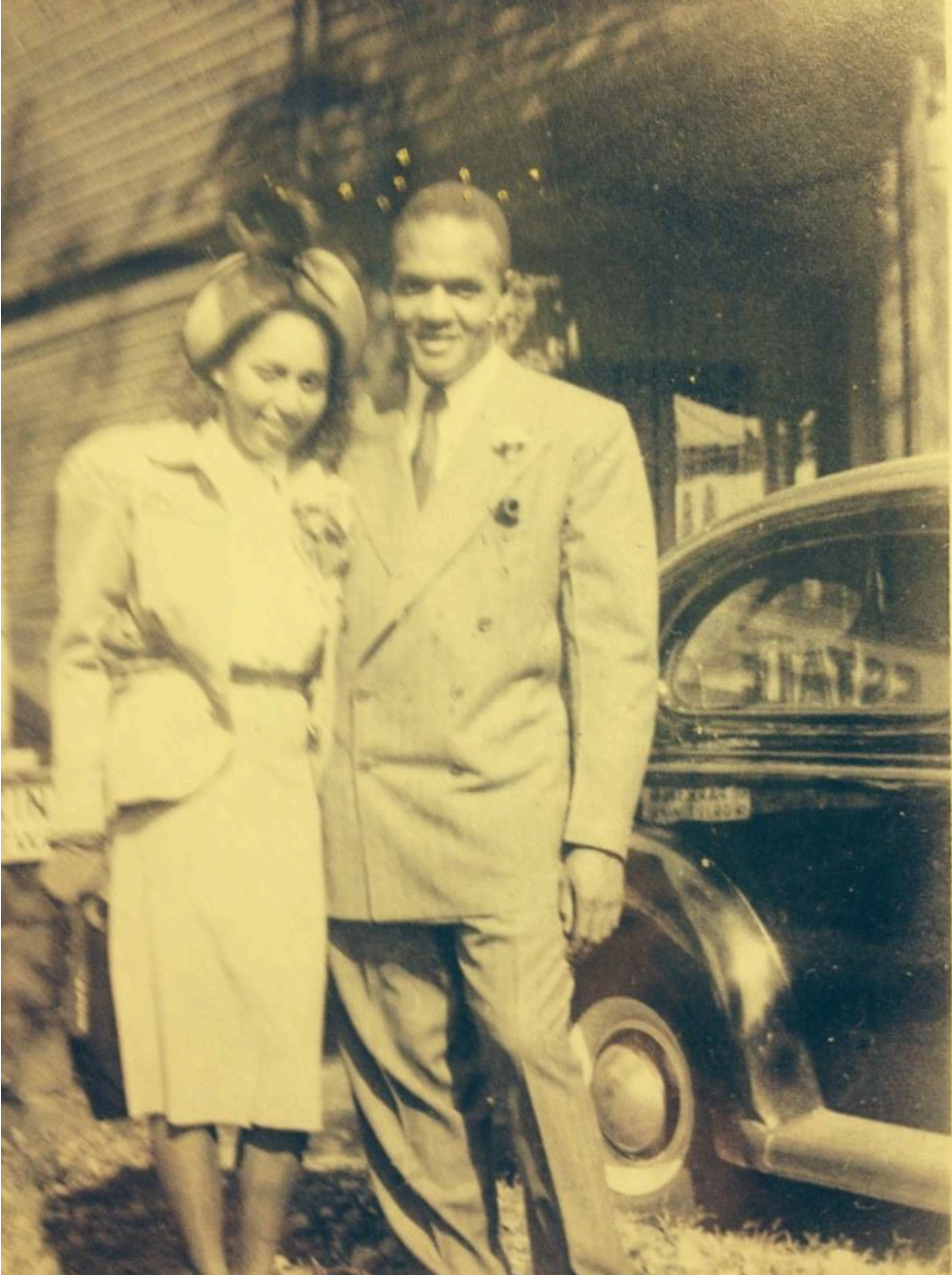


Figure 13: Albert and Jeanette Taborn, 1940s. Courtesy of Karen Taborn.

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**NO DOWN PAYMENT
To Veterans ON YOUR LOT**

The Lorenzo Ranch Type

This beautiful 3 bedroom brick can be built on your lot with no downpayment. Monthly payments \$75 including taxes and insurance. 17 ft. living room with picture window, automatic washer and dryer, gas heat, bath with shower, modern kitchen.

TO NON VETERANS \$700 DOWN

TABORN Home Builder

SW. 5-0940 RA. 1-2855 SW. 5-4664

Figure 14: *Call & Post*, June 26, 1954.



Figure 15: 16606 Langley Avenue. The original “Lorenzo” model home, September 14, 1954. Cleveland Public Library Photographic Collection.

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Whole Family Enjoys The New Perkins Home



"WE LOVE OUR NEW HOME," Mrs. Leola Perkins, 16900 Langley Ave., said this week, "because for the first time we have a home that my husband, myself and all of our five children REALLY ENJOY."

Mrs. Perkins and her family do enjoy their home, too, the CALL & POST found when it visited there; they "see up" every look of the beautiful, large cozy home with great indoor living.

The Perkins home is one of the popular "Lorenzo" series being built almost on a mass scale, by modern lines, set far back on a large lot which gives the children plenty of play-room inside and outside of the home.

Mrs. Perkins is especially impressed with her large, convenient basement, where she does all of her washing and other housework is up-to-the-minute

to offer, is responsible for many people owning brand new homes at their own now where they had always paid rent to some other owner in the past.

Perkins is a heater helper at the Republic Steel Company.

The children are Roger, 8; El-

Figure 16: *Call & Post* article about Perkins family's new home constructed by Albert Taborn, January 22, 1955.

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Figure 17: Albert Taborn receives national citation from *Saturday Evening Post*, 1959.
Courtesy of Karen Taborn.

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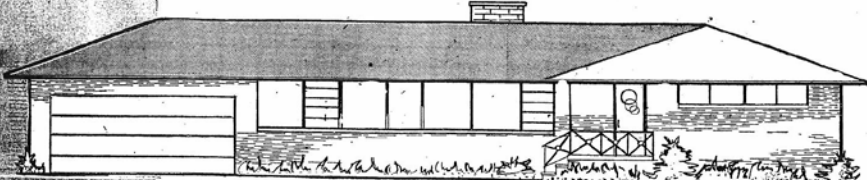
Figure 18: *Call & Post* article about William Woodridge joining the Albert Taborn Company, March 5, 1955.

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

Designed For Gracious Family Living . . .
3 BEDROOM RANCH HOMES
Priced From **\$15,000** USE YOUR OLD HOME AS DOWN PAYMENT
FHA & BANK FINANCING




SEE THIS MODEL HOME TODAY!
16401 HIGHVIEW AVENUE
Shown By Appointment **LU. 1-9673** Phone



Bring your dream home down to earth

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

FEATURES:
3 BEDROOMS
Large and roomy with hardwood floors throughout . . . huge closets with sliding doors.
MODERN KITCHEN
A Variety of kitchen plans featuring, built-in base and wall cabinets, gas disposal tile floors, breakfast nook.
LARGE LIVING ROOM
Room-size picture windows, hardwood floors, dining area, built in slate hearth.
FULL BASEMENT
Gas furnaces, plenty of storage space, recreation area.
Attached garage • paved drive • large lot.



WE HAVE SEVERAL CHOICE LOTS IN THE MT. PLEASANT-MILES AVENUE-LEE ROAD VICINITY
Also We Will Design And Build Your Ranch Home To Your Specifications On Your Own Lot

CALL NOW LU. 1-9673 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Model Home Shown By Appointment Only

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

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Figure 19: Call & Post ad featuring 16401 Highview Drive, February 15, 1958.

Myrtle-Highview Historic District
Name of Property

Cuyahoga, OH
County and State

CLEVELAND CALL AND POST

Ranaldson-Smith Promotes Sales Of New Housing

The finest home in the world is no good if nobody lives in it, and to bring new home construction closer to the people who need housing the Carr and Dillard Construction Company has made a most fortunate business alliance: it has placed its sales and promotional campaign entirely in the hands of a Cleveland real estate firm, the Ranaldson and Smith Company.

Ranaldson and Smith are well known in the local real estate field. One of the 'younger' concerns in the business, they have already executed a number of large and small deals that have been widely talked-about among their fellow brokers.

Youthful Rufus Ranaldson, who also operates a grocery store on E. 105th St. and Yale Ave. (one of the 'Atomic' chain, in which he is a leading force) shares the conduct of the realty concern with James L. Smith, a dynamic and personable addition to the Cleveland business picture.

Ranaldson told the Call and Post Saturday that "When we saw the



RUFUS RANALDSON



JAMES L. SMITH

vision and foresight of the men in the Carr and Dillard enterprise, we wanted to be their representatives to the public. We flatter ourselves that we know a success when we see one."

Ranaldson and Smith have broad visions of a sweeping housing program that will do much to alleviate the city's terrific shortage of housing for Negroes.

"There are many areas which Negroes are now employed in large numbers, but where they have to travel many weary miles to and from work," Ranaldson said.

"Negroes work in the Chevrolet and Ford and Cadillac plants, miles away from the East Side of Cleveland. There is no reason why a company as progressive and alert as Carr and Dillard cannot provide these people with hun-

dreds of new homes near their employment.

"There are other vast, untouched areas that we can expand into," he said. "With the kind of program that Carr and Dillard and their associates have in mind, we can do a lot to make Cleveland the best location for colored home-owners, too."

As an expression of confidence in the future of the Carr and Dillard Company, Ranaldson estimates that their objective of fifty new homes in 1953 is "A bit on the low side. We'll probably do much better than that, and future years will be still bigger."

"To show our solid confidence in them," he added, "Ranaldson and Smith are opening offices with Carr and Dillard in their new building. We want to go up together."



Figure 20: Call & Post ad for Ranaldson & Smith, September 27, 1952.

Myrtle-Highview Historic District
Name of Property

Cuyahoga, OH
County and State

NEW DEVELOPMENT
SPACIOUS 6 ROOM - 3 BEDROOM RANCH HOMES
Homes Include Features Like These: **FULL BASEMENT**

Large homes for your money
Large lots 50-53x125
desirable location
solid construction
30 gal. A. U. I. gas water heater
all copper plumbing
exhaust fan
package receiver
built in mailbox
double bowl sink
shower in bath
plastic tile in bath
brick foundation
forced air gas furnace

OCCUPANCY 90 DAYS

OPEN SAT. AND SUN., 2 P.M. TO 9 P.M.
ONE OF OUR MODELS PRICED FROM
\$15,900 TO \$17,500
\$2000 DOWN PAYMENT \$2500



Kollin Ave. off Lee Rd.
2 blocks N. McCracken Rd.
Will build on your lot

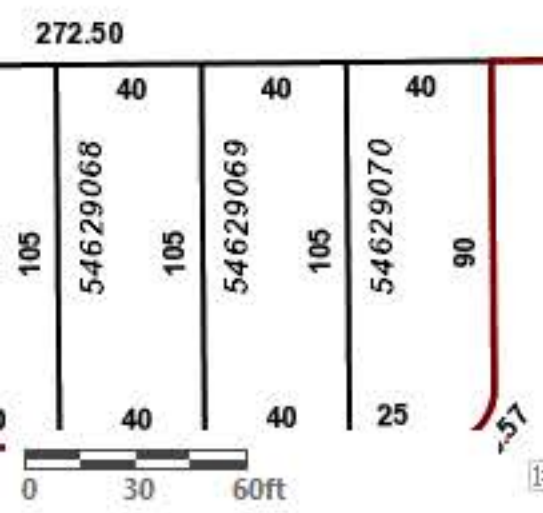
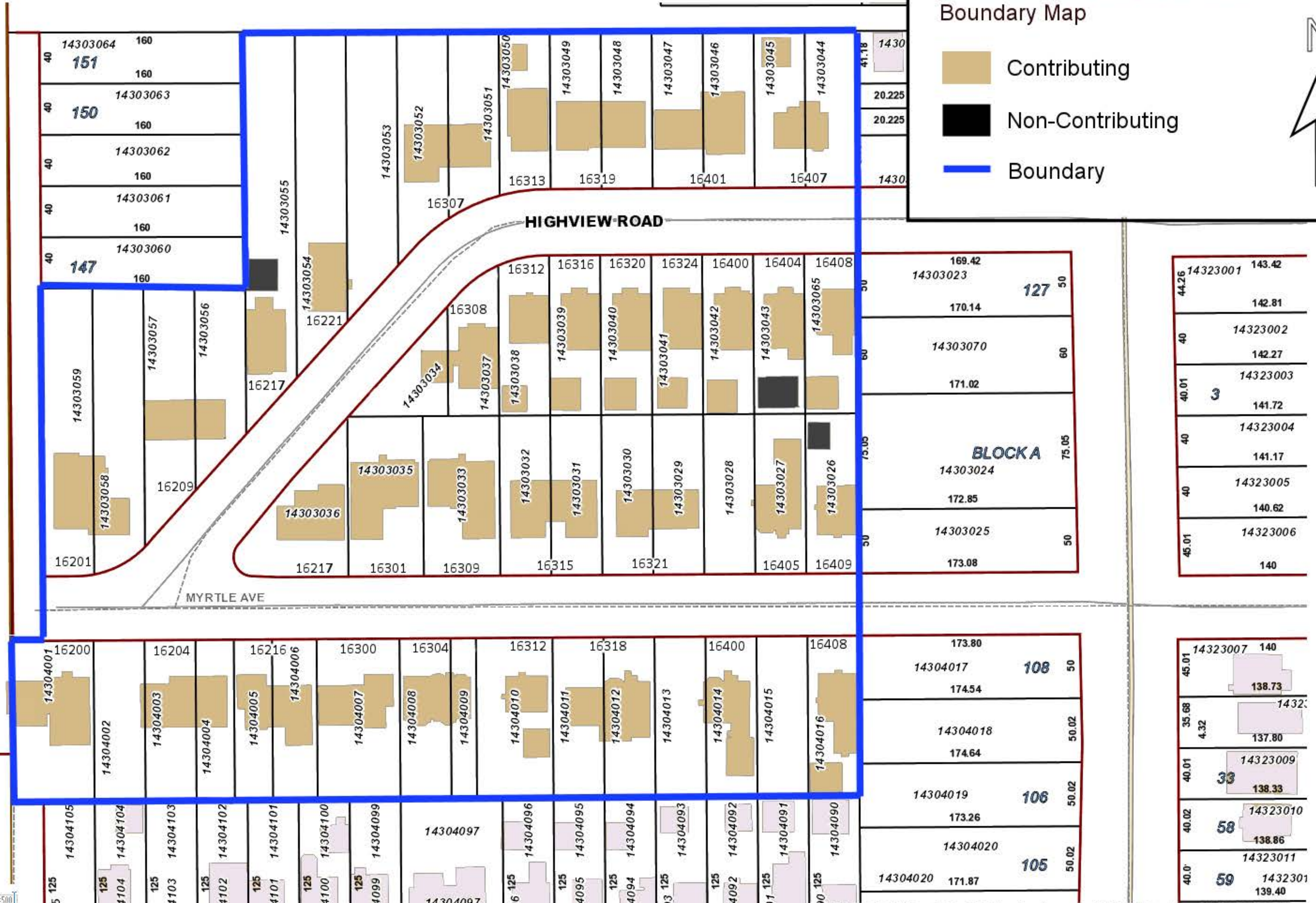
ECONOMY REALTY AND BUILDER
2584 E. 55th St. Rooms 221-22

OFFICE EX. 1-2810 "Built for Better Living" HOME MU. 1-2295

Figure 21: *Call & Post* ad featuring Ranaldson development on Kollin Avenue, September 27, 1957.

National Register of Historic Places
 Myrtle-Highview Historic District,
 Cleveland, Cuyahoga Co, Ohio
 Boundary Map

- Contributing
- Non-Contributing
- Boundary



MYRTLE-HIGHVIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT
Name of Property

CUYAHOGA, OH
County and State



State Historic Preservation Office (Ohio History Connection)
National Register of Historic Places Historic District Nomination Property Information List

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	Resource Number	NR Resource Category	Property Name	Property Street number	Street Directional (N, S, E, W)	Property Street Name	Property Street Type (AVE.,BLVD,DR.,LN, RD, ST.)	Property Street Direction (N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, SW)	Property City/Town	County	Date of Construction	Style	Type	Builder (if known)	C	N/C	Previously Listed	Owner Last Name	Owner First Name	Owner Street Number	Owner Street Name	Owner Street Type(AVE.,BLVD,DR.,LN, RD, ST.)	Owner Street Prefix/Direction (N, S, E, W, NE, NW, SE, SW,etc.)	Owner City/Town	State	Owner Zip Code
2	1	Building	Reese Residence	16200		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1961	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Hendon	Renee (Reese)	16200	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
3	2	Building	Blue Residence	16201		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1966	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Blue	Johnnie and Gracie	16201	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
4	3	Building	Searcy Residence	16204		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1957	Modern Movements	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Searcy	Alvin T. and Samuel H. Jr.	16204	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
5	4	Building	Towns Residence	16216		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1961	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Towns	Carliss	16216	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
6	5	Building	Cheairs Residence	16217		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1959	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Cheairs	John	16217	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
7	6	Building	Davis Residence	16300		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1961	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Davis	Synthia	16300	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
8	7	Building	Francis Walker Residence	16301		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1958	Modern Movements	Ranch	William Woodridge	1		NO	Walker	Francis	16301	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
9	8	Building	Clark Residence	16304		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1954	Modern Movements	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Clark	Tenesha	16304	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
10	8	Building	Pruitt Residence	16309		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1958	Modern Movements	Ranch	William Woodridge	1		NO	K & K Home Development LLC								
11	10	Building	Walker Residence	16312		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1953	Tudor/English Revival	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	2		NO	Walker	Jacqueline	16312	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
12	11	Building	Hasberry Residence	16315		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1958	Modern Movements	Ranch	William Woodridge	1		NO	Hasberry	Laura	16315	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
13	12	Building	Flood Residence	16318		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1951	Tudor/English Revival	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Flood	Shanda	16318	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
14	13	Building	Ferguson Residence	16321		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1957	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Ferguson	James A.	16321	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
15	14	Building	Boyd Residence	16400		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1949	Tudor/English Revival	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Boyd	Charlie R.	16400	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
16	15	Building	Taffe Residence	16405		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1955	Tudor/English Revival	Cape Cod Cottage/Williamsburg Colonial	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Taffe	Maureen	16405	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
17	16	Building	Payne Residence	16408		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1962	Modern Movements	Ranch	Federal Homes	2		NO	Payne	Michelle	16408	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
18	17	Building	McCall Residence	16409		Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1967	Modern Movements	Ranch	Federal Homes	1	1	NO	McCall	Juanita	16409	Myrtle	AVE.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
19	18	Building	Yancey Residence	16209		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1957	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Yancey	Mary E.	16209	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
20	19	Building	Kennedy Residence	16217		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1962	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1	1	NO	Bonner	Larry C and Rhonda	16217	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
21	20	Building	Beane Residence	16221		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1962	Modern Movements	Split-Level	The Burt Building Company	1		NO	Beane	Lula	16221	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
22	21	Building	Laney Residence	16307		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1965	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Laney	Marshall	16307	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
23	22	Building	Jones Residence	16308		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1961	Modern Movements	Ranch	Arthur Bussey	1		NO	Jones	Willie E	16308	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128
24	22	Building	Washington Residence	16312		Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Cuyahoga	1963	Modern Movements	Ranch	Federal Homes	2			Washington	Augustine	16312	Highview	DR.		Cleveland	Ohio	44128

Myrtle-Highview Historic District, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Zone 17

- 1) East 452530
- North 4586216
- 2) East 452739
- North 4586216
- 3) East 452739
- North 4586034
- 4) East 452530
- North 4586034

