



**A Black
Community of
Faith and Hope:
North Webster**

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

EIGHTH IN A SERIES

Established by the
Webster Groves Historical Society and
the City of Webster Groves, Missouri

This Historic Webster Walk is a joint project of the North Webster Neighborhood Coalition, the Webster Groves Historical Society, and the City of Webster Groves. A full history of the North Webster neighborhood can be found in *North Webster: A Photographic History of a Black Community* by Ann Morris and Henrietta Ambrose. The authors are deeply indebted to this work's intensive scholarship.

Written and edited by the North Webster Walking Tour brochure committee: Louis Davis, Kathryn DeHart, Toni Hunt, Ed Johnson, Lynn Josse, Jean Tarkington.

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For more information, please contact the Webster Groves Historical Society, 1155 S. Rock Hill Road, Webster Groves, MO, 63119, 314.968.1776

Before You Begin Your Walk

North Webster was founded as a community for recently freed slaves in 1866, but its roots go back farther. The first African Americans in what is now North Webster were those enslaved by John Marshall, who came from Virginia with his brother James in 1832. James Marshall's slaves built the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church in 1845. It stood just north of Webster Groves at the intersection of Manchester and Rock Hill Roads until it was demolished in 2012. As the story goes, the slaves used their day off, Sundays, to build the roof as a special contribution. Landowners and their slaves came from all over the area to attend the church.

Before he died in 1864, James Marshall freed two slaves and gave them property. When slavery ended a year later, many of the freedmen stayed in the area.

In 1866, former slaves built First Baptist Church in Porter's Subdivision. The church, the school in its basement, and the subdivision were located on Shady Avenue (present-day West Kirkham Ave. and Brentwood Blvd.). This street followed Shady Creek, which wound its way between two hills at the north end of Webster Groves. The small community of freedmen began to build houses along Shady Avenue, stretching east and west from their church. Eventually the community spread up the hill to what we today know as North Webster.

In 1885, John's Marshall's widow Cynthia subdivided almost the entire North Webster neighborhood, from Bell Avenue on the west to the other side of Shady Creek on the east, and all the way north to Deer Creek. The original lots in her subdivision were sized to be small farmsteads, from about one acre to more than five. The western blocks of North Webster were subdivided in 1892 as the Webster Heights subdivision. Some of the early black residents of Cynthia Marshall's Subdivision, including Annie Polk and Jacob Esaw, further divided their land and created their own subdivisions.

By the early 20th century, North Webster was a completely self-sufficient community. Although most of the residents worked outside of the neighborhood, almost all of the other needs of daily life could be met within a few blocks. The neighborhood had its own churches, groceries, barber shop, contractors, real estate agent, funeral home, confectionaries, and druggist. Black doctors and dentists settled here. One of the state's best schools for African-American children was built in the neighborhood. People kept their own chickens, and there was a goat farm until 1989. Corner stores dotted the neighborhood, and many businesses were run out of homes. There was a thriving business district along Shady Avenue.

Not everything was perfect in North Webster, of course. Most of the neighborhood lacked sewer service until the mid-20th century. The last privies were not removed until the 1960s. Roads were unpaved for years, and the community lacked many of the services available to other Webster Groves residents. But because of the challenges of discrimination and segregation, North Webster became a tight-knit and proud community. It was “a wonderful place to live,” wrote Ann Morris and Henrietta Ambrose, “with tall trees to shade the hottest days, creeks full of ‘crawdads,’ homegrown vegetables, a good school, and seven churches.”

This Webster Groves Historical Walk is more than the story of a neighborhood – it is the story of a community.

Two Sites to See by Car

Before North Webster was a densely settled African-American neighborhood, there was a small settlement to the south and west located on Shady Avenue (now West Kirkham). On your way to start the walking tour, stop and look at these two important historic sites from that community:

238 W. Kirkham Ave.

Original Site of First Baptist Church

Old Community Baptist Church (1982)

In 1866, the year after the Civil War ended, 19 black residents signed the charter for a new First Baptist Church of Webster Groves. The church was located here in Porter’s subdivision, which was established in 1866 for former slaves. Behind the church you see today, Porter’s subdivision stretched up what became known as “Vinegar Hill.”

First Baptist Church housed the first school for black children in St. Louis County, also started on this site in 1866. The church burned to the ground in 1892. It was rebuilt in the same year, but the school moved to Holland Avenue.

In 1927, the minister and part of the congregation moved to the present location of First Baptist Church at 3251 S. Brentwood Blvd. The rest of the congregation remained at this location, and for years both groups were known as First Baptist Church. After a lawsuit over the name, the church here at the original site became Old Community Baptist Church. The building was renovated to its present appearance in 1982.

500 W. Kirkham Ave.

Emmanuel Cartwright House (1869)

Emmanuel Cartwright was a prominent African American minister in the 19th century. He worked with John Berry Meachum, a former slave who had founded St. Louis’ first African American church in 1827. After Meachum’s death in 1854, Cartwright took over his ministry. He preached at the neighboring First Baptist Church, and founded another church in nearby Kirkwood.

North Webster Walk

This Historic Webster Walk will lead you past sites that were significant in the development of Webster Groves' historical African American community. The 1.75 mile walk is paved, and its hills and valleys will be sure to give you a good workout.

Begin your walk at the intersection of Elm and Ravine Avenues across from Douglass Manor (546 N. Elm Ave.).

546 N. Elm Ave.

Douglass Elementary School/Douglass Manor (1947)

Architect: William B. Ittner & Associates

The first school for African Americans in Webster Groves was founded in 1866 at First Baptist Church (in its original location on what is now 238 W. Kirkham Avenue). The new school district of Webster Groves took over responsibility for the school in 1868, and built a one-room log school next to the church in 1872. In the early 1890s, a series of fires destroyed first the school and then its temporary quarters at the church. As a result, the district built a two-room school on Holland Avenue (behind the site of the school you are looking at now). That school was named for Frederick Douglass in 1895.

In 1927 Joseph Mitchell, founder of the *St. Louis Argus* (the first African-American newspaper in St. Louis), built a 2½ story house at the south end of the site of what is now Douglass Manor. The house was the largest in the neighborhood. The Mitchells shared their home with boarders and roomers (including teachers from Douglass School), and opened up their tennis courts for the use of the community. This was one of the first properties in North Webster to have a garage for an automobile.

In 1944, the school district began the eminent domain process to take the Mitchells' property and replace it with a new elementary school. Until this time, all of the grades (including high school) were in a single school building on the other side of the block. Threatened with condemnation, the Mitchells left Webster Groves in 1945. The new elementary school, also named for Frederick Douglass, was completed in 1947. In 1954, the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision declared that segregated schools were not legal. After that, Douglass served both black and white students, acting as a demonstration school for innovative teaching ideas from the late 1960s until it closed at the end of the 1970s.

In 1983, after an extensive rehabilitation and remodeling, the school building was rededicated as Douglass Manor Apartments. Originally intended for older adults and people with disabilities, the building now includes 41 rent-assisted apartments. Its Howell Goins Community Room serves the neighborhood as a meeting space with historic exhibits.

Rogers Ice Cream Parlor/Summytt's Drug Store

At the north end of the Douglass Manor site, next to Joseph Mitchell's house, stood the ice cream parlor established by Preston and Eleanor Rogers in 1920. They built a private park and dance pavilion for community celebrations. In 1929, the business was purchased by druggist Elvis Summytt, who continued to sell ice cream and operated a pharmacy. A dentist, Dr. J. L. Grigsby, worked out of the store in the 1930s, as did surgeon E. A. South. The dance pavilion was used as Douglass School's gym.

Continue south on Elm Avenue.

531-553 N. Elm Ave.

This group of homes gives a good idea of the feel of North Webster in the mid-20th century. Built between about 1910 and 1963, these houses include simple folk forms, a gambrel-roofed Dutch colonial, a cottage-like brick house, and a Modern house with clerestory windows. North Webster retains many original houses from the early period of African-American settlement, but the original neighborhood was not densely built, and many more houses were added over time. The neighborhood continues to change and evolve, and now many blocks include contemporary houses built to serve the still mostly African-American community.

511 N. Elm Ave.

Blackwell Chapel AME Zion Church (1916)

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Mission Church, as it was originally called, was founded in 1884 by Reverend J. B. Bunch. The original church was in a storefront close to the intersection of Gore and Moody. In 1889 the church was renamed after the new pastor, Bishop G. L. Blackwell. The congregation built a frame church in 1891, and constructed the church that we see today in 1916. The congregation formally moved in a large procession from the old to the new building, singing "We are Marching to Zion." Blackwell was known for its three choirs. Concrete block, or "cast stone," was a popular and inexpensive building material in the early 20th century. It can be identified easily because, unlike real stone, all of the blocks have the same pattern.

Madelyn McIntosh operated a beauty shop nearby for many years, but the house was purchased and demolished by the church.

Turn around and proceed west (left turn) on Euclid Avenue

12 Euclid Ave. (c. 1900)

Like most of the houses in North Webster, this house has been modernized over the years. Look closely, though, and you'll find clues to the house's age. Probably constructed in the early 1900s, the original L-shaped house sits high on a stone foundation. The wide brick chimney is another giveaway that this is one of the earliest houses in the neighborhood.

22 Euclid Ave.

Lewis/Yandell Funeral Home (c. 1909)

In the 19th century, most funerals and wakes were held in private homes. The earliest undertakers were coffin-makers and stable owners who "undertook" the work of bringing the deceased to the burial site.

For North Webster, this all changed when Jones C. Lewis was trained as an undertaker. The date is uncertain, but we know it was after 1917 (when directories listed Jones as a plasterer and his wife Susie as offering tea). By 1922, the family had converted the first floor of their home into North Webster's first funeral parlor. Susie Lewis taught at Douglass School for many years.

When Jones died in 1948, his apprentice Ted Yandell became the new Funeral Director. In 1976, Yandell's son, Ted Yandell, Jr., owns the business.

Note the door at the left side of the façade. Its arched top and round window are typical of the late 1920s, when this section was probably added to the original foursquare house.

Polk Street

This private lane was named after former slave Annie Polk, who owned this property and subdivided it in 1906.

133 Euclid Ave.

Tappel's Grocery Store (c. 1928)

North Webster was full of businesses that operated out of houses, additions, and converted homes. This building has an original frame section, with an added brick commercial storefront. The Tappels were a white family who bought this grocery business in 1928. The store was in front, and the Tappels lived in back. They were known for permitting the neighbors to purchase their groceries on credit, running a "tab."

The sidewalk ends west of the store, showing the original city limits of Webster Groves.

141 Euclid Ave

Howell and Anna Goins House (1915)

Howell B. Goins and his wife Anna owned this stuccoed clay tile home. Goins was born in Louisiana, Missouri in 1899, and grew up in an unusual family: his father was one of the few black physicians practicing in the state at that time. He attended George R. Smith College in Sedalia, a historically black college that operated from 1894 - 1925 (and was the alma mater of Scott Joplin). After only three years at Douglass School, he became its principal in 1929. Under his leadership, the school opened its first gymnasium, expanded the library, offered night school, and added a kindergarten. When the elementary school and high school separated in 1947, Goins became principal of both schools. He served during the period of desegregation and finally retired in 1967. Goins' sister Helen, a public school teacher, lived with the family for a time.

The Goins' son John grew up in the house at 141 Euclid and later moved next door to 139 Euclid. He and his wife Geneva owned the home for many years.

In 1930, all of the Goins' neighbors to the west were white and almost all of the neighbors to the east were African-American.

142 Euclid Ave. (1996)

In 1988, the North Webster Neighborhood Coalition was incorporated to maintain and improve the living standards of the neighborhood. This was the first of more than a dozen homes built by the Coalition.

Rock Hill City Limits

The Webster Heights subdivision (platted in 1892) stretches three blocks west from Bell and covers Euclid, Eldridge, Madison, and the south half of Lithia Street. This is the only section of the neighborhood that is laid out like a grid with right angles. Before 1960, the City of Rock Hill had annexed the western two blocks of Webster Heights – blocks that had been traditionally white. Webster Groves later annexed the eastern block (between Bell and Plateau). In the years after 1950, the black population of North Webster began to extend west of Plateau.

Turn right on Plateau Avenue.

676 Plateau Ave. (c. 1950)

This is an example of a Lustron house – an all-metal house constructed from prefabricated parts. Lustrons, manufactured in Ohio between 1948-1950, were delivered in thousands of pieces which would be assembled on-site.

They are readily identifiable by the enameled panels of the exterior. The interiors are also finished with metal panels. This house is model #23, one of the less common Lustron houses.

200 Eldridge

Baker's Store (c. 1924)

In the 1930s and 40s, the Baker family lived in the bungalow at 200 Eldridge, at the corner of Plateau, and operated a confectionery and grocery from a building where the garage is now located. Plateau was a fairly well-defined color line for a time, with African-Americans to the east and whites to the west. Like the Schaefer's to the north, the Bakers lived on the "white side" of the street, and catered to both black and white customers.

Four additional Lustron houses are located to your right on this short block of Eldridge Avenue. Continue north on Plateau.

200 Lithia Ave. (at Plateau Ave.)

Schaefer's/Calvin's Grocery (c. 1920)

This neighborhood grocery store was opened in 1928. When the Schaefer's (who were white) retired in the 1960s, the store was taken over by the Calvins, who were black. They ran a confectionery and grocery at this location but continued to live in their house on Ravine. Mr. & Mrs. Calvin also ran the neighborhood taxi service.

Turn right on Lithia Avenue.

129 Lithia Ave. (2005)

This is another home constructed by the North Webster Coalition.

South side of Lithia Avenue

The south side of Lithia was empty land through the 1950s, making a perfect spot for the neighborhood's annual carnival. For three decades, the annual summer carnival featured rides, games, barbecue, and other tasty treats. The carnival raised funds for the volunteer firefighters.

Turn left on Bell Avenue.

648 Bell Ave. (2000)

This is another house that was built by the North Webster Neighborhood Coalition.

113 W. Thornton Ave. (at Bell Ave.)

Sanctified Church of God in Christ (1928)

In 1917 or 1918, a group of families organized the Sanctified Church of God in Christ in Webster Groves. The congregation first met in a side yard, then a tar paper shack, and then, in 1928, a frame church on this site. The congregation has always been known for its music; Ambrose and Morris mention that "on hot summer nights people listened from their front porches, and children drifted off to sleep to the haunting rhythms of heartfelt spirituals accompanied by guitars, tambourines, and an old piano." Almost 50 years after the frame church was built, it was remodeled as a brick building.

Ivory Crockett Park

This site was used as a park by the neighborhood children long before the City of Webster Groves annexed it and named it after track star Ivory Crockett. There was a lily pond here, and neighborhood residents remember that both black and white children played here together.

Across from the northern end of the park lived Herbert and Lucy Witt (**912 Bell Ave.**, c. 1928). Herbert became St. Louis County's first black licensed electrician. The Witts bought enough land to set up benches and show outdoor movies at their "Sky Dome." Lucy made ice cream and other treats to sell. When Herbert converted to Catholicism in 1930, his family opened up their home for catechism classes. Unwelcome at Holy Redeemer Church in Webster Groves, they attended St. Mary Magdalen Church in Brentwood.

The family was very tight-knit, and one of the Witts' seven children, Frank, ended up living next door over the electrical shop.

Next to the Witts was the **Fire House (916 Bell Ave., demolished)**. The north and west sections of North Webster were unincorporated until the 1960s, so neighbors had to band together to offer their own fire protection. Nine citizens got together in 1939 to form the North Webster Volunteer Firefighters Association. They operated out of Dixon's garage on Waymire until they had raised enough money to build a new firehouse on Bell Avenue.

At the far end of Waymire was **Rainbow Night Club (101 W. Waymire Ave., demolished)**. The club had a jukebox, dance floor, and a bar. With linen tablecloths, it was considered the fanciest of the three nightclubs in North Webster. The owner was Arthur Steward, a local political leader and chauffeur. (During this period, many North Webster residents found employment with the white families in surrounding communities.)

Turn around and head south on Bell Avenue. From Sanctified Gospel Temple, head east on E. Thornton Avenue. Stop at N. Elm Avenue and look to the right.

Elm Hills Farm & Dairy (site)

On the block to your right was James Morrison's Elm Hills Farm, which operated at 632 N. Elm until 1989. Morrison was a prize-winning goat breeder, known for his 1957 donation of goats to Dr. Albert Schweitzer's famed hospital in present-day Gabon in West Central Africa.

Charles and Alby Thomas House (site)

Across from the goat farm and down a bit, the Thomas family lived at 609 N. Elm. Charles Thomas owned a cleaning business and a small grocery here. In 1946, Charles and Alby's daughter Irene was the first black student admitted to Webster College (now Webster University).

709 N. Elm Ave. (c. 1923)

Herbert and Lorraine Davis House

Herbert Davis was the principal of Douglass School, and Lorraine Davis was elected to Webster Groves' new Board of Freeholders in 1953. They lived here for several decades in the middle of the 20th century.

Now turn the opposite direction and head north on Elm.

808 N. Elm Ave.

Benny and Lorraine Gordon House (1946)

This was the home of Benny Gordon and his family. Benny's family moved to North Webster during the Great Depression of the 1930s. He served in Europe during and after World War II, and became a Sergeant Major (the highest rank of noncommissioned officer). On returning from Europe in 1949, he learned that Webster Groves' beautiful new swimming pool was restricted to whites. He led a small group of black residents to visit the pool later that summer, but their presence was greeted by the police, the Mayor, and all three city councilmen. Gordon and other citizens then hired an attorney, Theodore McMillan, to take their cause to court. Their victory led the City of Webster Groves to close the pool altogether in 1951 and 1952. A vote of the people allowed the pool to reopen in 1953 as an integrated facility. Gordon also fought to integrate restaurants and Webster Groves' Ozark Theater.

Benny opened his real estate business in his home in the early 1960s. He later moved his business to Kirkham Ave. His wife Lorraine Gordon operated a beauty shop from the basement of their home.

812 N. Elm Ave.

Eugene and Georgia Crockett House (c. 1928)

Eugene and Georgia Crockett lived in this house in the mid-1960s when their nephew Ivory Crockett came to live with them. Eugene was a driver and also directed the Nellie Salmon Day Nursery on Brentwood Blvd. Ivory became an outstanding track star at Webster Groves High School. He went on to break the world record for the 100-yard sprint in 1974, earning him the title of "The World's Fastest Man."

906 N. Elm Ave. (1998)

This is another house built by the North Webster Coalition.

907 N. Elm Ave.

Piggy's (site)

Piggy's (formally known as the Drift-Inn Tavern) was one of three nightclubs in the community, and it was considered the neighborhood dive. The bar was known for gambling in the back room and an occasional scuffle. It was probably no coincidence that it was located just north of the city limits, where there was no police service.

921 Elm Ave.

Walter and Lucy Rusan House (site)

The original house that stood on this site was the home of Walter and Lucy Rusan and their family. Rusan worked for the Post Office as a clerk (the U. S. Postal Service was one of the major employers of African-Americans in the 1920s onward). He led the Douglass School PTA for many years, and led the effort to build a YMCA in North Webster.

The present house was built in 2000.

Turn right on Waymire Avenue.

The new houses to your left were built in 2003-2004.

North side of Waymire Ave. east of Elm Ave.

Dixon's Grocery Store and Gas Station (site)

William and Louise Dixon ran a small confectionary on this site, expanding it into a grocery, tavern, and filling station by the mid-1930s. The original volunteer fire station was next door.

Turn right on Cornell Avenue.

915 Cornell Ave. (c. 1915)

This is the only two-story brick house in the neighborhood. During the Great Depression, owners John and Alberta Green used half of it as a rental unit.

901 Cornell Ave.

Roscoe and Hattie James House (c. 1932)

Roscoe and Hattie James came to North Webster in the late 1920s and rented a house on the site of what is now Douglass Manor. In the early 1930s, they built the house in front of you. The James family is a perfect example of how extended families often lived together in North Webster, especially during the Great Depression.

In 1940, the census shows Roscoe and Hattie living here with their five children; Hattie's mother, sister, and niece; Roscoe's brother; and a brother-in-law.

Roscoe and his brother opened a contracting business in the late 1920s. He oversaw construction of the new First Baptist Church in 1927, and he did the work for free. He was known throughout town as an expert plasterer.

In 1947, Herbert Davis (former Douglass School principal), suggested the formation of a credit union for North Webster. This was necessary because conventional banks rarely made loans to African Americans. Roscoe James was the first president, and the credit union operated out of his basement until 1978.

The addition on the left side of the house was built as a beauty parlor for Roscoe's daughter Hallie.

Turn around and head back north on Cornell Avenue.

908 Cornell Ave. (c. 1948)

This appears to be a homemade concrete block house. From the early 20th century until after WWII, companies sold kits so that consumers could make their own concrete block that looked like stone.

Turn right on Willis Avenue.

119 Willis Ave.

Webster Groves AME/Douglas Memorial CME (site)
Residents remember this as the site of Douglas Memorial CME Church. Congregants started by digging out a basement and worshipping there, but no one remembers a sanctuary ever being built.

Riverside Stadium

When you reach Holland Avenue, look down to your left. At the end of the street, between the built-up area and Deer Creek, was the area known as the Bottoms. It was informally known as Riverside Park, and when it was fenced, it was called Riverside Stadium. The Webster Reds football and baseball teams played here. The Webster Reds were an all-black amateur team that played black and white teams from as far away as Indiana. The Blue Valley Giants were the only black team in the Blue Valley youth league. The Douglass High School football team played here as well.

The Vendome

Next to Riverside Stadium by Deer Creek was the Vendome Night Club. Both the stadium and club were owned by Joe Turner. The club was built on stilts to protect it from flooding.

Turn right on Holland Avenue then turn left to follow Willis Avenue.

114 Willis Ave.

Nazarene Baptist Church (1924)

This is the third Baptist church to be built in North Webster. It was founded by Reverend S. T. Tyler. The cornerstone is still visible today.

Turn right on Waymire Avenue and make an immediate left on E. Thornton Avenue.

Lorraine Davis Park

This park was named after Lorraine Davis, who was elected to the city's new Board of Freeholders in 1953. She and her husband, Douglass School principal Herbert Davis, lived on N. Elm Avenue. The park follows the rerouted Shady Creek, once an important source of water, fish, and recreation for neighbors in North Webster.

Turn right on Brentwood Boulevard.

Shady Avenue (now Brentwood Boulevard)

By the middle of the 20th century, black-owned businesses lined both sides of this stretch of road, originally known as Shady Avenue and later changed to Kirkham Avenue. Doctors and gas stations were here, along with the Blue Dahlia restaurant, Nellie Salmon's interracial nursery, Jim's Market, and Webster Grocery.

3185 S. Brentwood Blvd. (c. 1935)

Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Rusan's Office

In the 1920s, Dr. A. Leroy Reynolds moved to this location on what was originally called Shady Avenue. His family lived upstairs, and his practice was in the basement. In the 1940s, Dr. Thomas Rusan took over the office. He made house calls and delivered babies in the home until he gained permission to work in some of the hospitals. He later moved his business into a separate office farther north on Brentwood Blvd. Dr. Eric Donnelly lived and had his office next door, and Dr. Frazier Alexander had an office just down the street at Shady and Ravine in the 1940s.

3201-3229 S. Brentwood Blvd.

Kirkham Square (c. 1966)

In the 1920s, Mosby Collins' shop on the other side of Shady Avenue was the only black-owned barbershop in the neighborhood. He hired a young barber by the name of Lee Moss, who worked for Mr. Collins for many years. In the 1960s, the building was condemned and Mr. Collins retired. Lee Moss took over the business and moved it across the street to Kirkham Square. Mr. Moss retired in 2015.

When Kirkham Square was constructed, it housed both black-owned and white-owned businesses. Benny Gordon's real estate office was one of the black-owned businesses that located here.

3239 S. Brentwood Blvd.

Masonic Lodge of North Webster (1950)

North Webster had an active Masonic group, the Morning Star Lodge, beginning in 1880. Wives of the Masons joined the Eastern Star group and were active in charity work in the neighborhood. The original frame building was on the other side of Shady Ave. (now Brentwood Blvd.). This concrete block building was constructed for a later Masonic group in 1950. The first floor was rented out to neighborhood businesses, including Dr. Alexander and a beauty shop.

3251 S. Brentwood Blvd.

First Baptist Church (1927)

In 1866, 19 African-American residents organized the First Baptist Church of Webster Groves. It is one of the four oldest congregations in the city.

In its original location on Shady Avenue (now West Kirkham Ave.), First Baptist housed the first school for black children in St. Louis County. The church burned to the ground in 1892 and was rebuilt in the same year. In 1923, the congregation purchased this property to build a new church. The new sanctuary was completed in 1927, but part of the congregation stayed behind at the old location. It took a lawsuit to determine which group got to keep the First Baptist name. Because this congregation retained the original charter, the group which stayed behind in the old building changed its name to Old Community Baptist Church.

In 1954, First Baptist Church broke ground for a new, larger sanctuary and addition. Architect Harry Dew and Contractor Roscoe James were given the big project to build the new church. Roscoe James again contributed his own labor for free. Members attended their first service in the new building on Easter Sunday in 1955.

On November 7, 2000, First Baptist Church of Webster Groves was designated a City Landmark.

The parking lot was once the site of the Nellie Salmon Day Care Center. Nellie Salmon was a Douglass School teacher. When she passed away in 1950, she willed her house and estate to the Webster Groves Red Cross to form an interracial day care. Other groups were also formed in the 1940s and 1950s to promote interracial harmony, including the United Church Women of Webster Groves and the Webster Groves Interracial Group.

Turn around and head back north on Brentwood Boulevard. Then turn left on Ravine Avenue. The next two sites are on your right just before you reach Holland Avenue.

608 Holland Ave.

Parks Chapel AME Zion Church (1969)

This congregation was organized in 1915 as the Union Mission Church, Rev. Theodore Morrison, Pastor. Around 1919, they purchased the old AME Zion Church on Shady Ave., naming it Parks Chapel. As the congregation grew, the church moved two more times before constructing the present building in 1969.

608 Holland Ave.

North Webster YMCA (1944)

Prior to 1944, the only YMCA activities in North Webster were those held at the home of Joseph Mitchell (on the site of what is now Douglass Manor). The closest facility available for African Americans was the fabled Pine Street YMCA in the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood downtown. In 1944, Douglass School's PTA embarked on a fundraising effort to bring a YMCA to North Webster. The completed facility included a wading pool located across the street. The building still serves the community as the hall for Parks Chapel.

South side of Ravine between Holland and Cornell Site of Douglass High School

This was the site chosen for the community's school after an 1892 fire destroyed its original one-room log building on Shady Avenue. The new two-room frame building didn't have a name until 1895, when it was named in honor of abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Shortly afterwards, classes were extended through eighth grade. At this time, there was no high school for black students in St. Louis County, although they could travel to Sumner High School in St. Louis.

The school was improved by the addition of a basement classroom in 1913 and electricity in 1916. In 1917, Missouri's Supreme Court heard a case (brought by black families from Webster Groves and Kirkwood) petitioning for equal high school education for black students. The 1918 ruling declared that education in Missouri must be available to all, even if it was still "separate but equal." Webster Groves responded by paying Sumner High School to educate its children.

In 1925, Webster Groves did something no other district in St. Louis County had done – it established its own high school for black students. Originally the high school was simply a department of the existing Douglass School, which added three more rooms for the continuing students. The first eight students graduated in 1929. Douglass remained the county's only high school for African Americans until Kinloch opened its high school in 1938.

With so many students enrolled, North Webster became populated by many teachers.

Those in the elementary department were often single women (and some married women), while those in the high school were both men and women with advanced college degrees. Most lived in the neighborhood, although some of them, such as Thomas Moore (principal from 1904-1925), commuted from the City.

Douglass High School became a stand-alone school when the new elementary school (now Douglass Manor) opened in 1947. By 1954, 246 Webster Groves students and another 184 from other parts of the county attended Douglass High School. In that year, in the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were “inherently unequal.” African-American students who lived within the Webster Groves School District were admitted into Webster Groves High School in the fall of 1956. The remaining students were integrated into schools in their home districts, which were scattered throughout St. Louis County. Douglass High School was closed and demolished. The houses you see in the Douglass Manor subdivision were constructed on the site of the old high school in 1982.

Turn right on Cornell Avenue.

627 Cornell Ave.

Unity United Methodist Church (1979)

This congregation started when the Rev. B. F. Abbott held a tent revival in an open field across from the location of the current church. The first structure was completed next to its present location in 1911 as the Webster Groves Methodist Episcopal Church, with Rev. C. C. Kitchen as pastor. The new building was constructed in 1979, and the name was changed to Unity Church after merging with a congregation from Richmond Heights in 1989.

Turn around and head back to Ravine Avenue. Turn right on Ravine. Continue west until you reach N. Elm Avenue and the beginning of the tour route.

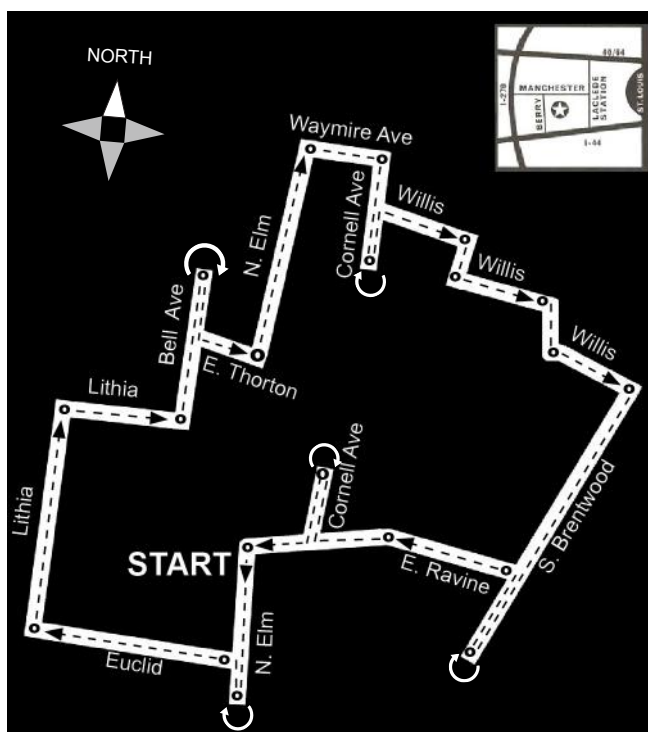
North Webster Site Overview

238 W. Kirkham Ave. Old Community Baptist Church (1982)
500 W. Kirkham Ave. Emmanuel Cartwright House (1869)
546 N. Elm Ave. Douglass Elem School/Douglass Manor (1947)
Rogers Ice Cream Parlor/Summyt's Drug Store (site)
531-553 N. Elm Ave.
511 N. Elm Ave. Blackwell Chapel AME Zion Church (1916)
12 Euclid Ave. (c. 1900)
22 Euclid Ave. Lewis/Yandell Funeral Home (c. 1909)
Polk Street
133 Euclid Ave. Tappel's Grocery Store (c. 1928)
141 Euclid Ave. Howell and Anna Goins House (1915)
142 Euclid Ave. (1996)
Rock Hill City Limits
676 Plateau Ave. (c. 1950)
200 Eldridge Ave. Baker's Grocery (c. 1924)
200 Lithia Ave. (at Plateau Ave.) Schaefer's/Calvin's Grocery (c. 1920)
129 Lithia Ave. (2005)
648 Bell Ave. (2000)
113 W. Thornton Ave. Sanctified Church of God in Christ (1928)
Ivory Crockett Park
912 Bell Ave. (c. 1928)
Herbert and Lucy Witt House (c. 1928)
916 Bell Ave. Volunteer Fire House (site)
101 W. Waymire Ave. Rainbow Night Club (site)
632 N. Elm Ave. Elm Hills Farm & Dairy (site)
609 N. Elm Ave. Charles and Alby Thomas House (site)
709 N. Elm Herbert and Lorraine Davis House (c. 1923)
808 N. Elm Ave. Benny and Lorraine Gordon House (1946)
812 N. Elm Ave. Eugene and Georgia Crockett House (c. 1928)
906 N. Elm Ave. (1998)
907 N. Elm Ave. Piggy's (site)
921 Elm Ave. Walter and Lucy Rusan House (site)
North side of Waymire east of Elm Ave. Dixon's Grocery
Store and Gas Station (site)
915 Cornell Ave. (c. 1915)
901 Cornell Ave. Roscoe and Hattie James House (c. 1932)
908 Cornell Ave. (c. 1948)
119 Willis Ave. Webster Groves AME/Douglas Memorial
CME (site)
Riverside Stadium
The Vendome
114 Willis Ave. Nazarene Baptist Church (1924)
Lorraine Davis Park
Shady Avenue (now Brentwood Boulevard)
3185 S. Brentwood Blvd.
Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Rusan's office (c. 1935)
3201-3229 S. Brentwood Blvd. Kirkham Square (c. 1966)
3239 S. Brentwood Blvd. Masonic Lodge of No. Webster (1950)
3251 S. Brentwood Blvd. First Baptist Church of W. G. (1927)
608 Holland Ave. Parks Chapel AME Zion Church (1969)
608 Holland Ave. North Webster YMCA (1944)
South side of Ravine between Holland and Cornell
Site of Douglass High School
627 Cornell Ave. Unity United Methodist Church (1979)

The following homes were constructed by the North
Webster Neighborhood Coalition:

31 E. Allison Ave.	203 Lithia Ave.
648 Bell Ave.	25 Ravine Ave.
627 N. Elm Ave.	97 Reasnor Ave.
906 N. Elm Ave.	104 Reasnor Ave.
142 Euclid Ave.	106 Reasnor Ave.
609 Holland Ave.	115 Reasnor Ave.
702 Holland Ave.	121 Reasnor Ave.
129 Lithia Ave.	

North Webster Walk Map



Thank you for taking a walk through Webster Groves history.

The Historic Webster Walk series has been created to provide residents and visitors with a look inside the unique character of Webster Groves, Missouri. The walk and guidebook are designed so that individuals, schools, scouts and other groups can tailor the walks to their own pace and particular interests.

Additional Webster Walks are also available, each one focusing on a specific neighborhood. If you would like to make a tax deductible contribution to support this important project, please make your check payable to the Webster Groves Historical Society and mail it to 1155 S. Rock Hill Road, Webster Groves, Mo. 63119.

For further information or if you would like to become a member of the Webster Groves Historical Society, please write us at the above address, call 314-968.1776 or visit us at www.historicwebster.org.