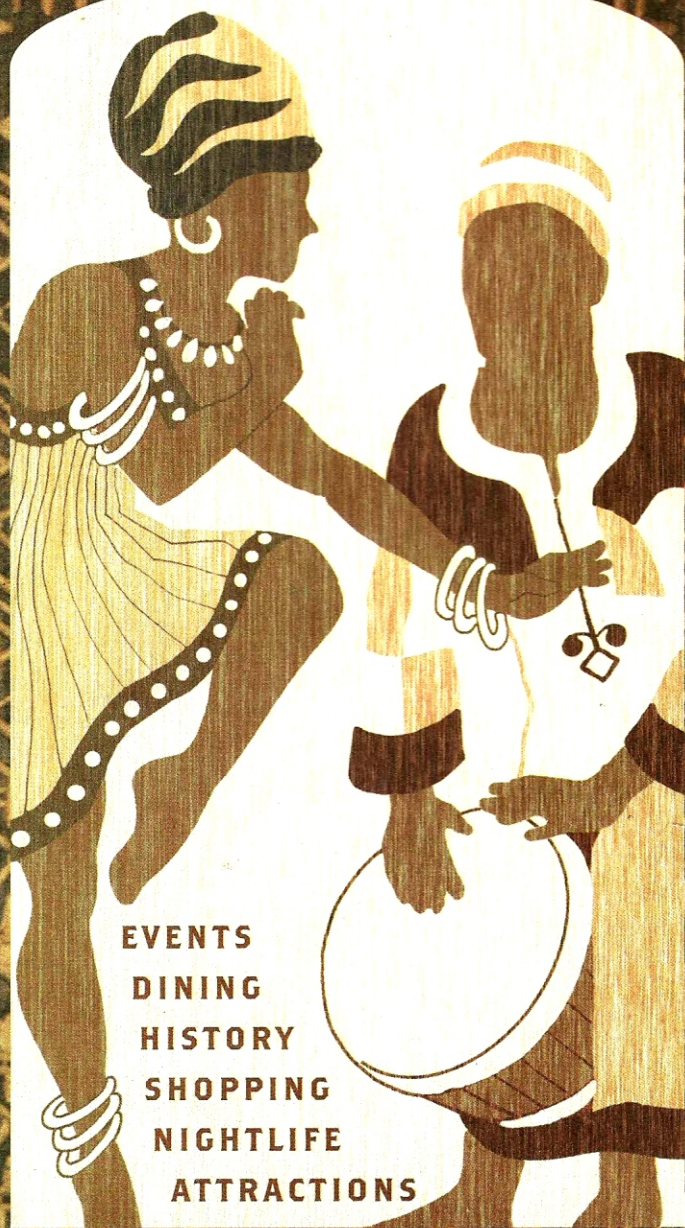


BUFFALO NIAGARA

AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE GUIDE



EVENTS

DINING

HISTORY

SHOPPING

NIGHTLIFE

ATTRACTIONS

AFRICAN AMERICAN BUFFALO

A Quilt of American Experience

Buffalo is an heirloom quilt stitched with the tenacity and triumph of the African American spirit. The city was a final stop on the freedom train north from slavery and the Jim Crow South. In its heyday, Buffalo represented hope and self-empowerment for Black Americans, and a better life for generations to come.

The weight and wonder of this rich legacy flows in blues riffs and jazz notes through the city.

Black frontiersman **Joseph Hodges** was one of Buffalo's earliest non-white settlers. Local griots - oral historians - know that Underground Railroad conductor **Harriet "Mother Moses" Tubman** led bands of runaways through the Niagara region. Abolitionist **William Wells Brown** lived on Pine Street in Buffalo and helped fugitives cross the river into Canada when he worked for the Lake Erie Steamship Co.



Harriett Tubman

Frederick Douglass spoke to a full sanctuary at the Michigan Street Baptist Church. In 1905, **W.E.B. DuBois**, with other black leaders, planned the Niagara Movement and **Booker T. Washington** addressed crowds in Buffalo. **Mary B. Talbert** campaigned for anti-lynching legislation from her home on Michigan Avenue.



Grover Washington Jr.

Buffalo is where jazz legends like **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Ella Fitzgerald** and **Louis Armstrong** jammed with local musicians at the Colored Musicians Club. Writer **Ishmael Reed** and pop R&B icon **Rick James** hail from Buffalo. "Queen of Soul" **Aretha Franklin** (and her sisters) sang in a Buffalo church choir where her father served as a pastor. Buffalo is where the late **Grover Washington Jr.** cultivated the smooth in his sax. **Cleveland Witherspoon** invented the electronic car starter here. The vibrations of the African American experience are palpable in Buffalo. Catch the rhythm and realize the whole American story is right here.



CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Black Buffalo History</i>	2-3
<i>A Culture of Festivals</i>	4-6
<i>The Spoken Word Circuit</i>	7
<i>Cultural Institutions</i>	8-9
<i>Historic Sites & Landmarks</i>	10-11
<i>Food for the Soul</i>	12-13
<i>Shopping Stops</i>	14-15
<i>Houses of Worship</i>	16-17
<i>Itineraries</i>	18-25
<i>The Night Scene</i>	26
<i>Family Reunion & Group Event Planner</i>	27-28
<i>References & Acknowledgements</i>	28

In 1816, there were 16 Black residents (nine listed as slaves) included among a Buffalo population of 400. By 1828, that number had grown to a community of about 60 who, shortly thereafter, organized the Vine Street African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Michigan Street Baptist Church. Along with the Colored Presbyterian Church and St. Philip's Episcopal Church, these churches became the cornerstones of activity dedicated to building a free life in the urban North.

At the beginning of the Civil War, the African American population in Buffalo numbered about 500; most were fugitive slaves or their descendants. Proximity to Canada – and to points West – made the city an important Underground Railroad station. Buffalo was pivotal in abolitionist and turn-of-the-century “race relations” movements. In 1843, the high point of the National Negro Convention, hosted by the Vine Street AME Church, was a debate between statesman and Rochester publisher Frederick Douglass and minister Henry Highland Garnett on whether or not the institution of slavery should be overthrown by force.

In 1845, the congregation of the Michigan Street Baptist Church erected its own building at 511 Michigan Avenue. It still stands as the oldest property in the region built and continually owned by African Americans. During the peak

of Underground Railroad activity, the church harbored tired runaways before they crossed the border into Canada. In 1974, the Michigan Street Baptist Church became an official historic site when New York State Governor George Pataki signed the New York Freedom Trail Program Act at the church.

In Broderick Park, on the Niagara River at the foot of Ferry Street, a plaque marks where other runaways crossed treacherous water to salvation.

Proximity to Canada made Buffalo an important Underground Railroad station. The city was pivotal in abolitionist and turn-of-the-century “race relations” movements.

At the turn of the 20th century, Black people flooded into the city from Alabama, Arkansas and Georgia, from Tennessee and the Carolinas. During this first wave of the Great Migration, they found plentiful work in the steel mills and factories and as domestics. And nearly as soon as they arrived, they founded businesses, established services and organized social groups to support their segregated communities.

There were Black-owned hotels, nightclubs, funeral parlors, cleaners, drug stores and restaurants in Buffalo. The city was home to nine Black newspapers, of which The Buffalo

Criterion, founded during this period, is still a vital source of community information. Already established were a grocery cooperative, a Negro Businessman's League, an American Colored Worker's League and the Michigan Avenue YMCA, which was built in 1926 by a Black architect named John R. Brent.

Buffalo also emerged as a place where African Americans gathered to chart their collective future. In 1905, it was the site of the first meeting of the Niagara Convention.

In 1920, Dr. Theodore Kaakaza, a South African physician; Cornelius White, a window washer; Alfred Boykin, a grocer; and Arthur Lewis, publisher of the Buffalo American newspaper formed a local branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. During the time that UNIA Local no. 79 was active, Marcus Garvey made a number of visits.

During the second wave of the Great Migration, beginning from about 1940, new masses of African Americans fled Jim Crow and flowed into the Queen City. As families

relocated and sent back for other family members and friends, the Black population grew to 75,000.

As the population increased, the network of support for life in the urban North increased in proportion. The evolution of this network – defined by a strong sense of family, faith and cultural tradition – forms the heartbeat of the present-day city. Buffalo is more than 37 percent African American and nearly 50 percent people of color.

During the summer, almost every glorious weekend in Buffalo offers a celebration of African American culture and heritage. Each December the African American community comes together in one of the few collective weeklong Kwanzaa celebrations in the country.

Within Buffalo's African American community, there is a genteel glow of Southern/African tradition and American wisdom. The light fills its clubs and churches and celebrations of self-love carried from grandmothers and generations past.

Strong ancestral spirits hold the soul of the Buffalo legacy safe - with steady and persevering pride.

➤ MARY BURNETT TALBERT



Mary Burnett Talbert was one of the most committed, versatile and tireless champions of social and political reform for race relations, anti-lynching and women's rights.

Born in Ohio in 1866, she graduated from Oberlin College before moving to Little Rock, Arkansas to teach.

When she arrived in Buffalo in 1891 - as the bride of prominent real estate broker William H. Talbert - she already had earned distinction as the first Black high school principal in the state of Arkansas.

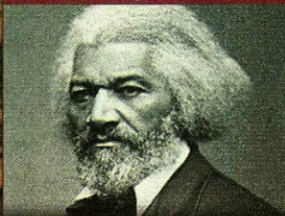
In 1899, as a member of the Michigan Street Baptist Church, Talbert helped found the Phyllis Wheatley Club, the city's first affiliate of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC).

She also played a pivotal role in the advent of the Niagara Movement. In 1905, she opened her Michigan Avenue home to W.E.B. DuBois and 27 others for a secret planning meeting of the famous civil rights summit.

By 1910 Talbert was lecturing nationally and internationally. In 1916 she became president of the NACWC, and during her two terms was instrumental in the restoration of the Frederick Douglass Home in Anacostia, Maryland. She also was president, vice president and director of the NAACP, and as chairman of its Anti-Lynching Committee lobbied nationally for passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. During World War I, she assisted with war loan drives, and became a Red Cross nurse with the American expeditionary forces in France. A year before her death in 1922, Talbert became the first African American woman to receive the prestigious NAACP Spingarn Award. She rests today in Forest Lawn Cemetery and Garden Mausoleum.

Frederick Douglass

Underground Railroad river crossing re-enactment



BLACK BUFFALO HISTORY

A Last Stop Before Freedom