The Green Book:
A Different Perspective on Mapping Maggie Walker's Neighborhood

Target audience: 11th grade VA/ US History

Ties to Virginia Standards of Learning: History and Social Science SOLs: VUS.8c

Materials: Access to internet images

Abstract: In this lesson, students will use primary sources to discover ways African Americans coped during the era of Jim Crow and racial segregation.

In the 1930's, roads were open to all motorists, but the facilities that lined them were not. African Americans who could afford to purchase a car declared the automobile was a way to avoid the humiliation of the Jim Crow car on the railroads. The discriminatory policies of hotels, tourist cabins, and other lodgings made highway travel difficult, and African American motorists did not enjoy the same "freedom" of the open road. African Americans responded by creating African American holiday resorts such as Idlewild, Michigan, and by creating guides to help travelers negotiate their way through the racially charged American byways in the South.

In 1936, a travel agent from New York City, Victor Green, published the first edition of the *Negro Motorist Green Book.* What started as a local guide later expanded to include nationwide listing of businesses such as hotels, restaurants and retailers which would serve black customers. The 1940 edition was prepared by Green who then partnered with the United States Travel Bureau. The book cost twenty five cents and was marketed as covering "Hotels, Taverns, Garages, Night-Clubs, Restaurants, Service-Stations, Automotive, Tourist-Homes, Road-Houses, Barber-Shops, Beauty-Parlors."

Many of the businesses in Jackson Ward appeared in these editions of the Green Book. Students will download the pdf version of the book (see links below) and research which businesses in Maggie Walker's neighborhood were included in Green's guide for African American travelers. Students will then locate the Jackson Ward businesses which were considered safe or friendly towards African American tourists using a map of Mrs. Walker's neighborhood.

Richmond has a significant collection of places listed in the National Register of Historic Places that document the important role of African Americans in the city's history. The oldest surviving properties generally date to the opening decades of the 19th century and later. Many are within the boundaries of the Jackson Ward Historic District, which the Secretary of the Interior designated a National Historic Landmark because of its nationally significant associations with African American history.

After the closing of the transatlantic slave trade to the United States in 1808, Richmond became a major center of the domestic slave trade. Owners of slaves from Virginia plantations brought them to Richmond to sell to owners developing new plantations in the Deep South. While no places relating to the slave trade are registered, many having to do with slavery are listed in the National Register. A large portion of Richmond's slave population worked as "domestics." Auxiliary buildings that served as quarters for the domestic slaves and as household kitchens survive in older portions of Richmond. "Kitchen quarters" remain behind antebellum houses in the St. John's Church Historic District and in the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Historic District. The Virginia Governor's Mansion has a kitchen quarter dating from between 1811 and 1813.

Slaves hired out by their masters played an essential role in the development of Richmond as a major industrial center in the antebellum period. They were an important part of the work force at the Tredegar Iron Works and other iron foundries. Hired slaves also provided the majority of the labor for Richmond's tobacco industry performing the intensive hand labor needed to stem tobacco leaves and make plugs of chewing tobacco. Several surviving examples of tobacco factory buildings where this work took place are in the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Historic District. After emancipation, African Americans continued to do essential work in the tobacco industry in the many tobacco related buildings from this later period that remain in the district.

African Americans also played a vital role in creating and maintaining Richmond's transportation network during the antebellum period. Between 1785 and the decades leading up to the Civil War, African Americans and Irish immigrants helped to construct the James River and Kanawha Canal, the first canal in the United States. Slaves and free blacks made up many of the skilled bateau crews that navigated Virginia rivers to bring cargoes into Richmond from as far away as the Allegheny Mountains in the western part of the state.

Slaves and free African Americans established several church congregations and burial associations before the Civil War. Surviving antebellum churches include Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church in the Jackson Ward Historic District. Both of these churches date from the 1850's. Burial Associations organized as early as 1815 to create a number of adjoining burial grounds preserved today as the Barton Heights Cemeteries. Richmond's free black population owned property and built houses in antebellum Richmond. Surviving examples from the 1850s include the Miller House in the Oregon Hill Historic District and the Adams House in the Jackson Ward Historic District.

Prompted by the ending of slavery and the disruption of rural Virginia caused by the Civil War, many African Americans relocated to Richmond during Reconstruction. They were essential in rebuilding the city's infrastructure and economy. During the late 19th century, the growing black population constructed a substantial amount of housing. Jackson Ward developed into the largest concentration of African Americans and the center of black life in the city. The considerable number of skilled black builders constructed homes not only in Jackson Ward but also in other parts of the city such as the Carver Residential Historic District. Their buildings ranged from modest row houses to substantial homes for Richmond's black leadership. Among the finest examples is the 100 block of East Leigh Street, known as "Quality Row" because of the many African American notables residing there. The most distinguished house on the block is the home of Maggie L. Walker.

Some important black churches survive from this era in the Carver Residential, Jackson Ward, and Manchester Residential and Commercial Historic District. Individually designated church buildings include the former First African Baptist Church building of 1876, the one-time seat of Richmond's oldest black congregation, and Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, organized in 1867 by the noted preacher Reverend John Jasper, rebuilt in 1887 and remodeled in 1925.

In the decades preceding and following the turn of the 20th century, African Americans organized fraternal and beneficial associations. Richmond was the national headquarters of significant fraternal organizations, including the United Order of True Reformers and the Order of St. Luke. The home of the True Reformer's Bank founder, W. W. Browne, is in the Jackson Ward Historic District. In 1886, Browne operated the True Reformer's Bank from his home, the first bank in the United States chartered by and for African Americans. Constructed in 1902 and expanded in 1917, the St. Luke Building is a significant African American landmark that housed a bank, fraternal insurance company, newspaper, and an auditorium. In 1903, Maggie Lena Walker established St. Luke Penny Savings Bank there, becoming the first African American woman bank president in the United States.

African American businesses thrived during this period, many in the Jackson Ward Historic District. One of the most substantial was the A. D. Price Funeral Home, which dates from 1902. The success of economic development activities by fraternal organizations prompted the establishment of for-profit black financial enterprises. Office buildings of insurance companies, including the Richmond Beneficial and Home Benefit, survive in Jackson Ward, as do bank buildings such as those of Mechanics Savings Bank and Second Street Bank.

Richmond also has several historic educational buildings associated with African Americans. The first public high school for black students was in the White House of the Confederacy. In 1891, the school moved to the Booker T. Washington Elementary School in the Jackson Ward Historic District. Constructed in 1871, Booker T. Washington is the oldest surviving purposely built public school building in Richmond. The city also has two other historic high school buildings that served black students, the old Armstrong High School in the Jackson Ward Historic District dating from 1922 and the Maggie L. Walker High School from 1936.

African Americans sought higher education in Richmond at Virginia Union University. The centerpiece of the university consists of two individual National Register listings: the original Romanesque campus buildings dating from 1899 and the Belgian Building, a modernist addition to the campus. Built by the Belgian government for exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair, then later moved to the Virginia Union campus in 1940, the Belgian Building is of particular interest for its sculptural groups representing the Congo.

Richmond is the location for one of the more unusual public buildings in the United States associated with African Americans. The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory in the Jackson Ward Historic District is a massive castellated Gothic building constructed for African American troops. This landmark is possibly the oldest armory for black soldiers in the United States in addition to being the oldest armory building in Virginia.

The work of Richmond's African American architects is represented in the National Register. Early in the 20th century, black architects began to be responsible for buildings in the Jackson Ward Historic District. In 1907, Washington architect John Lankford designed the W. L. Taylor Mansion, one of the largest homes constructed for an African American in the United States. Charles Russell designed a number of commercial buildings, churches, and homes. The Hughes House from 1914 is an important example of his work. Harvey Nathaniel Johnson, a protégé of Russell, was the architect of the house at 104 West Jackson Street that dates from 1919.

Much of the historic fabric of Richmond reflects the legacy of African Americans. They made significant contributions to the development of transportation and industry that turned Richmond into a major city. After the Civil War Richmond became a nationally important center of African American business and fraternal organizations. Listings in the National Register of Historic Places recognize the long and vital role of African Americans in the history of the city.

Resources:
http://www.nps.gov/history/NR/travel/richmond/AfricanAmericanessay.html
http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/R_Casestudy2.htm

PDF download of the Green Book:
http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/Negro_motorist_green_bk.htm

Map of Jackson Ward district in Richmond, VA:
http://www.jacksonward.com/

1936 EST.

1940 EDITION

THE NEGRO MOTORIST GREEN-BOOK

Hotels
Taverns
Garages
Night-Clubs
Restaurants
Service-Stations
Automotive
Tourist-Homes
Road-Houses
Barber-Shops
Beauty-Parlors

Prepared in cooperation with
The United States Travel Bureau

Victor H. Green – Publisher
938 St. Nicholas, Ave. New York City

Price-25¢