

Indiana Avenue Walk and Talk Hosted by [Sampson](#)



Yesterday on December 5th, 2020 I attended the Indian Avenue Walk and Talk tour. As luck would have it, I was the only person to sign up for the tour that day, so I got the ample opportunity to talk; it was just Sampson, Hanna his assistant, and me. Luckily, it was a

sunny but cold day. After a moment of silence in remembrance of Scott Beatty who was killed this year, we started our tour. The tour started across the street from the Urban League building where the sculpture of the musical instruments. The tour guide played music from the golden era of the avenue and commented on the Urban League Building across the street. I interjected how a major street by the airport is named for Sam Jones. Time didn't allow me to add that so often streets in non-Black areas a named for Black persons. As the tour began, Sampson mention that the tour would go south on Indiana Avenue, then go along the Canal, then come back along the Cultural Trail. I remarked that the bulk of my memories were on the west side of the Avenue. As we proceeded south of the Urban League Building, Sampson pointed out the several reference to Michal Taylor in the Black Lives Matter Mural. My thoughts were how his killing affected my mother, and I also mentioned that my son John was the artist for the letter with the ballot box in the mural. The next stop was the Walker Building. Sampson gave a really good overview of the significance the Walker Building, and how it fit into Indianapolis history. I interjected that my wife Joyce had a secretarial business in the building in 1980's, at the time in which many properties were changing hands.



Our next stop was the historical marker on the west street side of the Walker building. The sculpture also had a musical theme. I was invited to sit in on a Jam session with the musicians. I didn't think to had Hanna my phone to get a picture, Covid-19 made that awkward. A banner next to the Curt Vonnegut Museum listed several prominent musicians with ties to Indiana Avenue. I couldn't help but muse that the last time I was in that building, it was at a luncheon hosted by a long-standing Black organization for a meet and greet for local Black politicians.

As we crossed the street to get on the south side, Sampson made mention again to Wes Montgomery, that help sooth my angst. On the other side of the street was another historical marker. I've often whizzed by these places worrying about being in the right lane to make it through the intersection, I never even realized these markers were here.

We proceeded towards downtown and our next stop was the building that currently houses the Sonrisa Dental offices. Our family dentist Robert Stokes is a member of this practice. Sampson explained the plaque on the side of the building commemorates an important feature of the earlier use of the building by a critical pharmacy. A set of square tiles on the floor of the entryway of the building was used to explain the naming of streets in downtown. Most of this I knew, but some of it I didn't know, and once Sampson explained it, it all made sense. After leaving the Sonrisa offices we crossed over to the north side of the street, from there we were able to look down on the canal of the walkways next to it. Our next stop was a half block north of the Avenue where we viewed the marker of the Senate Avenue Branch of the YMCA. Sampson remarked that Madame Walker donated a thousand dollars for a Men's facility. On the reverse side of the marker is listed the names of those who attended. I remarked that my sister's middle name is Eleanor, and Sampson chimed in he has a relative named Theodore Roosevelt, I thought who doesn't and offered up our Lee Andrew Jackson. I continued, we've been loving America, it's just not loving us back. At this point, we made our way back to Indiana Avenue.



Upon arriving on the Avenue, Sampson laid several pictures on the sidewalk and talked about the corner we were standing on "then and now". He also continued to talk about the Indianapolis recorder. He tied in the issue that simultaneously covered the death of Michael Taylor and the announcement of his marketing position at the White River State Park. The Indy Star tends not to cover both of these items in the same edition. Earlier I was asked about growing up here, and I remarked that I was essentially away from 1966 through 1976, and the city changed quite a bit during that decade. As we gazed towards downtown, noting that Monument Circle was hidden by the AUL building, brought that home. The pictures that Sampson had laid out on the sidewalk made it vivid to me how much had changed. As we continued south, Sampson pointed out a picture taken long ago, of a store with a coke-Cola sign, and how now a Coke Vending machine is in almost the same spot.





We made our way to a building just north of the Avenue, Musicians Repair. Thanks to the Super Bowl a wonderful mural depicting many of our City's best-known musicians. As we gazed at the mural Hanna played some vintage music. I interjected my memories of buying Clarinet and Bassoon reeds there.

Next, we headed for the Canal portion of our tour. It occurred to me that I come around these things all the time, yet don't see or appreciate them. While walking along the canal, it really hit me how close this touristy area is to our beloved Indiana Avenue. Joyce was one of the speakers at the remembrance of the [closing of Bethel AME Church](#). I commented on the loss of Bethel AME, catching crawdads in the canal as a kid, and seeing the perspective of the Walker Building from the Canal Walk. After leaving the Canal, we headed back to Ransom Place.

As we crossed West street, I recalled stories my sister would tell me about how the family would often go on weekends to the Cooperative Grocery Store our Dad was the president to stock items. The store was located at 812 N. West and moved to 1006 N. West the week after I was born. Imagine, the Cultural Trail passing right by the location of a vibrant food coop without any mention.

Page 6--THE INDIANAPOLIS RECORDER, FEB. 7, 1918

Co-Op Grocery to Move Store, New Site 1006 N. West

The Peoples Cooperative grocery store located 812 N. West street will be open for business at its new location at 1006 N. West st on Monday, Feb. 9 according to members of the board of directors. It was announced this week.

The store will become completely self service and will offer a fine line of meats, fresh vegetables and other staples. The staff or management will be continued in the former location. Jay Smith, manager; Herbert Hines, assistant manager and Henry Pierson will be on hand to meet friends and patrons.

A. A. Moore, president of the board announces that at a recent meeting it was decided to expand the service of the Co-Op by selling additional stock. The stock will be offered to present shareholders and if the issue is not sold it will be offered to the public.

As we explored Ransom Place I noted how, some areas in Zionsville in the 1970's reminded me of the way I remembered Random Place in the early 1950's. We stopped at a corner store that had a political sticker on the window; for the 1960's; I remarked that the politician (Birch Bayh) gave a rally at my high school in his first run for senate. The next day I read that Senator Bayh came the closet to [changing the Electoral College](#) mode of electing presidents. At the beginning of our tour, I mentioned that I had two aunts who lived near by the Avenue, on Camp and on Paca. It was weird when we walked down Camp street. Where I recalled her house being is now a "Threplex". Our next stop was the Ransom Place historical marker complete with a sittings area, to reflect on the name of the families and streets that made up this vibrant community. So much of the tour has been about the notable and the talented tenth, this resting place commemorates the people like the rest of us.

Our tour ended a short distance away just north of the Urban League building where it began at the sculpture of the reflection, that drives home the point that each of us view things differently and our view is constantly changing over time; my view of Indiana Avenue is like so many others, but uniquely my own.

Earlier this year I discovered that my Grandfather's last address was listed as 427 Agnes Street. Our tour ends about five blocks from where my grandfather lived in 1928. About five blocks from where I participated in the group reading of the 1619 Project overview a little over a year ago; my year of discovery that began on the IUPUI Campus with a program about the 1619 Project is now marked by gazing at the sculpture here at the 800 block of Indiana avenue. Your perspective changes based on where and when you are looking at things. Being on this short tour made me realize how many things have and are going on. While to tour focused on music, it could have easily focused on the many facets of Black life that could have be commemorated in this historical district.

On November 6, 2019 Joyce and I attended a presentation related to the [1619 Project](#), on the IUPUI campus. The group in attendance was primarily college students and staff, with a few [ASALH](#) members. Our neighbor Anthony Artis and his drum troupe provided the opening for the presentation. The focus of the presentation was the group reading and discussion of the Our democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true. By Nikole Hannah-Jones (<https://nikolehannahjones.com/>). The primary event was the group reading of part of Nikole Hannah-Jones's introduction to her award-winning investigative report covering racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine. A 2016 Peabody Award winner for her series on school segregation for "This American Life" and 2017 MacArthur Fellow, Hannah-Jones was most recently the lead journalist for the 1619 Project. Little did we know what the world would be like in 2020! "America's traditional origin stories don't work for everyone and now is the time to wrestle with the meaning of who we are and who we want to be in order to bring America closer to its promises". Presented by Spirit & Place, Butler Arts Center, IUPUI Africana Studies Program, Central Indiana Community Foundation and Indiana University Bloomington Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies.



Every story has a beginning, middle and end, I am somewhere in the middle of my journey.
