

WAVING THE RED, BLACK, AND GREEN:  
THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL VISION OF THE UNIVERSAL NEGRO IMPROVEMENT  
ASSOCIATION IN AKRON AND BARBERTON, OHIO

by

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## ABSTRACT

Waving the Red, Black, and Green: The Local and Global Vision of the Universal Negro  
Improvement Association in Akron and Barberton, Ohio

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This micro study of the Akron and Barberton, Ohio, Divisions of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) adds to the understanding the geographic diversity of the Garvey Movement's expansive reach. It begins to uncover the importance of Garveyism in the Midwest and in Ohio, specifically, where the UNIA's presence was larger than in any other Midwestern state. Black people in Akron and Barberton who, like millions of others around the world, joined Marcus Garvey's global, Pan-African organization and embraced Garveyism's holistic pursuit of Black liberation. Living in Midwestern rustbelt cities at the intersection of the Great Migration and the global rubber industry, they were uniquely linked to the Garvey Movement's global initiatives and the transatlantic conflict between the UNIA and the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Liberia. Garveyites in these cities recognized their local organizing as part of a larger struggle against systemic antiblackness, white supremacy, and colonialism in Africa and asserted themselves as local, regional, and global actors. Through genealogy and family history research, this study looks beyond the UNIA's international leaders to reconstruct the history of Garveyites, their families, and in turn their grassroots social movement. It also

examines local intergenerational legacies of Garveyism and challenges the dominant narrative that the Garvey Movement died with its leader in 1940. This study demonstrates how Garveyism persisted through the lives of its members and their descendants.

*To Akron and Barberton's Garveyites and their descendants*



## CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Tables .....	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 The UNIA and Firestone in Liberia .....	13
Chapter 2 The UNIA in Akron and Barberton.....	53
Chapter 3 Membership of the Akron and Barberton Divisions of the UNIA.....	110
Chapter 4 Liberty Hall and the Geography of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton .....	155
Conclusion The Lasting Impact of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton.....	182
Appendix A Timeline of the Akron and Barberton UNIA Divisions.....	207
Appendix B UNIA Presence in Ohio.....	247
Appendix C Ohio’s UNIA Cities by Population, 1920.....	248
Appendix D Leadership of the Akron and Barberton Divisions.....	249
Appendix E Membership (Unedited).....	252
Appendix F Membership (Cross-referenced) .....	256
Appendix G Photographs of Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites .....	259
Appendix H Supplementary Images: UNIA in the E. Center Street Neighborhood of Akron, 1921-1930 .....	267

Appendix I Frequency of the name Marcus among African Americans .....	269
Bibliography .....	270

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. UNIA Presence in Ohio.....	66
Figure 2. Eliza Porch, 1925.....	70
Figure 3. Second Baptist Church, 1948. ....	73
Figure 4. Officers of Ohio divisions in Cleveland Conference, 1928. ....	88
Figure 5. Marcus Garvey’s tour schedule, February 1924.....	95
Figure 6. Negro Patriot medal, 1925.....	100
Figure 7. Akron UNIA officers and preamble, 1922.....	117
Figure 8. Genealogical chart of family networks in the Akron UNIA’s 1922 leadership. ....	120
Figure 9. Birthplaces of Akron and Barberton’s UNIA members. ....	121
Figure 10. Residences of UNIA members in Akron, 1920-1941. ....	158
Figure 11. UNIA in the E. Center Street neighborhood of Akron, 1921-1930.....	165
Figure 12. Liberty Hall at 325 N. Howard Street. ....	172
Figure 13. Residences of UNIA members near Howard Street, 1920-1941.....	174
Figure 14. Residences of UNIA members in Barberton, 1920-1941.....	177
Figure 15. Liberty Hall on Wolf Street.....	179
Figure 16. Liberian Delegation, 1944.....	187
Figure 17. Locating Akron’s E. Center Street Neighborhood. ....	267
Figure 18. Unobstructed aerial view of the E. Center Street Neighborhood. ....	268
Figure 19. Frequency of the name Marcus among African Americans in the US Census .....	269

*Additional photographs of Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites are included in appendix G.*

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Age of UNIA members in Akron and Barberton in 1925.....	144
Table 2. Ohio's UNIA cities by population, 1920 .....	248

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## INTRODUCTION

Like millions of others around the world, Black people in Akron and Barberton, Ohio, joined Marcus Garvey's global, Pan-African organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and embraced Garveyism's holistic pursuit of Black liberation. Through the UNIA, Garveyites in Akron and Barberton saw their local organizing as part of a larger struggle against systemic antiblackness, white supremacy, and colonialism. This study of two UNIA divisions in northeastern Ohio, Akron Division No. 215 and Barberton Division No. 408, pushes forward the historical understanding of these neighboring cities, as well as the historiography of the Garvey Movement. Uncovering the history of these divisions, located in Midwestern rustbelt cities at the center of the global rubber industry, demonstrates the vastness, diversity, and importance of the Garvey Movement in the interwar period. The UNIA was expansive in both its number of supporters and geographic reach, and it was as deep as it was wide. Participants in the Garvey Movement dedicated their lives to the organization's program. Alluding to the national flag designed and adopted by the UNIA, President Moses T. Wimbish of the Akron Division proclaimed in the *Negro World*, "We shall never be content until the Red, the Black, and the Green have been planted on the hilltops of Africa and hear the voice of Marcus Garvey, 'Africa has been redeemed.'"<sup>1</sup> Through the social movement of the UNIA, Akron and Barberton's Garveyites asserted themselves as local, regional, and global actors. They embraced Garveyism as a grassroots social movement, beyond the limits of the organization, and left intergenerational legacies of Garveyism.

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1. "The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922.



Aside from primary sources published by Garvey and the UNIA, and Amy Jacques Garvey's compilation of her husband's *Philosophies and Opinions*, the Garvey Movement received infrequent attention from scholars until the 1970s. Works published before then were very critical of Garvey or minimized the importance of the movement.<sup>2</sup> While earlier works played a foundational role in the field of Garveyism, the scholars of the 70s and 80s—including Theodore Vincent, Shawna Maglangbayan, Tony Martin, Emory Tolbert, Robert Hill, Judith Stein, Randall Burkett, Rupert Lewis, Liz Mackie, and John Henrik Clarke—paved the way for the growth of the field by writing more balanced monographs that discussed Garvey and the ideologies of the movement seriously.<sup>3</sup> These studies focused on the Garvey Movement as a whole, providing a much needed foundation for the field. Many of these works were biographies and held the Parent Body in Harlem as their focal point, which while crucial also left many avenues to be explored. This generation of scholars also greatly contributed to the field by adding to the body of published primary sources on the Garvey Movement, most notably Robert

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2. For some examples, see Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955); Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). For further explanation of the scholarly neglect of Garveyism by American historians, see Adam Ewing, "The Challenge of Garveyism Studies," *Modern American History* 1, no. 3 (November 2018): 399–418.

3. Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2006); Shawna Maglangbayan, *Garvey, Lumumba and Malcolm: Black National-Separatists* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1979); Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover: Majority Press, 1986); Emory J. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles: Ideology and Community in the American Garvey Movement* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California Los Angeles, 1980); Robert A. Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 1–10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press [for] the American Theological Library Association, 1978); Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992); Liz Mackie, *The Great Marcus Garvey* (London: Hansib Pub., 1987); John Henrik Clarke, ed., *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

Hill's extensive series *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*.

Historians of Garveyism, now supported by a significant foundation, have begun to direct attention towards more specific aspects of the movement. Scholars have engaged with the movement's ideology, its religious influence, the central role of women in the movement, its lasting significance in community organizing, biographies of UNIA leaders beyond Garvey, and localized studies of UNIA divisions that explore its geographic diversity.

This dissertation joins those studies in answering long-standing calls from scholars to direct attention towards local studies of the Garvey Movement in order to uncover a clearer picture of the vast and diverse movement that emerged in this era. Scholars of Black Power and Civil Rights have similarly shifted in recent years toward local studies to show the diversity of experiences within those movements and also to draw regional generalizations.<sup>4</sup> Local studies of the UNIA explore how the organization functioned locally and how Garvey's message manifested at the community level—from the bottom up. Looking at the local contexts in which Garveyites lived reveals much about regional differences in this far-reaching Pan-African organization. It uncovers how regional environments impacted the actions of local divisions like

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4. Only a few examples are cited here: Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, and Charles M. Payne, *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*. (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Andrew Witt, *The Black Panthers in the Midwest: The Community Programs and Services of the Black Panther Party in Milwaukee, 1966-1977* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Judson L. Jeffries, *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Peniel E. Joseph, *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jules Boykoff and Martha Gies, "'We're Going to Defend Ourselves': The Portland Chapter of the Black Panther Party and the Local Media Response," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111, no. 3 (2010): 278–311; Judson L. Jeffries, ed., *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011); Jakobi Williams, "'Don't No Woman Have to Do Nothing She Don't Want to Do': Gender, Activism, and the Illinois Black Panther Party," *Black Women, Gender + Families* 6, no. 2 (2012): 29–54; Clarence Lang, "Locating the Civil Rights Movement: An Essay on the Deep South, Midwest, and Border South in Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 2 (2013): 371–400; Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

Akron and Barberton's. The Garvey Movement became much more than its leader and its New York-based headquarters. Garveyism was not fully dependent on Garvey, the man. For example, Marcus Garvey visited Akron and wowed crowds as he spoke on two occasions (the great importance of these visits is discussed in subsequent chapters), yet he *only* visited Akron twice during over two decades of local UNIA organizing. The Akron and Barberton Divisions, like many others, had space to develop somewhat independently from the Parent Body and continued their dedication to the principles of Garveyism even while the international leadership was facing difficulties. Garveyite organizing took on a life of its own in cities and towns across the world.

The first in-depth local study of a UNIA division was published by Emory Tolbert in 1980. He placed the Los Angeles Division within the history of that city and tied the UNIA to local Black history, politics, and organizing. He analyzed the division's membership demographically, ideologically, and geographically. Additional localized studies were slow to follow, especially those with the same depth as Tolbert's. Shorter local studies on divisions in Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the United States began to recognize and confirm the immensity of this movement that claimed millions of members.<sup>5</sup> Each of these studies repeated the call for further localized studies and the need to decentralize narratives of the Garvey Movement.

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5. Some examples of local studies, excluding studies in Africa and the US South that are mentioned elsewhere: Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Frances Peace Sullivan, "'Forging Ahead' in Banes, Cuba: Garveyism in a United Fruit Company Town," *New West Indian Guide* 99, no. 3-4 (2014): 231-61; Ronald Harpelle, "Cross Currents in the Western Caribbean: Marcus Garvey and the UNIA in Central America," *Caribbean Studies* 31, no. 1 (2003): 35-73; Marc C. McLeod, "'Sin Dejar de Ser Cubanos': Cuban Blacks and the Challenges of Garveyism in Cuba," *Caribbean Studies* 31, no. 1 (2003): 75-105; Rhoda Reddock, "The First Mrs Garvey: Pan-Africanism and Feminism in the Early 20th Century British Colonial Caribbean," *Feminist Africa*, January 1, 2014, 58-77; Alejandra Rengifo, "Marx, Garvey y Gaitán: Palimpsesto Ideológico En 'Chambacú, Corral de Negros,'" *Afro-Hispanic Review* 20, no. 1 (2001): 36-42; Asia Leeds, "Toward the 'Higher Type of Womanhood': The Gendered Contours of Garveyism and the Making of Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica, 1922-1941," *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1-27.

Ronald Stephens also published an instructional guide for conducting studies of local UNIA divisions. The present study falls in line with recommendations by Stephens, and studies by Emory Tolbert and Mary Rolinson, who pushed their works to an even more micro level to understand the general membership and “rank-and-file” of the UNIA.<sup>6</sup> Because the majority of Akron and Barberton’s UNIA members were Southern migrants, the works of Claudrena Harold, Mary Rolinson, Barbara Bair, and Jarod Roll on Garveyism in the American South offer especially valuable insight to this study.<sup>7</sup> To unearth the history of these Ohio divisions, after identifying members through primary sources, I relied heavily on local newspapers and genealogical sources to rebuild the history of Garveyites, their families, and in turn their movement. These sources are discussed in greater detail in chapter 3. By combining genealogy research within a framework of community studies, I was able to build an understanding of what the UNIA looked like locally, regionally, and internationally. Perhaps counterintuitively, looking at individual actors and families in Akron and Barberton allowed me to uncover networks that stretched across the United States and the world.

Of the slowly growing number of local studies, only a few have directed their attention to Garveyism in the Midwest and even fewer to Ohio.<sup>8</sup> Ohio had more UNIA divisions than any

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6. Ronald J. Stephens, “Methodological Considerations for Micro Studies of UNIA Divisions,” *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 281–315; Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (London: Routledge, 2007); Mary J. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles*.

7. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*; Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*; Barbara Bair, “Garveyism and Contested Political Terrain in 1920s Virginia,” in *Afro-Virginian History and Culture*, ed. John Saillant, Crosscurrents in African American History (New York: Garland, 1999); Jarod Roll, “Garveyism and the Eschatology of African Redemption in the Rural South, 1920-1936,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 20, no. 1 (2010): 27–56.

8. Kenneth Jolly brings long-deserved attention to William Sherrill, a leading figure in Midwestern Garveyism who frequently travelled to divisions in the region as a state commissioner and later as president-general, Kenneth S. Jolly, *By Our Own Strength: William Sherrill, the UNIA, and the Fight for African American Self-Determination in Detroit* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); Ronald Stephens also researched the UNIA in Idlewild,

other Midwestern state, yet only two article-length studies consider the UNIA there.<sup>9</sup> Ohio's divisions represent an extreme diversity in circumstances that resulted in the formation of UNIA divisions in places ranging from small, rural, unincorporated towns up to Ohio's largest city of Cleveland, with a population that surpassed 800,000 residents in 1920. Erik McDuffie's study of the UNIA in Cleveland makes important arguments for the significance of the Midwest within the African Diaspora and the central position of women in the UNIA.<sup>10</sup> However, Cleveland, as the by-far largest city in Ohio, was an outlier in the experience of most Ohioans. When comparing the findings from this study to McDuffie's findings in Cleveland, there are significant differences which highlight the need for further study of the UNIA in Ohio and the Midwest in general. The experience of the Cleveland Division is not representative of any of the more than forty other cities with a UNIA presence in Ohio. This study begins to fill this gap. Mark Christian, meanwhile, offers a micro study of one UNIA parade in Columbus.<sup>11</sup> Christian and McDuffie's studies, however, were both published as articles and limited by their lengths. Instead, these articles called for the further exploration of Garveyite activity in the Midwest. My

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Michigan, publishing his findings in various places: Ronald J. Stephens, *Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan* (Chicago: Arcadia, 2001); Ronald J. Stephens, "Garveyism in Idlewild, 1927 to 1936," *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 4 (2004): 462–88; Stephens, "Methodological Considerations for Micro Studies of UNIA Divisions"; Ronald J. Stephens, "The Impact of Garvey and Garveyism in Colorado and Michigan," in *New Perspectives on the History of Marcus Garvey, the U.N.I.A., and the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia: Marcus Garvey Foundation Publishers, 2011), 39–45; Ronald J. Stephens, *Idlewild: The Rise, Decline, and Rebirth of a Unique African American Resort Town* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013); Ronald J. Stephens, "Marcus M. Garvey and Joseph A. Craigen: Collaborations and Conflicts," in *Global Garveyism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019).

9. Ohio had at least 39 divisions in 1926, the most out of any Midwestern state and outnumbered only by Louisiana, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Mississippi in the US. Martin, *Race First*, 15.

10. Erik S. McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest: 1920-1975," *African Identities* 9, no. 2 (2011): 163–82.

11. Mark Christian, "Marcus Garvey and the Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): With Special Reference to the 'Lost' Parade in Columbus, Ohio, September 25, 1923," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 3 (2004): 424–34.

work adds to these and begins to build a clearer picture of the UNIA in Ohio. This study takes an in-depth look into the activities, membership, and geography of two divisions and brings attention to the benefits of continued study of the Garvey Movement in urban and rural Ohio.

Recent scholarship has turned towards understanding the Garvey Movement's global connections, with works focusing on Garveyism outside of the United States such as Ewing's *Age of Garvey*, the edited volume *Global Garveyism*, and many of the articles mentioned earlier. This study complements this trend by acknowledging Akron and Barberton as sites connected to the global Garvey Movement. Considering these cities within a transatlantic framework allows this study to simultaneously be a local and global examination of the UNIA. Specifically, it connects Ohio divisions with the Garvey Movement in Liberia, exemplary of what Erik McDuffie calls the "diasporic Midwest." He argues the Midwest is often marginalized in African Diaspora studies and proposes that the region provides a unique context for participation in the Diaspora. The Midwest in general, and Akron and Barberton specifically, were sites of diasporic participation and understood by contemporaries to be very important to the global Garveyite network.

The historiography of Black Freedom Struggles in some cities, as lamented by Kenneth Jolly in his discussion of Detroit, leans toward a progressive, integrationist narrative that celebrates increasing national successes, rather than acknowledging a reoccurring influence and embrace of Black Nationalist politics in the local arena.<sup>12</sup> This study makes the argument that Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist thinking was central to Black organizing in Akron and Barberton in the twenties and has continuously impacted Black intellectual frameworks in these cities to the present day. In the case of Akron, the historiography of the Black experience is still

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12. Jolly, *By Our Own Strength*, 14–15.

in its early stages, and only a very small amount has been published on Akron's Black history.<sup>13</sup> This includes studies of residential segregation, Black leadership, labor organizing, and self-published memoirs.<sup>14</sup> However, the most comprehensive work on African American history in Akron is a 1975 dissertation by Shirla Robinson McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron," that spans the period from 1825 to 1975. Her study consists of archival research as well as interviews with Akron residents and family members of those who had already passed away. Her work is very helpful for the present study, and reading between the lines can fill in pieces of the history of the UNIA in Akron. McClain's excellent scholarship draws the contours of African American history in Akron, but she surely hoped other scholars would help to fill in the gaps as she dedicated her life to studying this history. McClain's study briefly mentions the Garvey Movement in Akron and a visit by Marcus Garvey yet lacks specific information about the UNIA division and its members. One of many recommendations McClain left at the end of her dissertation was to write Black history biographically, "for many of the biographical sketches of blacks are inspirational and representative of what black masses could accomplish."<sup>15</sup> Many UNIA members have not been recognized in preceding academic works, therefore this study contains a considerable amount of biographical information woven into it. Members of these divisions worked tirelessly toward Black liberation and deserve recognition.

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13. Comprehensive local histories, such as Karl Grismer's *Akron and Summit County*, neglect Akron's rich Black history. In the book's last chapter of over one hundred biographies and attached photos, there is not one Black face included. Karl H. Grismer, *Akron and Summit County* (Akron: Summit County Historical Society, 1952).

14. Warren Louis Woolford, "A Geographic Appraisal of Major Distributional Changes in the Akron, Ohio Black Population, 1930-1970" (master's thesis, University of Akron, 1974); Marguerite Spears, "Some Characteristics of Officers of Selected Negro Organizations in Negro Community" (master's thesis, Kent State University, 1950); John A. Tully, *Labor in Akron, 1825-1945* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2020); Abel A. Bartley, *Akron*, Black America Series (Charleston: Arcadia, 2004); Maxine A. Browne, *149 Palmer Street, Akron, Ohio: "The Way We Were,"* 2nd ed. (Lexington, KY, 2014).

15. Shirla Robinson McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975" (PhD diss., University of Akron, 1975), 418.

The historiography of Barberton is very similar. Only two broad works by Phyllis Taylor, *Talk of the Town: Stories from the Barberton Herald* and *100 Years of Magic: The Story of Barberton, Ohio, 1891-1991*, include Barberton's Black history. While Taylor, a Barberton History Specialist at the Barberton Public Library, made an effort to reach out to Barberton's Black communities at the time of her research, she was still only able to compile "bits and pieces of Black history" which she included in a chapter about Barberton's ethnic heritage.<sup>16</sup> Some memoirs and church histories have also been published.<sup>17</sup> Of course, this is not to say Barberton does not have Black history, only that it has been rarely written and published. This study briefly outlines the early contours of Barberton's Black history and demonstrates the significant role of the Barberton Division of the UNIA, which is also reflected in the self-determination and institution building embraced by Barberton's Black residents over the past century.

Following the significant scholarship that has centered women in the historiography of the Garvey Movement and Black Nationalism and internationalism, I have prioritized and centered women in this project, especially in the research process. Patriarchal and white supremacist influences in documentary evidence can make it more difficult to uncover Black women's stories, as their voices are less frequently recognized in written sources. Researchers must read between the lines. Even in city directories, women can be difficult to follow if their last name changed after marriage. To combat these biases, I put in extra effort to seek out information on the women in this story and amplify their voices. Previous studies of women in

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16. Phyllis Taylor, *100 Years of Magic: The Story of Barberton, Ohio, 1891-1991* (Akron: Summit County Historical Society Press, 1991), 146-47.

17. Billy Taylor and Kevin Allen, *Get Back Up: The Billy Taylor Story* (Wayne, MI: Immortal Investments, 2005); "Our History," Greater Galilee Baptist Church, last modified 2020, <https://www.greatergalileebc.org/ministries>.



the Garvey Movement offer a foundation for the interpretation of available sources.<sup>18</sup> Barbara Bair’s “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement” is a very useful, direct study of gender roles in the UNIA. Ula Taylor’s *Veiled Garvey* is a biography of Amy Jacques Garvey that uses Garvey’s story as a window into gender dynamics and manifestations of patriarchy within the UNIA. Keisha Blain’s work on Pearl Sherrod offers insight into gender dynamics and the actions of women members of the UNIA, and her book *Set the World on Fire* speaks directly to women in the Garvey Movement. Natanya Duncan did the same in her dissertation, “The ‘efficient womanhood’ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association: 1919-1930.” Tiffany Gill’s *Beauty Shop Politics* offers an innovative analysis of beauticians in the Garvey Movement, and this study supports her findings. Erik McDuffie pays close attention to gender and has written about Louise Little, Malcolm X’s mother, and her role in the UNIA. Even with these contributions, however, the study of gender and sexuality is far too marginalized in the study of Garveyism. This project engages with these works and builds upon them by exploring Black women’s experiences on a local level. However, because almost all of the actors in this history have not yet been recognized by historians, I elected to include as many of Akron and Barberton’s dedicated Garveyites as possible, regardless of gender.

Finally, this project considers Garveyism as a phenomenon that originated in the UNIA but stretched far beyond it. In his recent book *The Age of Garvey*, Adam Ewing traces the

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18. Barbara Bair, “True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement,” in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women’s History*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 154–66; Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Keisha N. Blain, “[F]or the Rights of Dark People in Every Part of the World’: Pearl Sherrod, Black Internationalist Feminism, and Afro-Asian Politics during the 1930s,” *Souls* 17, no. 1–2 (2015): 90–112; Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Natanya Duncan, “The ‘Efficient Womanhood’ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association: 1919–1930” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 2008); Erik S. McDuffie, “The Diasporic Journeys of Louise Little: Grassroots Garveyism, the Midwest, and Community Feminism,” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 4, no. 2 (2016): 146–70.

influence of Garvey in East Africa. Ewing uses the concept of Garveyism to encompass all projects inspired by the ideals of Garveyism, showing the trail of Garveyism reaching even further than the thousands of divisions worldwide. He “traces the rhythms of Garveyism more vigorously than its reach.”<sup>19</sup> Ewing finds Garveyism in political and religious groups throughout Southern and Eastern Africa. This methodology is very useful in identifying the importance and vast reach of the Garvey Movement in the 1920s and in considering the lasting impact of the UNIA beyond the 1920s and 30s. Both Ewing and Blain trace the influence of the Garvey Movement beyond the organizational boundaries of the UNIA to appreciate the even wider impact of Garveyism and the women and men who developed and embraced the movement.

I came to this project as someone working towards the destruction of white supremacy and hoping to see Black liberation. Looking to historical examples of Black institution building and efforts toward Black economic independence, and considering tactics that could lead toward the ultimate goal of Black liberation, I began to ask myself, “Why, when Black people have succeeded in institution and wealth building, was it intentionally destroyed?” At the time, I was thinking of the Greenwood Massacre that included the murder, incarceration, bombing, and looting of Tulsa’s Greenwood neighborhood, known as “Black Wall Street.” When I posed the question to my advising professor at the time, he suggested that I turn my attention to the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in Liberia, a company that destroyed the sovereignty of the Black nation. It was during this study that I became more familiar with Firestone and the UNIA’s conflict in Liberia. Influenced by immersion in transatlantic history, I decided to trace this conflict back across the Atlantic to Firestone’s hometown in Akron, which was home to not only

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19. Adam Ewing, *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 10.

the rubber company but also to a division of the UNIA. My initial driving question was if and how this transatlantic conflict between Firestone and the UNIA played out in Akron, but my scope broadened to encompass the history of the Akron and Barberton Divisions, their functions, and their members in their own right.

My line of inquiry is reflected in the organization of this project. Before discussing the local realities of Akron and Barberton, the first chapter is an introduction to the international Garvey Movement, the conflict in Liberia, and Firestone's impact on Liberians. This chapter outlines the transatlantic context that Black Midwesterners and Garveyites in Akron and Barberton saw themselves as being a part of. The second chapter is a loosely chronological account of the Akron and Barberton Divisions that highlights the local, regional, and global activities of the Akron and Barberton Divisions. The third chapter turns its attention to the membership of these divisions, uncovering demographic trends and shared experiences amongst members. The fourth chapter considers these divisions spatially with special attention to Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the local divisions. The concluding chapter reflects on the lasting impact of the Akron and Barberton Divisions through generations up to the present day.

Through the UNIA, Garveyites in Akron and Barberton, saw themselves as intimately connected to the African Diaspora and the global struggle for Black freedom. By exploring the activities, members, and geographies of the Akron and Barberton's UNIA Divisions, we gain a greater understanding of who embraced Black (inter)nationalism and Pan-Africanism and how they engaged in a global movement from their homes in the Midwest.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE UNIA AND FIRESTONE IN LIBERIA

Millions of people, including residents of Akron and Barberton, Ohio, were drawn to Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Calling for self-determination, race pride, and African redemption from colonialism, it became the largest freedom movement of people of African descent in the twentieth century. The organization was founded in Jamaica and headquartered in the United States, but not limited by these national boundaries. Africans and people of African descent throughout North and South America, the Caribbean, Australia, and Europe supported the organization and formed divisions of their own, amounting to over one thousand by 1922.<sup>1</sup> This chapter describes the formation and ideological foundations of the UNIA that captured the hearts and minds of Midwestern Garveyites and its eventual transatlantic conflict with the Akron-based Firestone Tire and Rubber Company at the promised "national centre" of the Garvey Movement, ultimately undermining the Garvey Movement in Liberia.<sup>2</sup> These two events place the Midwestern cities of Akron and Barberton into the larger global world in which they operated, setting the stage for an in-depth look at Akron and Barberton's Garveyites who will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

#### **Formation and Ideological Foundation of the UNIA**

The UNIA was armed with the wisdom and skill of its predecessors in Black freedom struggles and found itself firmly planted in a Black Radical Tradition, defined by Cedric

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1. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 1.

2. Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 16.

Robinson as “the continuing development of a collective consciousness informed by the historical struggles for liberation and motivated by the shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being.”<sup>3</sup> Both Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism fall under this umbrella. This tradition developed through centuries of resistance to slavery and imperialism and extended to Garvey’s emergence as a popular leader, and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Early Black radicalism emerged in direct opposition to the slave trade as antiblackness began to subsume the worlds of captured African people. As Wilson Jeremiah Moses explains, some of the earliest proto-nationalist sentiments were seen in slave rebellions and in the establishment of maroon societies.<sup>5</sup> In the background of Amy Ashwood and Marcus Garvey’s intellectual journeys towards a Pan-Africanist consciousness and Black Nationalism, was the history of Jamaica’s maroons, who escaped Spanish slavery and fought off the British army in the 1730s to protect their independent societies in the mountains of Jamaica that functioned outside of the reach of European colonial powers. One of the most heroic figures to come out of these struggles was Queen Nanny, who through her leadership of the Windward Maroons made a significant and early contribution to nationalist ideology and the Black Radical Tradition. These legacies of marronage held great significance because, as writer and Africanist Yannick Marshall remind us, “The mere possibility

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3. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

4. Robinson; for a discussion of antecedents of the Garvey Movement, see: Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, xvi–xxxii; Mary J. Rolinson, “Antecedents,” in *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 24–47.

5. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 8–9.

of marronage [marked] a limit to white supremacist hegemony.”<sup>6</sup> Over a century later, this was the end goal of the UNIA: to escape the antiblackness that held Black people in a perpetual state of subjugation even after the transatlantic slave trade was legally abolished and create a nation of their own. As descendants of formerly enslaved people in Jamaica, Garvey, Ashwood, and Jamaica’s future Garveyites may have possessed these proto-nationalist feelings before even reading the works of Black Nationalists that inspired them.<sup>7</sup>

Ashwood and Garvey also drew upon Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and religious separatism of the preceding century, picking and choosing elements of each to fit their twentieth-century context. Martin Delany’s demand of “Africa for the Africans,” Bishop Henry McNeil Turner’s religious dimension of Black Nationalism, Edward Blyden’s emigrationism and commemoration of Africa’s celebrated history, and Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on economic self-determination all provided the ideological roots of the UNIA. Through their studies and experiences, Ashwood and Garvey began to build a global understanding of race and the extreme violence enacted on Black people because of it, and they were ready to do something about it.

Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Jamaica to work for the uplift of the Black race. Their first strategy was to organize an industrial school in Jamaica to the likeness of the Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, but their goals quickly expanded from building a school to establishing a

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6. Yannick Marshall, “An Appeal—Bring the Maroon to the Foreground in Black Intellectual History,” African American Intellectual History Society, June 19, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/an-appeal-bring-the-maroon-to-the-foreground-in-black-intellectual-history/>.

7. Some scholars have suggested that Garvey’s father was a descendent of Maroons, but this has been contested in Lindsey Herbert and Robert A. Hill, “Reasoning with Professor Robert A. Hill,” *Callaloo* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 701.

nation. Garvey moved the headquarters to Harlem, New York, in 1916, and Ashwood followed two years later, playing an integral role in the early development of the UNIA in the US. She continued feminist and Pan-Africanist activism for her entire life but left the organization shortly after marrying and then divorcing Marcus Garvey.<sup>8</sup> The UNIA was formally incorporated in the United States in 1918, and it almost immediately began to grow exponentially. Between the International Conventions of the Negro Peoples of the World in 1920 and 1921, the UNIA experienced enormous growth. Division charter numbers 96 throughout 418 were assigned during this period.<sup>9</sup> This included Division No. 215 and Division No. 408 in Akron and Barberton.<sup>10</sup>

The rapid expansion of the UNIA can be attributed to many factors. The period in which Garvey arrived in the United States was characterized by fleeting hope and swift disappointment among a majority of African Americans that created almost perfect circumstances for a Black Nationalist mass movement. Many felt pessimistic towards the white power structure in the United States. Black soldiers returned from World War I hoping to find equality at home after proving their equality through national defense, but they were left disappointed and still excluded from full rights of citizenship. 1.6 million Black migrants left the rural South between 1910 and 1930 in search of more opportunities in cities, but instead were faced with violence and

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8. For a biography of Amy Ashwood Garvey, see Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist and Mrs. Marcus Garvey No. 1, or, A Tale of Two Amies* (Dover: Majority Press, 2007).

9. Kenneth A. Pierce, "Mobilization Lessons from Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association" (PhD diss., Stony Brook University, 2015), 106.

10. Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

discrimination comparable to what they had known their whole lives.<sup>11</sup> Lynching and waves of racial violence continued, which specifically impacted Garvey and propelled him to adjust his conservative goals of vocational education for the UNIA.<sup>12</sup> Jim Crow laws similarly reinforced the dehumanization of Black people in the United States and simultaneously forced self-reliance and self-determination on Black communities, nurturing separatist and Black Nationalist sentiments. Additionally, the death of Booker T. Washington left an opening for a new Black leader on the national scene.<sup>13</sup> This convergence of circumstances catapulted Marcus Garvey to the status of a symbol for the struggle of Black liberation.

Marcus Garvey's charismatic and strategic leadership was certainly critical to the successful expansion of the UNIA, but even more so was the organizational structure, multi-faceted holistic ideology, and Pan-African alliances that allowed the organization to take on a life of its own. The UNIA was structured hierarchically in the image of a nation-state, with the highest position being Potentate and Supreme Commissioner. The UNIA awarded the highest positions in the organization to Africans from the continent, as some of the UNIA's first strategic Pan-African alliances. Membership and leadership in the UNIA was representative of the diversity of the African Diaspora.<sup>14</sup> The first Potentate was Gabriel Johnson, the Mayor of Monrovia, Liberia, and the Supreme Deputy Potentate was Sierra Leonian George O. Marke.<sup>15</sup> Marcus Garvey held the position of president-general who served as the working administrator

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11. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 18.

12. Sundiata, 18.

13. Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, xxxi.

14. Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow*, 68–69.

15. Martin, *Race First*, 124.



of the organization. This role also earned him the title, “Provisional President of Africa.” There were four assistant president-generals, each with different geographic responsibilities, a secretary-general, a high chancellor, a counsel-general, an auditor-general, a minister of labor and industry, a high commissioner-general, a chaplain-general, an international organizer, minister of legions, and a minister of education. This group, along with a few others, made up the High Executive Council, the foundation of what was more frequently described as the “Parent Body.”

The leadership structure of the UNIA was built to accommodate the global growth of the organization and encourage establishing divisions across the world. It maintained structure and flexibility at the same time. Executive leaders supervised the work of various regional actors. For example, the High Commissioner-General was responsible for appointing one Commissioner to every country where Black people resided. In large countries, the High Commissioner-General would oversee regional Commissioners who were responsible for state-level Commissioners who communicated frequently with local leaders in their state. The Minister of Labor and Industries would stay well-informed with “the labor conditions throughout the world and formulate plans to relieve the economic conditions of Negroes everywhere,” and “when feasible he should have representatives in each division.”<sup>16</sup> Local units of the UNIA were called divisions, or occasionally chapters, if a division already existed in the same city. Leadership roles in local divisions reflected the structure of the Parent Body’s international leadership, with one notable exception. Each division had two presidents, one that was a man and one that was a woman. The woman president was often called the “lady president.” Local divisions also had one or more vice presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and leaders of each auxiliary group.

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16. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:749.

To carry out the UNIA's program and disseminate the ideology of the UNIA, members used various means of communication including international conventions, travel, correspondence, and the *Negro World* newspaper. The UNIA Parent Body hosted, and delegates from most divisions attended, an annual International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, the first of which was held in 1920 at Madison Square Garden with 25,000 delegates present.<sup>17</sup> Most major decisions in the organization were discussed and decided upon at the UNIA's international conventions, usually requiring support from two-thirds of the delegates. The conventions typically lasted an entire month with daily morning, afternoon, and evening sessions discussing topics from updates on conditions and obstacles facing local divisions, financial matters, and elections, to current events and Liberia. Additionally, the conventions included large parades featuring the UNIA's auxiliaries in uniform.

Parent Body representatives and appointed commissioners travelled regularly and strategically visited divisions. This travel kept the local divisions informed about the organization and encouraged in their efforts. New members often joined local divisions after hearing an inspiring talk from one of these out-of-town visitors. These trips also encouraged the travelling representatives as well and aided in fundraising efforts.

Divisions also communicated with the Parent Body through correspondence and monthly reports. Many frequently wrote in to the "News and Views" section of the *Negro World* newspaper, updating readers about the happenings in their divisions. The *Negro World*, the organization's official newspaper, played a vital role in local divisions and connected them to Garvey's global Pan-African network. During the 1920s, the *Negro World* was the most widely

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17. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 18.

sold newspaper across the African Diaspora.<sup>18</sup> The UNIA published this newspaper between 1918 and 1933, and readers all over the world eagerly awaited each issue carrying the words of Marcus Garvey and discussing issues pertaining to Black people globally—even in places where governments banned its publication.

The UNIA also maintained auxiliary groups to add to its structure and organization: the Universal African Legions, Universal Black Cross Nurses, Universal Motor Corps, UNIA Choirs, and a juvenile division. Garveyites established these auxiliaries as part of their local divisions with local leadership. Each auxiliary had international leadership in the form of members of the High Executive Council who were responsible for communicating with the local leadership of their auxiliaries. These auxiliaries defined the roles of UNIA members by age and gender. The Minister of Legions planned programming for and communicated with local divisions of the Universal African Legions (UAL) around the world. The UAL represented the military wing of the UNIA, and its members took an oath to “spiritually, mentally, and physically defend the cause of the U.N.I.A. and A.C.L. from all enemies within and without.”<sup>19</sup> The UAL was made up of men between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five who were active members of the UNIA and in good health. Black veterans found that the UNIA was an organization that would make use of their military training, but prior service was not a requirement.<sup>20</sup> They were a self-defense force against white racial violence, symbolic of “New

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18. Martin, *Race First*.

19. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:766. Throughout this dissertation, “UNIA” is used to encompass both the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities’ League. These two entities were incorporated separately by Garvey but were politically unified by 1918; see Hill, vol. I, lix-lxi.

20. Chad Louis Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers and the Era of the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 293.

Negro manhood and black nationalist militancy.”<sup>21</sup> While most did not carry guns, their dedication was clear, as many were “willing to die at [their] posts until Africa is redeemed.”<sup>22</sup> Officers required training in the geography of Africa, topography, mathematics, languages, writing, reading, and signaling, including Morse code and semaphore telegraphy before being appointed.<sup>23</sup> They wore uniforms manufactured by the Negro Factories Corporation located in Harlem. Uniform designs slightly changed over time and allowed for slight variation due to climate, but common features included navy pants and jackets with gold accents. Uniforms, in true New Negro fashion, demanded the respect of onlookers.<sup>24</sup> This auxiliary also included Universal African Legions’ Bands who played at events and paraded with the UAL.

The Universal Black Cross Nurses auxiliary was made up of women between the ages of sixteen and forty-five who were active members of the UNIA, though those who were not active members and men could become honorary members if they donated one dollar per year.<sup>25</sup> The Black Cross Nurses were tasked with prevention and relief of suffering during disasters as well as attending to the sick of the division. They wore all white uniforms, that they supplied themselves.<sup>26</sup> Women were asked to perform duties in accordance with gender roles. The UNIA expected its women to be caretakers and support racial uplift by supporting their husbands who

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21. Williams, 295.

22. Major E. D. Woodley, “Legion Notes of Interest,” *Negro World*, August 23, 1930.

23. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, III:758.

24. For more ways that the UNIA used visual representations and performance to benefit the organization, see Paula C. Austin, “‘Conscious Self-Realization and Self-Direction’: New Negro Ideologies and Visual Representations,” *The Journal of African American History* 103, no. 3 (June 1, 2018): 309–39; Honor Ford-Smith, “Unruly Virtues of the Spectacular: Performing Engendered Nationalisms in the UNIA in Jamaica,” *Interventions* 6, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 18–44.

25. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:766.

26. Hill, vol. III:768.

assumed roles as primary organizers and their children who were the future of the nation. In the 1920s, the New Negro Movement embraced respectability in an effort to reverse negative racial stereotypes. Therefore, Black feminism during this period manifested differently than it did for white women.<sup>27</sup> However, that does not mean Garveyite women did not protest and negotiate for more power within the UNIA. Unlike the UAL, the Black Cross Nurses were not managed by one person. Instead they were managed by a committee that included the president-general, secretary-general, surgeon-general, and a “Universal Directress” with training and experience as a nurse. Only the Universal Directress was a woman. Women of the UNIA protested the lack of female leadership at the Third International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in 1922. After initial resistance, their resolutions were adopted by the convention, opening greater opportunities for Garveyite women to assert themselves as Pan-Africanists.<sup>28</sup> While women did not have total control of this auxiliary on paper, in practice Garveyite women were able to exercise autonomy in their divisions through the Black Cross Nurses auxiliary and were instrumental in the success of their divisions and in the international program of the UNIA. While the UNIA enforced restrictive gender roles on women in support of the nation, the UNIA is often credited with having the most women’s participation among non-women-specific activist organizations of its time.<sup>29</sup>

The Universal Motor Corps was managed by the Brigadier-General who was a woman and worked closely with the leadership of the UAL. This auxiliary was primarily composed of women between the ages of sixteen and forty-five, but some officers were men. Members were

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27. Bair, “True Women, Real Men,” 154–66.

28. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, 45.

29. Blain, *Set the World on Fire*, 19.

to be licensed chauffeurs with skills in both driving and automobile repair. They trained in military discipline with the UAL and wore very similar uniforms. UNIA women advocated for full control of this auxiliary as well. Here, again, Garveyite women were positioned to play a support role to their husbands and male counterparts in the UAL, while at the same time practicing discipline, auto-mechanics, strength, and militancy. Some women used this platform to become respected leaders in the UNIA. For example, Maymie L. T. DeMena—born in Louisiana, joined the UNIA in Nicaragua, travelled extensively, and settled in Jamaica—rose through the ranks of the UNIA and became a prominent representative and international organizer during Garvey’s imprisonment. At the 1929 International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in Kingston, DeMena led a massive parade of delegates and supporters in uniform and on horseback wielding a sword.<sup>30</sup>

Juvenile divisions were structured around education as laid out in the *Constitution* and led by a superintendent who was a “lady vice president” of each local division. The juvenile division had programming for youth from ages one to eighteen. The first class for children between one and seven years of age, taught Black history and about the objectives and projects of the UNIA “in story book fashion.” Consecutive classes advanced these subjects and also taught writing, race pride, crafts, economics, and prepared juveniles to enter into the Universal African Legions and the Black Cross Nurses. Teachers were appointed by the president of the division.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Bair, “True Women, Real Men,” 162; Nicole Bourbonnais, “Our Joan of Arc: Women, Gender, and Authority in the Harmony Division of the UNIA,” in *Global Garveyism*, ed. Ronald J. Stephens and Adam Ewing (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), 139–67.

31. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:772.

Universal Negro Improvement Association Choirs were also directed by the leadership of local divisions. They were made up of both men and women and were primarily responsible for preparing the music for UNIA meetings and events, which almost always included music. Prominent songs in the culture of the UNIA were “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains” and the national anthem of the UNIA, the “Universal Ethiopian Anthem,” which inspired the continued work towards the UNIA’s objectives:

Advance, advance to victory!  
Let Africa be free!  
Advance to meet the foe,  
With the might of the red, the black and the green.<sup>32</sup>

The UNIA’s mission and ideology were multi-faceted and constituted a holistic program for “universal improvement.” Each facet, including nationalism, internationalism, Pan-Africanism, race-pride, economic self-determination, religion, history, and education, was designed to encourage self-worth, advocate self-pride, and elevate self-esteem among Black people worldwide.<sup>33</sup> The aims of the UNIA stretched farther than any strictly secular, strictly religious, or strictly fraternal organization of its time. Its purpose was to touch and even transform all aspects of the lives of its followers, from their mental and spiritual health to their material needs. Its strategic and multi-faceted implementation and goal to be “universal” caused the movement to gain unprecedented attention. The tenets of the organization were easily embraced by Black people around the world and began to have an immediate impact on their lives.

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32. Benjamin Burrell and Arnold J. Ford, “The Universal Ethiopian Anthem: National Anthem of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities’ League,” (1920), Dr. Shirla R. McClain Collection, 1940s-1990s, Box 1, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

33. Martin, 23.

The Garvey Movement's nationalist program had a much larger scope than other contemporary organizations. The UNIA had a nationalist program in the sense that its primary goal was to create a nation-state by Black people, for Black people, and governed by Black people. The UNIA did not want to fight for political respect within the United States, Jamaica, or any other nation that did not extend the category of humanity to Black people. Instead, it intended to establish a government and homeland for its nation and create a seat for it at the world table, on equal standing with other national governments.<sup>34</sup> In many ways, the UNIA functioned as a nation even before finding a geographical location to ground itself. As Garvey summarized the UNIA's position: "I know no national boundary where the Negro is concerned. The whole world is my province until Africa is free."<sup>35</sup> The UNIA pursued land of its own, first when it sent delegates to the League of Nations to petition for jurisdiction over the ex-German colonies after World War I and then again in Liberia. While the Garvey Movement did not succeed in establishing a physical space for its nation in West Africa during Garvey's lifetime, Garveyites continued to lead and support anti-colonial struggles of African nations until independence was won.<sup>36</sup>

The wide scope of the UNIA's program was also extended by its internationalism. The UNIA's goals were not limited by the borders of nation-states. Its foundational Pan-African principles strived for unity and uplift among the Black Diaspora wherever its members lived across the world. Garveyites came to have a worldview that linked their local struggles with those facing Africans worldwide. The opposition of colonialism was directly connected to the

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34. Martin, 62.

35. Marcus Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Universal Publishing House, 1923), 37.

36. Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, [vii].



resistance of lynching and second-class citizenship afforded to African Diaspora in the Americas and Caribbean. Additionally, while prioritizing a race-first program, the UNIA still stood in solidarity with all anti-colonial struggles across world, including those in Ireland and India.<sup>37</sup>

Another core feature of the UNIA's program was the prioritization of racial self-reliance. The UNIA recognized that what motivated the global violence and exploitation of descendants of Africa was race. It knew that "race" excluded Black people from what it meant to be human, and that white society depended on Black exclusion and suffering to maintain white humanity.<sup>38</sup> It was clear to Garvey that Black people were not going to find freedom in the white-dominated nations where they lived. He thought that, with further education and occupational successes, Black people would put themselves at greater risk of retaliation as competitors with white society.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the UNIA concluded that race would be a primary organizing tool for the Garvey Movement. Each aspect of the UNIA's program was designed to re-instill race pride in people who repeatedly received messaging that told them the opposite. The UNIA manufactured Black dolls, encouraged Black religion with a Black god, started a Black-owned international shipping company, and celebrated African history. This race-first program supported its members in a way that was deeply needed.

The UNIA maintained separatism. Membership in the UNIA was restricted to people of African descent, and white philanthropy was not accepted, ensuring that all leadership would be Black, and their goals would not be compromised by white capital. This model allowed the

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37. Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2010).

38. Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

39. Martin, *Race First*, 23.

UNIA to be an independent organization with all decisions to be made by its Black leaders *and* the opportunity to enter into short-term inter-racial coalitions that would benefit the organization. This strategy of racial nationalism aimed for unity, but as is expected from any people group, the diversity within it resulted in conflict. The UNIA's program emphasized universality, but this did not stop Garvey from critiquing or dissociating from Black people who did not seem to him to be working in the best interest of the race. Various political beliefs and organizing strategies also led to divisions among Black people which even motivated his opposition to wage a "Garvey Must Go" campaign against the UNIA.

The UNIA aimed to build economic stability for the organization and economic power for Black people. This conviction was exemplified in the UNIA's shipping enterprises, the Black Star Line, which operated between 1919 and 1922, and its successor, the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company. These were shipping companies that strived to serve as the infrastructure for a global, independent Black economy connecting the United States, West Africa, and the Caribbean. Supported by small stocks purchased across the African Diaspora, the UNIA's companies purchased five ships. They sailed internationally and locally carrying passengers and cargo.<sup>40</sup> The UNIA, through the incorporation of the Negro Factories Corporation, also built businesses in Harlem, including restaurants, groceries, laundries, and manufacturers. These businesses set an example for divisions around the world who started local businesses as well. The UNIA was concerned with economic self-determination through business but also the labor conditions experienced by Black workers around the world.

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40. Ramla M. Bandele, *Black Star: African American Activism in the International Political Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), xi; Martin, *Race First*, 151–67.

Spirituality remained a significant part of the UNIA's program as well. Garvey understood the importance of welcoming Black preachers into the UNIA and embracing longstanding Baptist and AME traditions among his potential collaborators.<sup>41</sup> Because of the lasting significance of the Black church, the organization grew exponentially through embracing clergy and religious networks. By doing so, the UNIA "recruited recruiters" who would take the UNIA back to their congregations.<sup>42</sup> For some, religion was a central tool for Black liberation and encouraged members to "re-think traditional white theology and philosophy."<sup>43</sup> The UNIA's programming was heavily influenced by Christianity and took on religious tones and practices: it published a catechism, had chaplains, and even its motto was "One Aim! One God! One Destiny!"<sup>44</sup> However, Marcus Garvey maintained his efforts to make the UNIA truly universal, and the UNIA never claimed one denomination or even one religion. For Garvey, the core of religion was to proselytize the values of self-determination, race pride, and Black Nationalism.<sup>45</sup>

To reach these same ends, the UNIA focused strongly on history and education. The UNIA promoted education through its auxiliaries and required officers to learn African history and geography as well as leadership skills before qualifying for office. The Parent Body prepared a curriculum called the School of African Philosophy for this purpose. The Parent Body also made some large-scale, though short-lived, investments in education when founding Booker T.

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41. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 35–37.

42. Pierce, "Mobilization Lessons from Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association," 95.

43. Dave Gosse, "Garvey's Black Theology and Its Impact on the UNIA/ACL," *Caribbean Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 182.

44. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, 15–37.

45. Martin, *Race First*, 77.

Washington University in New York and Universal Liberty University in Virginia.<sup>46</sup> Like many other aspects of the UNIA's program, the Parent Body made a significant example that was both practical and symbolic to inspire its followers around the world to replicate it with their own local flavor wherever they resided. Universal Liberty University encouraged local divisions to fundraise and send young people from each division to attend the university. It also encouraged local divisions to value the Afrocentric history that supported the organization's national aspirations.

### **Conflict in the "National Centre"**

For Marcus Garvey, as well as for members of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton and around the world, Liberia stood as a free Black republic perfectly positioned to realize their dreams of self-determination under a Black government in Africa. They were drawn to Liberia because it was one of only two countries in Africa not formally colonized by Europeans and was therefore seen as a symbol of strength and pride. Garvey envisioned the headquarters of the UNIA one day being relocated to Liberia. Garveyites "emphasized the necessity of the Negro securing a place to establish a government of his own where he may have an opportunity to develop in his own way unhampered by prejudice," and they hoped this could happen in the all-Black nation.<sup>47</sup> Garveyites in the Diaspora "imagined Liberia as a place free from exploitation," and as almost a utopia, in dramatic contrast to the lives they lived in the Americas.<sup>48</sup> Garvey did not encourage African Americans to give up opportunities they had in the places they lived, but

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46. Austin, "'Conscious Self-Realization and Self-Direction,'" 311.

47. Amanda Stroud, "Massillon, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 15, 1925.

48. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008),

rather encouraged them each to do what was best for themselves.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, even those who did not dream of going “Back to Africa” still understood Africa to be a symbol of home and freedom. But when the UNIA’s Pan-African dream encountered the Liberian reality, it confronted many obstacles. This story of the UNIA’s engagement with Firestone highlights the complexity of Liberia’s political situation and illuminates how international white alliances formed to ensure the disruption of the UNIA’s plan.

The Garvey Movement embraced the idea of moving its headquarters to Liberia. It planned to aid that country financially in hopes of freeing Liberia from debt and enabling it to build infrastructure like schools and hospitals. At the First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in 1920, the UNIA pledged to raise two million dollars for development projects in Liberia.<sup>50</sup> UNIA Commissioner and Director of the Black Star Line Elie Garcia visited Liberia to meet with President Charles D. B. King of Liberia and explain the UNIA’s desire to support its economy through agricultural development and the Black Star Line.<sup>51</sup> After President King and Liberian Secretary of State Edwin J. Barclay agreed to cooperate with the UNIA, the UNIA saw growth in Liberia. Gabriel Johnson, Mayor of Monrovia, attended the UNIA’s international convention in New York City during August of 1920. There he was named “Potentate” and “Titular Head of all the Negroes of the World.” Many African Americans who moved to Liberia during this period, as well as Africans of the Diaspora who had previously relocated to Liberia, embraced Garvey’s message, wrote to the *Negro World*, and donated money to UNIA projects. Joseph Hazel Donaldson, for example, sent about a dozen poems to the *Negro*

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49. “Garvey Re-Explains ‘Back to Africa,’” *Negro World*, February 20, 1932.

50. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 32.

51. Monday B. Akpan, “Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey’s Scheme for African Colonization,” *The Journal of African History* 14, no. 1 (1973): 118.

*World* from Monrovia in 1921.<sup>52</sup> In August of that same year, Liberia's first division of the UNIA was founded in Brewerville.<sup>53</sup> Word of the UNIA spread across the continent, and divisions formed across West Africa in places like Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Nigeria.<sup>54</sup> Rev. Dr. R. Harten was a missionary in southern and western Africa and then eventually in Liberia, who first heard of the organization there and was immediately captivated by its program. He organized a branch of the UNIA in Grand Bassa, Liberia, and another formed in Monrovia.<sup>55</sup>

The UNIA sent a delegation of six to Liberia in February of 1921 to establish a farm and housing for future migrants.<sup>56</sup> One of the members of the UNIA delegation was Cyril Critchlow, another director of the Black Star Line. Because of what appeared to be inter-personal disagreements between he and UNIA Potentate Gabriel Johnson—but which hinted at something deeper—this delegation did not complete this goal.<sup>57</sup> The delegation had, in fact, witnessed the hierarchy and subsequent inequality imposed by the Americo-Liberian ruling class.

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52. One example can be found in "A Prayer for Ethiopia," *Negro World*, October 22, 1921.

53. "Unveiling of Charter of Brewerville Division of the U. N. I. A. and A. C. L., Republic of Liberia, West Coast, Africa, the First to be Unveiled in Said Republic," *Negro World*, October 15, 1921.

54. Martin, *Race First*; Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*; Akpan, "Liberia and the UNIA"; Kings M. Phiri, "Afro-American Influence in Colonial Malawi, 1891-1945," in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1993); Michael West, "The Seeds Are Sown: The Impact of Garveyism in Zimbabwe in the Interwar Years," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2-3 (January 1, 2002): 335-61; Yekutiel Gershoni, "Common Goals, Different Ways: The UNIA and the NCBWA in West Africa, 1920-1930," *Journal of Third World Studies* 18, no. 2 (2001): 171-85; Rina L. Okonkwo, "The Garvey Movement in British West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980): 105-17; J. Runcie, "The Influence of Marcus Garvey & the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Sierra Leone," *Africana Research Bulletin* 12, no. 3 (1982): 3-42; J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

55. "Rev. Dr. R. Harten, of Liberia, Speaks," *Negro World*, December 31, 1921; Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library; "Members of U.N.I.A. Delegation to Europe and Africa With Group of Distinguished Citizens and Officials of Liberia," *Negro World*, July 12, 1924.

56. Akpan, 106-7.

57. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 32.

Liberia was founded by the American Colonization Society (ACS) and freed slaves from the United States. This group colonized along the Atlantic coast of what would become the Republic of Liberia. Beginning in 1847, African Americans in Liberia—who became known as Americo-Liberians—replaced white members of the ACS in government positions and wrote their own constitution. However, this transition proved to make little change in the country’s hierarchy. American interests were still at work in the background and the elite intermarried families of Americo-Liberians, who assumed government control, excluded and alienated indigenous Liberians. By the 1920s, largely through military force and voluntary annexation, the government absorbed neighboring indigenous groups, expanding Liberia’s territory to the 43,000 square miles it is today, leaving a legacy of tension and conflict.<sup>58</sup> Even though the indigenous population was about half a million to the Americo-Liberians’ 5,000, the Americo-Liberian minority held all government positions.<sup>59</sup> Many of the government’s practices were harmful to the indigenous people of Liberia. The Liberian government enforced some degree of segregation and travel restriction to reinforce the distinction between Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians. Indigenous people could travel long distances to market goods on the coast or send their children to apprentice with Americo-Liberian families, but Americo-Liberians were not permitted to travel to the interior without permission.<sup>60</sup> The reality for the Americo-Liberian

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58. Joseph Saye Guannu, *Liberian History since 1857: A Reference for High School Students* (Monrovia, Liberia: Central Printing, 1980), 16; Monday B. Akpan, “Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1841-1964,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1973): 220–21.

59. Akpan, “Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey’s Scheme for African Colonization,” 108.

60. Richard P. Strong, *The African Republic of Liberia and the Belgian Congo: Based on the Observations Made and Material Collected during the Harvard African Expedition, 1926-1927* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 126; Santosh C. Saha, *Culture in Liberia: An Afrocentric View of the Cultural Interaction between the Indigenous Liberians and the Americo-Liberians* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1998), 106.

elites was contradictory. The Liberian constitution restricted citizenship to people of African descent, and because many Americo-Liberians had experienced slavery firsthand, it also included an anti-slavery clause stating that “no person shall be held in slavery or forced labor within the Republic.”<sup>61</sup> Despite this, the government of Liberia employed a system of compulsory labor. In lieu of taxes, indigenous Liberian towns were forced to send laborers to work on government projects—often for periods of nine months. These jobs consisted of agriculture, road building, and portage, and workers received no pay. For example, women labored farming rice under the supervision of soldiers of the Liberian Frontier Force that was established by Americo-Liberian colonists and supported by the United States. These women suffered from the threat of the lash and received no wages.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, laborers were rounded up for export to the Spanish-owned island of Fernando Po and to labor on private farms. The Americo-Liberian government obtained laborers through “physical violence, involving capture, flogging, and tying by soldiers of the Frontier Force and armed messengers,” and by “indirect compulsion exercised in excessive fines upon chiefs, intimidation, bribery, extortion,” provoking tensions between ethnic groups over land.<sup>63</sup> During their visits, Garcia, Critchlow, and the UNIA delegations witnessed some of this discrimination and imbalance of power and had doubts about the success of the project in Liberia.

Despite the difficulties of the delegation, the UNIA continued working with the Liberian government and promoting migration to Liberia. The Parent Body in New York sent a second

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61. Article 1, section 4, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia.

62. Cuthbert Christy, Charles Surgeon Johnson, and Arthur Barclay, *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia: Monrovia, Liberia, Sept. 8, 1930* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 83.

63. Christy, Johnson, and Barclay, 26.



delegation to Liberia in 1923 to work with a committee of indigenous and Americo-Liberians, including former President Arthur Barclay, Doughba Carranda, and Vice President Henry Too Wesley, to coordinate the relocation of the headquarters of the UNIA to West Africa.<sup>64</sup> They selected an area on the Cavalla River in Maryland County of about 500 square miles as the UNIA's first settlement site.<sup>65</sup> Local UNIA leaders and members of the international UNIA delegation, Henrietta Vinton Davis, Robert L. Poston, and Milton Van Lowe, agreed on terms stipulating that, before migrating, Garveyites would take an oath that they would respect the authority of the Liberian government and be financially stable, having at least \$1,500 per family or \$500 per single person.<sup>66</sup>

On June 4, 1924, Liberty Hall in Harlem was filled to capacity for a send-off meeting and celebration for a delegation who would sail for Liberia a few days later.<sup>67</sup> This delegation of engineers, builders, and machinery was to prepare the land for 500 Garveyites who would follow.<sup>68</sup> Divisions of the UNIA awaited the groundbreaking of a new Liberty Hall in Liberia and news of new homes built for UNIA members interested in relocating. The global membership of the UNIA anxiously awaited news of this progress. They dreamed of a self-sustaining community that would thrive agriculturally and industrially on the west coast of Africa. Members from around the globe contributed to a fund for the delegation's travel and

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64. Garvey and Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 387–88; Akpan, "Liberia and the UNIA," 106–7.

65. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 33; "Forerunners of African Colonization," *Negro World*, June 14, 1924 in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. X:182.

66. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 33.

67. "Forerunners of African Colonization," *Negro World*, June 14, 1924, in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. X:182.

68. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 32.

building supplies. They imagined the SS *Booker T. Washington* arriving at the West African coast to pick up Black passengers and cargo to be transported without financial or personal discrimination. They envisioned a global trade network that would afford people of African descent respect and self-determination.

Instead, the UNIA leadership and its membership were surprised and disappointed to hear that the delegation was deported on arrival and its equipment confiscated.<sup>69</sup> The Liberian government ceased to collaborate with the UNIA. President King claimed he had only unofficially discussed the UNIA's plans.<sup>70</sup> Miscommunications and uncertainty about the Liberian government's position on the UNIA had been present during the past four years of negotiations, but these worries had faded by the time the delegation boarded and equipment had been loaded onto their ships in 1924. Marcus Garvey and Garveyites looking on from across the world were shocked. Ultimately, Garvey's Pan-African plan was rejected by President King, and the government did what it could to distance itself from the UNIA. After the deportation of the UNIA delegation, visa applicants were required to present an affidavit stating they were not affiliated with the UNIA.<sup>71</sup> Gabriel Johnson was relieved as Mayor of Monrovia and only offered another government position if he formally resigned from the UNIA, which he did in 1924.<sup>72</sup> Former president and UNIA legal advisor in Liberia, Arthur Barclay, had a change of heart as well, and spoke out against the UNIA for trying to incite a "race war."<sup>73</sup> It is not clear

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69. Garvey and Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 388; Cronon, *Black Moses*, 129.

70. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 33.

71. Martin, *Race First*, 128.

72. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 33, 96.

73. Frank Chalk, "Du Bois and Garvey Confront Liberia: Two Incidents of the Coolidge Years," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 2 (1967): 140.

what the UNIA's opposition within the Liberian government did to dismantle remaining local divisions of the UNIA. Some assume local manifestations of the UNIA in 1920s Liberia were short-lived. However, others maintain that Garveyites continued to have a significant impact on political changes in Liberia.<sup>74</sup> At the very least, both the Monrovia and Brewerville Divisions had contact information on file with the Parent Body in 1926.<sup>75</sup>

Unbeknownst to the UNIA as it was planning its move to Liberia, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company began negotiating with the Liberian government in 1923. On June 5, 1924, one day after the UNIA's send-off celebration at Liberty Hall, Firestone's Secretary William D. Hines submitted an official proposal to the Liberian government to lease land in Liberia.<sup>76</sup> He travelled to Monrovia that month and, during his stay, the Liberian government approved draft versions of an agreement.<sup>77</sup> This was less than one month before the UNIA's delegation was deported. In the preceding years, Firestone had sent researchers around the world to investigate potential locations for producing rubber. After exploring options in Mexico and the Philippines, Firestone set its eyes on Liberia—and sent Donald Ross, accompanied by W. E. B. Du Bois, to investigate the potential of growing rubber in Liberia.<sup>78</sup> Ross was a scientist with experience in

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74. Anthony Morgan, "Marcus Garvey's U.N.I.A. in Liberia," Historical Preservation Society of Liberia, 2012, <https://hpsol-liberia.blogspot.com/2012/12/marcus-garveys-unia-in-liberia.html>.

75. Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

76. "Mr. W. D. Hines to the Liberian Secretary of State (Barclay)," June 5, 1924, 882.6176 F 51/207, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1925, Volume II, Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1925v02/d324>.

77. Frank Chalk, "The Anatomy of an Investment: Firestone's 1927 Loan to Liberia," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967): 18.

78. "Firestone in Mexican Deal: Manufacturer Leases Huge Rubber Tracts ..." *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1925; Wayne Chatfield Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia* (Washington: National Planning Association, 1956), 46; Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 110.

growing rubber in the Philippines, and who later became the first general manager of the Firestone Plantations Company. Negotiations between Firestone and the Liberian government began upon his approval.<sup>79</sup> Preliminary agreements were made quickly, but with Firestone's late changes and additions, the concession faced opposition in the National Legislature. Firestone hired Arthur Barclay and Senator William Tubman as its lawyers in Liberia, and they along with President King and Secretary of State Edwin Barclay became the agreement's greatest advocates.<sup>80</sup> After years of debate and negotiation, in 1926 an agreement was reached wherein the exact same land that had been offered to the UNIA and where it had planned to establish its first settlement and headquarters was leased to the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.<sup>81</sup> This decision thwarted Garveyite plans in Liberia, and subjected native Liberians to a neocolonial future and economic dependency on Firestone.

The entrance of Firestone into Liberia represents a white racial project to, among other self-serving goals, destroy the Universal Negro Improvement Association.<sup>82</sup> The interests of the British and French colonial governments, members of the US government, and executives at the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company converged and wielded significant power over the future of the UNIA in Liberia and the Liberian Government. Neighboring colonial governments had a stake in the UNIA-Firestone conflict. The UNIA's anti-colonial position was directly in contrast with their existence. The period of European colonial rule in West Africa, beginning in the

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79. Akpan, "Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey's Scheme for African Colonization," 122.

80. Fred van der Kraaij, "Firestone in Liberia," in *Dependence, Underdevelopment and Persistent Conflict; on the Political Economy of Liberia*, ed. E. Hinzen and R. Kappel, 1980, 204-5.

81. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. VI:143; Strong, *Harvard African Expedition*, 4.

82. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 125.

nineteenth century, was characterized by the exploitation of Black labor, the extraction of Africa's wealth in resources, and economic, political, cultural transformations through "civilizing" that laid the groundwork for the neocolonial period. This set up a dangerous power dynamic between Liberia, Africa's first Black republic, and its neighboring colonies. The Americo-Liberian government struggled to maintain its independence amidst the colonial powers of Great Britain and France encroaching from all sides, as both had taken territory from Liberia in the past claiming it was ineffectively occupied.<sup>83</sup> So when these colonial powers communicated their concern about Liberia's involvement with the UNIA and "notified the Liberian government that the admission of UNIA experts would be considered an act of aggression" against its colonies, this was a threat against Liberia's sovereignty.<sup>84</sup> Since Liberia's sovereignty in the face of colonialism was uneasy, these international pressures forced the Liberian government to cut ties with the UNIA. Within these constraints, Americo-Liberian elites made choices to preserve their precarious position of power rather than advocate for all Black people worldwide—or even within their own country.

The US government was opposed to the UNIA's plans in the US and in Africa, and held significant power over Liberia, its "invisible protectorate."<sup>85</sup> Because of Liberia's long-standing ties with the country, many historians refer to this relationship between the US and Liberia as one of "indirect rule."<sup>86</sup> Liberia was recognized as an independent republic, but it had much in

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83. Guannu, *Liberian History since 1857*, 15–18.

84. "Interview With Acting President of Liberia...By the Commissioners of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Tuesday, March 22, 1921," RG 59, 882.00/705, in Martin, 124.

85. Emily S. Rosenberg, "The Invisible Protectorate: The United States, Liberia, and the Evolution of Neocolonialism, 1909-40," *Diplomatic History* 9, no. 3 (1985): 191–214.

86. Tamba Eadric M'bayo, "Liberian-American Relations, 1900-1945: Neocolonialism and Pan-Africanism in Perspective" (master's thesis, Miami University, 2000), refers to the relationship between the United States and Liberia as "neocolonial"; Katherine Harris, "The United States, Liberia, and Their Foreign Relations to 1847" (PhD

common with its neighboring colonies. In 1884, the United States had attended the Berlin Conference along with other colonial powers and negotiated an agreement that Liberia was effectively “occupied with the consent of the natives” and therefore off limits to European empires engaged in the “scramble for Africa.”<sup>87</sup> And as was true of nearby colonial projects, this arrangement was far from consensual. Indigenous ethnic groups with varying cultures and customs such as the Vai, Gola, Mende, Kissi, Loma, Kpelle, Mano, Dan, Krahn, and Grebo became one nation. Extending from assigned colonial boundaries chosen at the Berlin Conference, many of these ethnicities were also divided, some becoming “Liberians” and others being “colonial subjects” of Great Britain or France.<sup>88</sup>

Additionally, the US government sought to gain from Firestone’s investment. Mutual support between Firestone and the United States government laid the foundation for this project and played a significant role in its success, as the US government played a crucial role in influencing Liberia to accept Firestone’s contract. Akron’s rubber companies expanded their industrial manufacturing and became heavily involved in wartime production. This alliance between Firestone and the United States military led the company to pursue raw materials under US control because, at the time, it relied on the British rubber industry to supply its factories. Key US government collaborators were President Warren G. Harding, Secretary of Commerce

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diss., Cornell University, 1983), 283, uses “informal political control” to describe the relationship between the US and Liberia; Leslie Clyde Hendrickson, “Kinship, Achievement and Social Change in Tribal Societies: Report of 1300 Interviews with Rubber Workers in Liberia, West Africa.” (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1970), 239, uses “indirect rule” to discuss the relationship between Americo-Liberians and indigenous people.

87. “The Berlin Conference; The Part the United States Takes Therein. An Understanding That the Work of the Conference is not Binding—The Monroe Doctrine Upheld,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1885.

88. At the Berlin Conference, leaders from fourteen European nations and the United States—France, Germany, Great Britain, and Portugal being the most active participants—divided up the entire continent, interior and coast alike, amongst the European colonial powers. See illustration in Hendrickson, 204.

Herbert Hoover, and former US President and Governor-General of the Philippines, William Taft, who agreed that the US needed to find rubber under its own jurisdiction. Hoover lobbied the US Congress for \$500,000 in funding to finance a survey of rubber-producing countries.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, it was heavily reported by Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, the *Akron Beacon Journal*, and leading national and international periodicals, that Liberia owed over \$1,700,000 in debts.<sup>90</sup> In 1922, the United States withdrew a loan to Liberia, allowing Harvey Firestone to step up and fill this void.<sup>91</sup> The American government encouraged the Liberian government to cut ties with Garvey and accept the loan agreement.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, other members of the US government were working to attack the UNIA in the US. J. Edgar Hoover of the Bureau of Investigation led an eleven-year surveillance campaign against Garvey, the UNIA, and many of its prominent members around the country. Hoover was admittedly searching for a reason to deport Garvey.<sup>93</sup> Hoover's targeted surveillance campaign ultimately resulted in a conviction for mail fraud in 1923, imprisonment, and then deportation from the US in 1927.

This alliance between the US government and the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company must not be understood as race-neutral, but rather as a white supremacist alliance to further global racial capitalist objectives. While the US government deemed the UNIA's race-first program a threat, it was not unfamiliar with the idea of race-based policy. Clearly, the United

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89. Kraaij, "Firestone in Liberia," 200.

90. Garvey and Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 400.

91. Strong, *Harvard African Expedition*, 4.

92. Alfred Lief, *The Firestone Story* (New York: Whittlesey, 1951), 151; Akpan, "Liberia and the UNIA," 123.

93. Martin, *Race First*, 178.

States and Firestone understood the need for self-determination and self-sustainability, but this philosophy did not extend to Liberians or Garveyites. Additionally, in this instance, the ability to gain access to rubber for Firestone and the United States correlated directly with the denial of sovereignty and self-sustainability of Liberians. The Firestone Tire and Rubber Company was bolstered by white supremacy at every level: systemically, institutionally, and even by personal privilege.<sup>94</sup> As Ibrahim Sundiata has noted, “Born in the same year as W. E. B. Du Bois, Firestone, a self-made rubber tycoon, had followed a career path blocked to all people of color, no matter how well educated.”<sup>95</sup> His novice experience and his sometimes inarticulate posturing suggested that he was not prepared to launch an international business venture, but his personal privilege afforded him this opportunity. His personal and professional networks reveal this as well. Harvey Firestone and Henry Ford’s relationship extended beyond camping and golfing trips. Together, Firestone and Ford vied to control the twentieth-century transportation industry in the United States. They worked closely together as business partners, and their families intermarried, further solidifying their families’ partnership.

The UNIA may have encountered its own problems if it had been welcomed to pursue its program in Liberia. Marcus Garvey, having never visited Africa, was not aware of its realities. It was difficult to imagine Pan-African unity in Liberia in the early 1920s, because the country had not found internal unity. The country was home to sixteen different ethnic groups, each with their own cultures and customs. Tensions between groups, all of whom were Black, were exacerbated by an abusive government, leaving no incentive for national unity amongst

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94. Charles Mills, “White Supremacy as Sociopolitical System: A Philosophical Perspective,” in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, ed. Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (New York: Routledge, 2003), 35-48.

95. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 98.



Liberians. Even leading Pan-Africanist Edward Blyden, who lived most of his life in Liberia, was disappointed at the prospects of Pan-African unity in Liberia at the time of his death in 1912; he condemned the actions of Americo-Liberian elites.<sup>96</sup> It was indeed an outrage that the very same land that was offered and then refused to the UNIA by the Liberian Government, was given to Firestone and developed into a rubber plantation. However, only ten years earlier, in 1910, this region was the site of a war against the Grebo people. This land was indigenous land, stolen by the Liberian government by force. Such actions put Pan-Africanism to the test—and it failed. Another possible point of conflict between the UNIA’s ideology and practice was the UNIA’s “civilizing” mission among indigenous Africans.<sup>97</sup> Garveyites did not agree with the abuse of power and exploitation of indigenous labor they witnessed at the hands of Americo-Liberians, and Garvey even speculated that the UNIA was rejected in Liberia, “for they realize they have no colleague in me to exploit the labor of the unfortunate black and build up class distinctions, based on education of the wrong sort.”<sup>98</sup> Still, the language of the UNIA’s constitution maintained a patronizing vocabulary of superiority over Africans. Some Africans joined the UNIA, but others criticized and questioned it. Madarikan Deniyi, originally from Lagos, Nigeria, questioned, “How can Marcus Garvey and the UNIA redeem Africa without the consent and cooperation of the black kings, chiefs and presidents who were born in ... Africa?”<sup>99</sup>

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96. Sundiata, 68.

97. For an examination of tensions between what he refers to as “black American nationalism” and indigenous Africans, see Tunde Adeleke, *UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth Century Black Nationalists and the Civilizing Mission* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

98. Chalk, “Du Bois and Garvey Confront Liberia,” 141.

99. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 76; Madarikan Deniyi to the *Richmond Planet*, January 29, 1921, in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. IX:144.

But the UNIA's program would not be tested, and Firestone would develop to the detriment of both Liberians and Garveyites.

The *Negro World* followed Firestone's actions in Liberia closely and warned about the intentions of white capitalists in Liberia: "It is our firm belief that the Firestone concessions in Liberia will lead them ultimately to seek the usurpation of the government, even as has been done with the black Republic of Haiti after similar white companies entered there under the pretense of developing the country."<sup>100</sup> He foreshadowed the exploitation of labor and resources that was to come in the arrangement between the white American aspirations of capital in Firestone and the government of Liberia. There was much debate about Firestone in the Liberian government, which did not want to sacrifice Liberia's sovereignty as an independent nation.<sup>101</sup> Santosh Saha explains, "It was generally feared by many indigenous African elites in Liberia that the company, acting as the middleman in attempts to secure a private loan for Liberia, might gain political supremacy which would be injurious to Liberia's sovereignty."<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, after years of negotiations, they came to an agreement.

Headlines announced Firestone's "Plan to Clean Up Dark Continent," and proclaimed that "U.S. Millions Lift Liberia Out of Jungle," euphemistically setting the stage for Firestone's extraction of rubber and abuse of labor.<sup>103</sup> This press coverage portrayed Liberians as incapable and in need of help from the United States. After a century-long history linking the United States

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100. Garvey and Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 392.

101. Arthur J. Knoll, "Harvey S. Firestone's Liberian Investment, 1922-1932," *Liberian Studies Journal* 14, no. 1 (1989): 13-33.

102. Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 51.

103. "Scientist, Missionary Unite to Develop Africa: More Schools, Less Disease, for Africans: Plan to Clean Up Dark Continent," *Chicago Defender*, November 21, 1925; "U. S. Millions Lift Liberia Out of Jungle: Firestone to Invest 100 Million for Rubber," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 16, 1925.

and the Republic of Liberia, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio, established a rubber plantation in Liberia in 1926.<sup>104</sup> Firestone and the Liberian government agreed to the lease of the Mt. Barclay plantation, previously used and abandoned by the British rubber industry, and the use of one million additional acres for ninety-nine years at six cents per acre, a deal far more beneficial to Firestone than to anyone in Liberia. The agreement was accompanied by an obligation that ensured laborers would be contracted for the plantation. Liberia agreed to accept American loan advisors to government positions and to accept American administration in the Liberian Frontier Force. Firestone was also granted permission for a harbor construction project, although this was never completed—“Firestone did not need a port to export the rubber from Liberia but merely proposed it to get the approval and support of the United States State Department which was particularly invested in a port on the West African coast as a station for naval use.”<sup>105</sup> After reaching an agreement with the Liberian government, Firestone added a clause that obligated Liberia to take a five million dollar loan from Firestone in order to proceed. This addition caused protests across Liberia and throughout the African Diaspora, but the Liberian government hesitatingly agreed on the condition that the loan was not administered directly by Firestone.<sup>106</sup> Hardly an improvement, the loan was administered by the Finance Corporation of America, a subsidiary of Firestone.

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104. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 52.

105. Fred van der Kraaij, “The 1926 Firestone Concession Agreement,” *Liberia: Past & Present of Africa’s Oldest Republic*, March 26, 2018, <http://www.liberiapastandpresent.org/1926FirestoneCA.htm>.

106. Tarnue Johnson, *Critical Examination of Firestones Operations in Liberia: A Case Study Approach* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2010), 12.

## Firestone's Impact in Liberia

Firestone began operations at the Mt. Barclay plantation, the Cavalla plantation in Maryland County, and its largest plantation at Harbel in Margibi County, greatly impacting Liberia and its inhabitants. First and foremost, the agreement ensured land and its resources to Firestone. Firestone's plantations absorbed indigenous groups that were living in the area, effectively taking their lands.<sup>107</sup> The majority of laborers were recruited from indigenous groups historically located in the vicinity of Firestone's imposed plantations, including the Kpelle, Loma, Dan, Mano, and Bassa.<sup>108</sup> Lands previously cleared by indigenous farmers were particularly valuable to the development of the plantation.<sup>109</sup> In 1930, 55,000 acres had been cleared and 18,000 laborers had been obtained for the company. Between the years of 1926 and 1977, Firestone's plantations made an estimated \$410 to \$415 million dollars in profit by extracting rubber.<sup>110</sup>

The loan forced Liberian dependency on Firestone, and the company's actions continued to reinforce it. The acquisition of indigenous agricultural lands and labor limited the amount of time and resources that Liberians could devote to their own agricultural practices. Before long, the country was largely importing its food, even rice. Rice was essential to Liberian life and culture as a dietary staple as well as an important indicator of wealth.<sup>111</sup> A Firestone subsidiary,

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107. Nicholas Jahr in "Fighting Firestone in Liberia," YouTube, accessed November 28, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvRAY4f1v8g>.

108. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 114.

109. Harvey Samuel Firestone and Samuel Crowther, *Men and Rubber* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1926), 267.

110. Kraaij, "Firestone in Liberia," 223.

111. Debra Newman Ham, "The Emergence of Liberian Women in the Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., Howard University, 1984), 111-2.

the United States Trading Company, became the primary provider for food and other supplies for laborers and many Liberians who did not work in the rubber industry. This dependency on Firestone continued the extraction of resources from Liberia without investing back in the country. This pattern continued the underdevelopment of Liberia and also had a dire effect on the country when Firestone's executives abandoned the plantations and their workers in 1980. Many depended on Firestone for food, medicine, education, and wages. In the 1970s, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, an economist who served as the minister of finance and was elected president in 2006, came to the same conclusion: "Firestone's entry into Liberia...served mainly to reinforce the imposed economic dependency."<sup>112</sup>

Extending from the initial agreement that required the Liberian government to provide laborers for Firestone's plantations, the rubber industry forced the economy further towards wage labor and contributed to a forced labor scandal in the country. From research conducted in Liberia prior to the establishment of its plantations, Firestone knew about exploitative labor practices used by the government.<sup>113</sup> The company decided to use them to its advantage.

Raymond Leslie Buell, a researcher who spent time in Liberia in 1925 and 1926, concluded that "the preexisting system of labor recruitment for Fernando Po was being used for the rubber plantations."<sup>114</sup> Members of indigenous ethnic groups were frequently at risk of being forced into labor and made up the majority of Firestone's workers. In an interview conducted by historian Fred van der Kraaij, one man recalled, "I was a small boy when Firestone came to

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112. Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 57.

113. The report of the Harvard African Expedition in 1926-27 was dedicated to Harvey S. Firestone, see Strong, *Harvard African Expedition*.

114. Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 831, as cited in Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 42.

Liberia...During the King Administration, soldiers of the Liberian Frontier Force would come to the villages and compel people to leave for the Firestone Plantations to work there.”<sup>115</sup>

Some were forced into labor by their local leaders who had been paid by Firestone. One study found that “Firestone paid \$2,000 to 20 paramount chiefs for the recruitment of 16,000 laborers in 1954,” twenty years after the Johnson-Christy report exposed Liberia’s slave labor to the world.<sup>116</sup> Other laborers were “recruited” from schools. Indigenous Liberian students “were conscripted by the government to build roads linking the Firestone plantations.”<sup>117</sup> George Eutychianus Saigbe Boley, a member of the Krahn ethnic group, argued that rubber exploited indigenous labor. He said, “The forced labor system was so effective that the price of rubber in the United States dropped from \$50.16 cents to \$1.40 cents per pound in 1930, which was far below the production cost.”<sup>118</sup> This drop in price was likely impacted by the global depression in addition to profits resulting from forced labor, but the statement shows how central forced labor was to someone who lived in close proximity to it. Firestone’s labor abuses continued to provoke indigenous protest. “At a conference of Liberian Chiefs with President Charles D. B. King in 1928, Paramount Chief Kandakai firmly stated, ‘We do not want the government to force labour out of us for Firestone.’”<sup>119</sup> In the 1940s, leaders like Dew Tuan-Wleh Mayson organized with the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA), and took a stand against Firestone.<sup>120</sup> In 1949,

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115. Kraaij, “The 1926 Firestone Concession Agreement.”

116. Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 52.

117. Saha, 74.

118. Saha, 54; van der Kraaij uses comparable numbers (48 cents per pound in 1926 to 5.5 cents per pound in the early 1930s), see Kraaij, “Firestone in Liberia,” 211.

119. Saha, 53.

120. Saha, 56.

workers destroyed property and burned down rubber trees at Harbel.<sup>121</sup> Through the decades, Firestone remained a symbol of white exploitation of Black people in a Black nation.

Four years after Firestone established its plantations in Liberia, an international commission investigated Liberia on charges of slavery—resulting in global media attention and leading to the resignation of Liberian President Charles D. B. King and the impeachment of Vice President Allen Yancy. The commission found that compulsory labor was used on the Firestone plantations and private rubber farms that sold their rubber to Firestone. One of many findings concluded that “labor for private purposes is forcibly impressed by the government and used in the Firestone Plantations” with the assistance of the Liberian Frontier Force.<sup>122</sup> A town chief testified, “We are nothing but slaves now.”<sup>123</sup> But the commission did not hold Firestone responsible. The Liberian government bore the responsibility for forced labor in the country including on Firestone’s plantations. As Firestone’s involvement was excused, the rubber company continued to expand in the country for years to come.

The International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia was composed of the British League of Nations representative Cuthbert Christy, American representative Charles S. Johnson, and former president of Liberia and Firestone lawyer Arthur Barclay. This commission, dispatched by the League of Nations, represented another move by a white supremacist alliance of global racial capitalism between Firestone, the US, and Europe’s colonial powers. The Commission’s report scapegoated the Black Republic for slave trading rather than implicating Spanish, French, and British colonial

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121. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 87.

122. Kraaij, “The 1926 Firestone Concession Agreement.”

123. Christy, Johnson, and Barclay, *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia*, 89.

powers, as well as American commercial ventures such as Firestone's rubber plantation. The US government also used the Commission's findings as justification for intervention, and the ensuring compliance to the Commission's recommendations reinforced a neocolonial relationship between the United States and Liberia.<sup>124</sup> The United States and Firestone worked hand-in-hand to establish neocolonial rule that, far from ending slavery, reaffirmed it, even if by another name.

### **Working Conditions at Firestone**

Working conditions for Firestone's indigenous laborers on the plantations were very strenuous. They worked long hours for little pay, endured unequal living conditions in comparison to Firestone's white employees, and faced an environment of institutionalized racism and personal prejudice from white Firestone employees. On the Firestone plantation, impressed laborers performed tasks such as clearing the land by hand or extracting rubber from trees one by one. "Tappers," as they were called, worked long hours and were forced to meet a daily quota. After extracting the rubber, they carried it in buckets to the nearest collection location—often miles away. Firestone's promotional materials claimed plantation laborers worked eight-hour days and received the two-hour breaks, but testimonies of workers and legal claims of forced labor and child labor contradicted these claims. According to testimonies, workers were required to fulfill high quotas that would be impossible for one person to obtain on their own in twenty hours. This encouraged laborers to seek the support of their children, who were not on the

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124. Neocolonialism refers to the use of economic, political, religious, ideological, and cultural pressures to control or influence other countries, especially former dependencies. Because Liberia was initially controlled by the American Colonization Society before gaining independence, many historians have viewed the relationship between the United States and Liberia as neocolonial. For elaboration on neocolonialism in an African context, see Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1970). For historians who see the U.S.-Liberia relationship as neocolonial, see: Rosenberg, "The Invisible Protectorate"; Sundiata, *Black Scandal*; M'bayo, "Liberian-American Relations, 1900-1945."



payroll, to complete their work in order to get paid.<sup>125</sup> Institutional racism and anti-indigenous prejudice was also directed at Firestone's Liberian laborers. The National Planning Association boasted that Firestone's "labor force of over 25,000 can be managed with a foreign executive and technical staff of less than 200."<sup>126</sup> This statement celebrated the domination of a few white staff who held executive or scientific positions over 25,000 Black laborers.

Firestone pledged to bring western education, medicine, and "civilization." However, bringing those things translated into a society structured on white supremacy that continued to benefit white American interests. As Saha writes, this was an "attempt to westernize their values without offering [Liberians] any concrete benefits."<sup>127</sup> The primary goal was profit, therefore the health and education of their workforce was only important to Firestone because it strengthened the workforce. The Plantations Company wrote, "Sanitation, education, and medical assistance have a prominent place in our program because we understand that the future of the country and of our own enterprises depends upon the education, health, and general welfare of the Liberian people."<sup>128</sup> To this end, Firestone established segregated hospitals and schools.<sup>129</sup> Through their education, Liberians were socialized into their place in the economy and the racial hierarchy. In a confidential letter from Thomas Jesse Jones, a white administrator invested in Black education in the United States and Africa, to Harvey Firestone, Jones wrote about the importance of race in

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125. This information is derived from witness testimonies. However, the case was dismissed in 2010, *Flomo et al v. Firestone Natural Rubber Co*, 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 10-03675.

126. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 80.

127. Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 77.

128. *Liberia and Firestone: The Development of a Rubber Industry, a Story of Friendship and Progress* (Harbel, Liberia: Firestone Plantations Company, 1956), 7.

129. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 52.

his teaching staff. He wrote, “For the present, Liberia needs the influence and services of at least a few white educators and workers.”<sup>130</sup>

Living conditions for rubber workers in Liberia were similarly unequal and segregated. The essence of the situation can be captured through inspection of the “Firestone Bungalow”—housing built for the foreign staff of the Firestone Rubber Plantation from the United States and Europe. Each of these large houses had “a large living room, dining room, and two or three bedrooms with modern, fully equipped bathrooms and kitchens.”<sup>131</sup> They featured high ceilings and architecture that lifted the second floor with 10-foot pillars to access a cool breeze. Similar to the homes belonging to Americo-Liberians, the Firestone executive mansion was influenced by the architecture of the American South.<sup>132</sup> These buildings were “admirably adapted to ensure comfortable living despite Liberia’s heat, high rainfall, and teeming insect life.”<sup>133</sup> Again for their comfort, some contained living quarters for domestic servants, of which households usually had from two to five. Also, white Firestone employees were accustomed to patronizingly referring to Liberian domestic servants, often adult men, as “houseboys,” “boatboys,” or “yardboys.”<sup>134</sup> These conditions were in stark contrast to the housing provided to the indigenous laborers on the plantation. Laborers, and sometimes their families, lived in small, crowded one-room homes with no indoor plumbing or running water. They did not have access to land for

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130. Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 75.

131. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 81.

132. Amos J. Beyan, “The American Colonization Society and the Origin of Undemocratic Institutions in Liberia in Historical Perspective,” *Liberian Studies Journal* 14, no. 2 (1989): 140–51.

133. Taylor, *The Firestone Operations in Liberia*, 81.

134. Marcela Gaviria, *Firestone and the Warlord* (Frontline, 2014), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/firestone-and-the-warlord/>.

subsistence farming of staples crops like rice, let alone private facilities for leisure like the golf courses the white executives enjoyed. These differences in living conditions reveal a stark dimension of institutionalized racism and classism in the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. Inequality in housing sent a strong message that Firestone cared much more about promoting the comfortable living of white employees over that of the Black employees who served the company in much greater numbers.

## **Conclusion**

Colonial norms were adopted by international businesses like the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company which sought to profit from the legacy of colonial exploitation in Liberia. Firestone was one of many businesses that intended to benefit from the trends of global racial capitalism. As Firestone expanded to establish plantations in Liberia, with the support of key US government officials and the systemic antiblackness of the colonial period, it inevitably engaged in a transatlantic conflict with the Garvey Movement that understood Liberia to be central not only to its movement but to the liberation of Black people globally. Firestone's success represented the ever-looming white alliance that comes to the rescue when Black people get too close to freedom. Firestone expanded at the expense of indigenous Liberian communities and Garveyites everywhere. It stifled the UNIA's anti-colonial aspirations and left a devastating impact in Liberia, especially for those forced to work at Firestone's plantations. The working conditions for indigenous Liberian laborers on the Firestone plantation in many ways mirrored those of Firestone's African American workers in Akron and Barberton. Both held similar positions in a racial hierarchy, echoing Marcus Garvey's early observations of a global racial hierarchy. These shared experiences between rubber workers in places as distant as Akron and Liberia illustrate why so many people joined the ranks of the UNIA.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE UNIA IN AKRON AND BARBERTON

With the vision of an independent nation and government, redemption of Africa from colonialism, and an independent Black economy on their minds, Garveyites in Akron and Barberton had new expectations for what they could do in their own lives and communities. Akron and Barberton's divisions embraced the energy and enthusiasm of the international Garvey Movement and put it into action in their own cities, asserting themselves as members of a global diasporic community and as residents of Akron and Barberton. Diasporic participation was a source of hope and a sign of the ability to dream of freedom in the midst of their local realities.<sup>1</sup> Sitting at the intersection of the rubber industry and the Great Migration, Akron and Barberton are unique places to study the Garvey Movement because both cities' Garveyites and rubber executives were looking toward Liberia. When considering the conflict between the UNIA and Firestone discussed in the previous chapter in a transatlantic framework, it can be traced from Liberia, the location of the UNIA's proposed Black nation and the conflict that thwarted those dreams in the early 1920s, back to Akron, Firestone's hometown. The Akron and Barberton Divisions of the UNIA were distinct and made up of different groups of people, and centered in different environments, but collaborated frequently and shared many similarities that allow me to look at how both divisions were involved in the UNIA globally, regionally, and locally. Additionally, the history of these divisions highlights the expanse and diversity of the UNIA in this period, and reveals local, regional, and transatlantic connections that place Akron

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1. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*.

and Barberton's Garveyites into the "diasporic Midwest."<sup>2</sup> Using existing histories of the Garvey Movement to frame the discussion, this chapter chronologically tells the story of the Akron and Barberton Divisions, while also situating them within the UNIA's global, regional, and state networks and their cities' local realities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Black Akron and the Rubber Industry**

Akron, Ohio, was the world's leading rubber manufacturing city in the world, and in turn, the rubber industry greatly shaped the city. Housing four of the five major American rubber companies founded around the turn of the century—B. F. Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone, and General—it earned it the nickname, "Rubber Capital of the World."<sup>4</sup> Akron's economy and population rapidly expanded to meet the needs of the growing rubber industry. Between 1910 and 1920, Akron's population skyrocketed. As the city's rubber plants became heavily involved in wartime manufacturing, the industry boomed, and potential workers migrated to Akron in large numbers. Akron's rubber companies advertised in both African American and white newspapers in West Virginia and the Deep South to attract many people in search of wage labor.<sup>5</sup> In these years, the total population increased from 69,067 to 208,435. In this same period, Akron's Black population swelled from 657 to 5,500, an increase of more than 830%.<sup>6</sup> A similar trend occurred in Barberton, a rural suburb just to the southwest of Akron. The population of

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2. McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 163.

3. For a full timeline of the Akron and Barberton Divisions' activities, see appendix A.

4. B. F. Goodrich was founded in 1870, Goodyear in 1898, Firestone in 1900, and General in 1915; Herbert R. Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 5–6.

5. Kimberley L. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915-1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 49; John A. Tully, *The Devil's Milk: A Social History of Rubber* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 114.

6. Woolford, "A Geographic Appraisal."

Barberton in 1910 was 9,410, and it almost doubled by 1920, to 18,811. In other words, in 1920 the majority of Akron's residents, and about half of the residents of Barberton, were recent arrivals. While they were not the very first Black family to reside in Barberton, only one Black family was listed in that city's census records in 1910.<sup>7</sup> By 1920 its Black population had increased to 746.<sup>8</sup> These numbers demonstrate that African Americans were in the extreme minority in both cities, making up less than 3% of Akron's total population in 1920.<sup>9</sup> They also show that nearly all of Akron and Barberton's Black residents were relatively new arrivals in 1920.

Many migrants to Akron found work in the rubber industry. Some rubber workers also lived in Barberton, but Barberton was growing industrially in its own right. Its nickname became Magic City because its industry seemingly popped up overnight. In 1920, sixty-five percent of Akron's total population and about half of its Black population worked in the rubber industry.<sup>10</sup> Connected by global racial capitalism, conditions faced by Liberian workers paralleled those experienced by African American workers at Firestone's factories in Akron. Like indigenous Liberian "tappers," Black rubber workers in Akron, Ohio, were also underpaid, segregated into unequal living conditions, and faced personal prejudice from white Firestone employees. African Americans' experiences were shaped by institutional racism within the rubber industry.

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7. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 146–47; Kat, "Wadsworth Coal Mines and Strike Breakers," *Medina County District Library Genealogy* (blog), February 15, 2018, <http://mcdlgenealogyspot.blogspot.com/2018/02/wadsworth-coal-mines-and-strike-breakers.html>.

8. 1910 United States Census, *Ancestry.com*; 1920 United States Census, *Ancestry.com*.

9. Around 5% by 1940.

10. This number was calculated using total population of Akron in 1920 (208,435), the number of Black workers in 1920 (2,685) listed in Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry*, and the percentage of rubber workers that were Black (2%) also from Northrup. See Woolford, "A Geographic Appraisal" for Akron's Black population in 1920.

Executive positions were held by white people. African Americans only held low-level positions, and workers were racially segregated. Many Black workers were subjected to hot, dirty labor in the compound room, which was unofficially known as the “Black department.”<sup>11</sup> They were often involved in the most dangerous work, and as production became more mechanized, employment opportunities for production jobs declined. Wartime demand led to an increase in the number of African American employees through the 1920s, but compared to white employees, African Americans were twice as likely to be laid off after World War II.<sup>12</sup> African Americans were employed only as production workers and janitorial staff until 1960.<sup>13</sup>

On top of the physical strain and risks involved in the positions most rubber workers held, they were also subjected to an environment of personal prejudice. Joyce Dyer, daughter of longtime Firestone employee Thomas Coyne, argued that this environment, wherein Firestone’s entrepreneurial capital was built on the backs of Black workers who most often held entry-level positions, influenced Firestone employees and their families. Her white father internalized the racism that was built into the company he felt so dearly about. Dyer wrote, “My dad breathed in Firestone’s message every day,” and it came out at home.<sup>14</sup> Thomas Coyne, like many other white Firestone employees, treated people differently based on race. For example, according to his daughter, “I always knew if Dad was talking about a white man or a black man because he called whites by their last names and blacks by their first.”<sup>15</sup> In this subtle way, he was

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11. Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry*, 30.

12. Joyce Dyer, *Gum-Dipped: A Daughter Remembers Rubber Town* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2002), 168.

13. Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry*, 13.

14. Dyer, *Gum-Dipped*, 168.

15. Dyer, 109.

perpetuating the racial hierarchy he absorbed at work and passed it on to his daughter. This sort of personal prejudice was an obstacle that non-Black employees did not encounter. Black rubber workers were required to maintain exceptional mental strength in the face of an environment that constantly attacked their sense of self-worth. This of course made the situation of African American rubber workers in Akron that much more difficult. Sustained assertions of racial inequality reinforced antiblackness in the rubber industry and the city at large. These parallels in living and working conditions, segregation, and racial inequality were visible and present in the lives of Black people around the world. Akron's Garveyites found themselves in a contradictory position in the midst of the conflict between the UNIA and Firestone. They attentively followed the situation in Liberia through updates in the *Negro World*. They also read a front-page story written by Garvey that declared, "Firestone should get out of Liberia." Garvey understood that J. Edgar Hoover and Harvey Firestone constituted, as he said, a "political and commercial alliance to rob and exploit Liberia and Haiti and the Negroes," and undoubtedly, the Akron Division knew this as well.<sup>16</sup> Yet, because rubber constituted the majority of Akron's industry, many of Akron's Garveyites worked in it.

The rubber industry shaped the reality of Akron and Barberton's Black residents and the industry's Black workers, facilitating their adjustment to the local flavor of antiblackness they encountered. Black migrants arrived in Akron and Barberton with hopes and dreams of a life better than the one they had in the South, but Akron and Barberton, like the rest of the United States, maintained an antiblack status quo that prevented these dreams from becoming a reality.

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16. Marcus Garvey, "Garvey Linking Hoover and Firestone in Sinister Liberian Rubber Project Urges Negroes to Vote for Smith," *Negro World*, September 1, 1928.



Migrants found themselves facing de facto segregation, discrimination in public services, housing, and job opportunities, and threats of racial violence from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

Both Akron and Barberton were segregated and discriminated against African American residents in public accommodations and housing. Restaurants, schools, hotels, and public recreation facilities were often segregated. Many downtown restaurants hung signs that read, “We cater only to white trade,” and “Colored people served in sacks, please don’t sit down.”<sup>17</sup> Similar discrimination restricted Black residents to living in certain neighborhoods. Because Akron’s population was increasing so rapidly in this era of industrialization and the Great Migration, there was a shortage of available housing and migrants struggled to find comfortable living situations. Landlords often rented out rooms in eight-hour shifts, to both accommodate and profit from the housing demand.<sup>18</sup> Housing discrimination and segregation compounded Black workers’ difficulties. Landlords discriminated based on race across Akron and Barberton, in much of the same way that rubber companies did. Rubber companies themselves built housing to accommodate the growing labor force they depended on, but Firestone’s company housing in the Firestone Park neighborhood remained all white. As Joyce Dyer recalled, “In Akron, black people worked for Firestone. But they didn’t live within the strict boundaries of Firestone Park,” where she grew up.<sup>19</sup> In Barberton, the Pittsburgh Valve and Fitting Company and the American Sewer Pipe Company built segregated housing for their Black employees.<sup>20</sup> The population

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17. William Wayne Giffin, *African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), 140–41.

18. Kenneth C. Beede and Edward N. Cooper, *Housing Market Analysis for Akron, Ohio* (Washington, DC: Federal Housing Adm., 1938), 172-180 as cited in Woolford, “A Geographic Appraisal,” 11; Tully, *The Devil’s Milk*, 142.

19. Dyer, *Gum-Dipped*, 109.

20. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 147.

density imposed by segregation likely aided in the growth of the Garvey Movement. The chances that Akron and Barberton's Black populations would get wind of the movement and the local divisions were increased by the very restrictions placed on their worlds. Additionally, this environment made potential members more likely to see how they could personally benefit by joining.

The antiblack conditions were bolstered by the growth of the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio that extended to both Akron and Barberton. In the mid-twenties, Akron had the largest Klan chapter, or Klavern, in the country, claiming "an enrolled membership exceeding 52,000"—roughly one-fourth of the city's population.<sup>21</sup> In the 1920s, the Akron Klavern made public displays of antiblack hate. As a part of a larger Klan gathering at the Akron Fairgrounds, 3,400 men, women, and children of the KKK paraded in full-regalia after receiving a permit from the city.<sup>22</sup> The parade route antagonistically passed through one of Akron's oldest Black neighborhoods on Furnace Street before turning down Main Street and looping through downtown. Intimidation tactics had been used by the Klan in Akron before. In 1913, in the same North Hill neighborhood, about 120 white residents and Klan members gathered outside the residences of three Black homeowners living in the neighborhood and threatened them with "serious trouble" if they did not relocate.<sup>23</sup> On another occasion in Goodyear Park, an exclusively white neighborhood designed for company employees, Klan member Bob Jones spoke at a public

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21. John Lee Maples, "The Akron, Ohio Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1928" (master's thesis, University of Akron, 1974), 111.

22. Maples, 25.

23. "Ku Klux Klan is Organized on North Hill," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 13, 1913.

revival in front of a three-story, electrically-lit “burning” cross.<sup>24</sup> The Klan was also very active in politics and the local school board. Klansmen held the majority of positions in Akron’s city leadership, including the “Mayor, Superintendent of Schools, County Sheriff, County Prosecutor, Clerk of Courts, two of three County Commissioners and four of the seven seats of the Akron Board of Education including the Presidency.”<sup>25</sup> Joseph B. Hanan, Assistant Office Director at B. F. Goodrich Rubber Company, was also an influential Klan member.<sup>26</sup> For a short time in the mid-twenties, it seemed the only way into Akron politics was through membership in the KKK. This had a rippling effect across the city. For example, in 1924, newly elected Sheriff Chris Weaver “deputized about 250 Klansmen as auxiliary police with full authority to arrest anyone for any offense.”<sup>27</sup> The Klan’s influence in politics, education, and policing institutionalized antiblackness in Akron, making the lives of its Black residents increasingly difficult. Institutionalized racism of the police impacted Barberton’s residents as well. In the C. Louis Alexander police brutality case that will be explored later, witness Hattie Simpson testified that she inquired about a warrant as three officers entered into her home. They responded dismissively that they “didn’t need a warrant to go into a nigger’s house.”<sup>28</sup> Threatened with violence and disappointed in the circumstances Black migrants found in their new Northern homes, some turned to activism and advocacy for Black people.

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24. Kymberli Hagelberg, *Wicked Akron: Tales of Rumrunners, Mobsters, and Other Rubber City Rogues* (Charleston: History Press, 2010), 68.

25. Maples, “The Akron, Ohio Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1928,” 42, 111.

26. Maples, 48.

27. Maples, 37.

28. Walter White, “The Case of C. Louis Alexander,” July 23, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 19.

In addition to the systemic inequality experienced by Black people, some turned to activism and to the Garvey Movement because they had hope and believed that freedom may be possible. At the turn of the century, Akron's small Black community was developing ideas of Black self-determination and strategizing ways to improve its members' lives, and the explosion in population from the Great Migration further contributed to an increase in Black consciousness and Black culture in both Akron and Barberton. Black migrants had high expectations for a new life in Northern cities, arriving with hopes and dreams of political, religious, and economic freedom. When Akron turned out not to be the Promised Land many migrants had expected, Akron's new residents made "an organized effort" to realize their own freedom by forming and joining groups that worked towards improving conditions for themselves.<sup>29</sup> As Davarian Baldwin argues in *Chicago's New Negroes*, Black working-class migrants used participation in consumer culture and entrepreneurship to challenge the antiblack capitalist environment they found in Midwestern industrial centers.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, migrants had a history of activism, preparing them to be advocates in their new city.<sup>31</sup> In 1919, Akron formed a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and, in 1920, Leon Gordie, Alexander Davis, Henry Killings, Frank E. Petite, and Thurston Watt established the Young Men's Progressive Club (YMPC) with the purpose of "the bettering of the conditions of the Negro man, politically and economically."<sup>32</sup> In this same year, following the passing of the

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29. Leon Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* (Akron: Eureka Publishing Co., 1922), 30.

30. Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 7.

31. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 30; Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*; Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*, 242.

32. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 39. In 1922, Leon Gordie was the President of this organization and a manager at Archer and Wimbish Grocery. Alexander Davis was a printer, Killings was a

19<sup>th</sup> Amendment granting women's suffrage, Akron's Black women formed the Colored Women's Political Club. The women of this organization, led by Mrs. Artee Fleming, president; Iva Haines, first vice president; and Mrs. T. W. Dyson, second vice president, worked with the YMPC to elect Dr. Charles R. Lewis, well-known Black doctor in Akron, to the Republican ballot for state legislature.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, African Americans in Akron organized fraternities, fraternal lodges, veterans' clubs, religious, business, and professional groups, and social action and social service organizations.<sup>34</sup> All of these groups shared the common goal of improving conditions of Black people in the city. Because Akron and Barberton's Black populations were already looking for solutions to local obstacles caused by the existing antiblack status quo and practicing self-determination, many eagerly embraced the UNIA.

The UNIA was compatible with many of Akron's pre-existing organizations, but also set itself apart from them. Its platform on racial unity and the establishment of a nation in West Africa stood out from other organizations. It offered to connect their local hardships and the global African Diaspora and tied their fate with millions of Garveyites who were mobilizing in unity.

### **UNIA in Ohio**

African Americans in Ohio joined millions of members of the UNIA across the world as they built the Garvey Movement. Garveyites established thousands of divisions, including thirty-five along well-travelled routes in Ohio. In 1926, the year for which the most extensive records

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"producer, shipper and distributor of Southern products specializing in pure corn meal and the famous Georgia cane syrup," and Petite did sheet metal work in buildings and automobiles.

33. Gordie, 17.

34. Spears, "Some Characteristics of Officers of Selected Negro Organizations in Negro Community," 17.

are available, Ohio had more divisions than any other state in the Midwest, and the seventh highest amount out of any state in the US.<sup>35</sup> Ohio's first division was established in Cleveland, Ohio's largest city with a population of nearly 800,000, in the first months of 1920.<sup>36</sup> Attesting to the diversity of political beliefs and tactics held by members, the division was organized by Mr. Fuller, a former member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).<sup>37</sup> Almost immediately, the Parent Body recognized Cleveland as an important location in their Pan-African network.<sup>38</sup> UNIA officials made various trips to Ohio and the Midwest before the First International Convention of the Negroes of the World held in August of 1920. Marcus Garvey visited Cleveland in March and again in May.<sup>39</sup> In May of 1920, Garvey took a direct trip to Cleveland that was not part of a larger tour. He travelled by train from New York City to Cleveland, arriving on the morning of his first talk and returning the next day after his second. During this visit, he arrived at the Cory Methodist Episcopal Church in Cleveland to find the enthusiasm and excitement of over four hundred supporters who celebrated the UNIA's plan to organize and unite the African Diaspora and to "demand the freedom and independence of Africa."<sup>40</sup> This UNIA message sweeping across the globe was equally attractive to Clevelanders

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35. Martin, *Race First*, 15.

36. McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 168.

37. McDuffie, 168.

38. Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library; Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 39; McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 173; McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 168-69.

39. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. II:269, 339.

40. Hill, vol. II:340; McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 163.

and future Garveyites around the state of Ohio. Some of Ohio's future Garveyites likely travelled from around the state to hear him speak just like Alice Mahaffy and her husband of Franklin, Ohio, did. She explained, "We have been able to hear Mr. Garvey speak three times and I thought that every word that fell from his mouth were just what we should hear. I heard him in February of this year, first in Cincinnati; the next night in Dayton, Ohio. Then on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, this year, I heard him speak and also was in the big parade in Cincinnati."<sup>41</sup> Akron and Barberton were only forty-five miles away from Cleveland and connected by train. By word of mouth, through the press, and through travel, the enthusiasm for the UNIA spread.

Representatives from Ohio were present at the UNIA's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World and recognizable by the banner introducing their contingent in the historic parade.<sup>42</sup> Prior to the first convention, ninety-five UNIA divisions had formed, including Division 59 of Cleveland and Division 68 of Hamilton.<sup>43</sup> Additional unchartered divisions had begun to organize in Columbus and Cincinnati as well.<sup>44</sup>

Then, after the convention, as the UNIA saw exponential growth around the world, so did the UNIA in both urban and rural areas of Ohio.<sup>45</sup> Fourteen more divisions formed in Ohio before the Second International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in August of 1921. Six of these divisions formed in Ohio's largest urban areas after Cleveland, including

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41. Alice Mahaffy, "Two Faithful Workers In the Buckeye State," *Negro World*, July 26, 1924.

42. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. II:493.

43. Pierce, "Mobilization Lessons from Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association," 105-11.

44. "Columbus Division of the U. N. I. A. and A. C. L.," *Ohio State Monitor*, April 17, 1920; William Ware attended the first convention representing a group of 20 from Cincinnati, "Speech by Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, February 6, 1921, in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:164.

45. See appendix B, for full list of Ohio cities with a UNIA presence.

Cincinnati, Toledo, Columbus, Akron, Dayton, and Youngstown. In 1920, the populations of these cities ranged from 401,247 in Cincinnati to 132,358 in Youngstown. Four divisions formed in cities with populations ranging from 15,000-60,000, including Springfield, Middletown, Sandusky, and Barberton. Four divisions also sprung up in small towns and in the unincorporated rural areas of Struthers, Medina, Santoy, and New Plymouth. Ohio divisions formed through a combination of local enthusiasm and outside support. Parent Body representatives visited Ohio's cities to assist in forming divisions, hosting elections, or establishing auxiliaries of the Legions or Nurses. Officers and members of Ohio's divisions travelled around the state to help divisions form as well. This pattern of travel and regional support grew the total number of divisions, chapters, and clubs in Ohio to 50. In addition to this, the UNIA still had members, supporters, *Negro World* agents and subscribers, donors, and contributing poets from at least thirteen more of Ohio's cities that did not have UNIA divisions of their own. The expansion of the UNIA in Ohio is illustrated in figure 1.



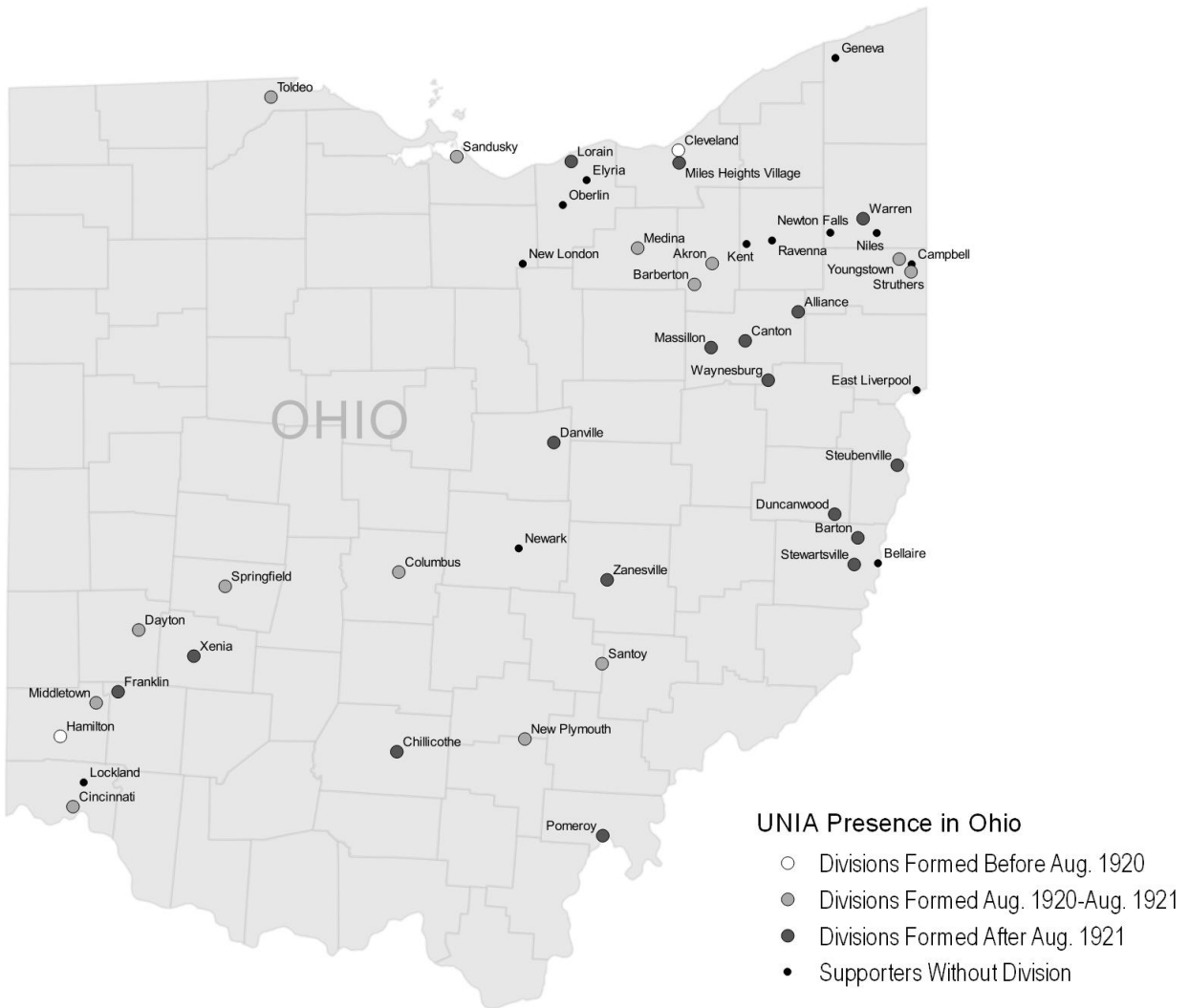


Figure 1. UNIA Presence in Ohio. Created by author.

Stemming from the various sizes, industries, and populations in each city (see appendix C), the experiences of Garveyites from city to city varied greatly. For example, divisions formed in three Ohio company-owned mining communities: Barton, Duncanwood, and Santoy. The population living in Santoy in 1920 was 976, with African Americans in the minority. The company closed the mines in 1927 and asked all former employees and their families to vacate

company housing, resulting in the decline of the community and likely its UNIA division.<sup>46</sup> This dramatic example illuminates how local circumstances contributed to a variety of outcomes for the UNIA in Ohio. Another division was formed in Miles Heights Village, only incorporated between 1927 and 1932 before being absorbed by Cleveland. This integrated rural suburb located outside of Cleveland had a population of about 1,500, where one third of the population was Black. Miles Heights' Black population was largely made of Southern migrants, drawn to the area for its rural familiarity and the opportunity to buy land and homes. The village's Black residents built the stores and businesses that they needed. Former resident Barry Moore remembered, "We had everything we wanted. We were really self-sufficient within this little community."<sup>47</sup> In 1929, the village elected a Black mayor. After its previous white mayor died, Jamaican American Vice Mayor Arthur Johnston assumed the position and then ran victoriously in the next election to remain in office. The UNIA division that formed here in Miles Heights Village operated in different circumstances than Ohio's mining towns or that of Ohio's major industrial areas. These examples call attention to the local contexts that shaped the worlds in which Garveyites in Ohio lived. They demonstrate the need for further study of the UNIA in Ohio that uncovers the diversity of outcomes experienced by divisions created in very different circumstances and recenter the importance of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism in Ohio's history. Additionally, studies could further uncover the Midwest's regional network that led Ohio to have a larger UNIA presence than any other Midwestern state.

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46. JRW, "Official Census of Perry County 1900, 1910, 1920," *The Little Cities Archive* (blog), August 13, 2012, <https://littlecitiesarchive.org/tag/san-toy/>.

47. Dennis Knowles, "Look Back At Miles Heights Village, Cleveland's Black Suburb," *ideastream*, February 7, 2020, <https://www.ideastream.org/news/look-back-at-miles-heights-village-clevelands-black-suburb>.

## Akron Division 215 Formed

Regional organizers visited Akron as well. Parent Body representative Dr. George B. Riley had been visiting in Cleveland for some time, giving many compelling speeches, mentoring the Cleveland Division, and making trips around the state to assist Ohio divisions get set up and expand. Starting in February of 1921, Riley travelled to Sandusky, Springfield, Akron, and Oberlin.<sup>48</sup> In each place, he worked with local leadership, delivered talks on Black history, and outlined fundraising plans for the UNIA's Liberia Construction Loan. However, not all of his trips were equally successful. While the swift growth of the Garvey Movement would make it seem like Black people inevitably joined the UNIA, this was not always the case. In Sandusky, a division starting with 54 members was established during his visit.<sup>49</sup> In Springfield, Riley found what Cleveland Division Secretary Lavinia D. Smith described as "conditions similar to what he found in other places." Riley frequently encountered misconceptions about Garveyism and a lack of local unity, but after a week-long stay and three nights in a row of public speaking, a UNIA division was established in Springfield.<sup>50</sup> Riley also encountered difficulties in Oberlin, which Smith attributed to the lack of segregation that existed in the college town. Oberlin was a stop on the underground railroad, and abolitionists on the board of trustees of Oberlin College voted to allow Black students entry in 1835.<sup>51</sup> Oberlin did have some Garvey supporters, but a division

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48. "U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, April 2, 1921; "The U. N. I. A. News," *Negro World*, March 5, 1921.

49. "The U. N. I. A. News," *Negro World*, March 5, 1921.

50. "U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio" *Negro World*, April 2, 1921.

51. "Oberlin History," Oberlin College and Conservatory, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.oberlin.edu/about-oberlin/oberlin-history>

did not materialize.<sup>52</sup> In Akron, Dr. Riley's visit was an overwhelming success, indicating that there was enough local unity and excitement over Garvey's program to form a division.

Local participation and enthusiasm was essential for the UNIA's growth locally and globally. Before Riley visited, residents of Akron met and applied for a charter. Planning likely began in 1920 or in the first month of 1921, because on January 31, 1921, seven "citizens of intelligence," as required by the UNIA's *Constitution and Book of Laws*, gathered in the basement of a home on Newton Street on the east side of Akron to apply for a charter to establish a division of the UNIA.<sup>53</sup> One of these founding members was Eliza Porch (see fig. 2). She remained deeply involved in the division's work until she passed in 1935.<sup>54</sup> William Sherrill, fourth assistant president-general, commented during one of his many visits to the division that "she has never been known to be absent from a meeting." While she never held an office in the division, she held respect among the division's members and officers and "her counsel [was] sought whenever matters of weight involving the division [were] concerned."<sup>55</sup> Porch was widowed and in her early sixties when she migrated with her son from Alabama around 1919. When they arrived, they stayed in rooming houses, and she worked as a laborer doing laundry through Mary A. Upperman's Employment Bureau. Upperman was an African American entrepreneur in Akron who owned a grocery, laundry, corner store, employment agency, and

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52. "U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio" *Negro World*, April 2, 1921.

53. L. N. Toney, "The U. N. I. A. in Akron, Ohio Division 215," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922; Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library; Randall Burkett notes, this was "reminiscent of the pattern of organization utilized by Black Baptist churches, in which the cooperation of seven individuals had to be secured, in order to form a new congregation," see Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, 86.

54. "Ohio Deaths, 1908-1953," s. v. "Eliza Porch," 1935, *FamilySearch.org*

55. "The Grand Old Woman of Akron Division, U.N.I.A.," *Negro World*, April 11, 1925.

rooming house for Akron's Black community.<sup>56</sup> It is likely that Eliza Porch began to build her network through these experiences. Upperman's rooming house and grocery were located on Bluff Street, on the same block as future president of the Akron Division, Alexander Davis.



Figure 2. Eliza Porch, 1925. "The Grand Old Woman of Akron Division, U.N.I.A.," *Negro World*, April 11, 1925.

Eliza Porch is the only confirmed founding member, but my research has led me to speculate about two additional members who may have applied for the division's charter on January 31. The first is Herman S. Miller. He is the only known UNIA member that lived on

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56. mws40, "Mary A. Upperman, 1878-1937," *Akron Women's History* (blog), September 6, 2013, <https://blogs.uakron.edu/womenshistory/2013/09/06/mary-a-upperman-1878-1937/>.

Newton Street at this time.<sup>57</sup> He also held an early leadership position in the division. Herman and Clara Miller migrated with their children from Houston, Texas, where he worked as a wagon driver, she as a washerwoman, and their son James as an apprentice at a candy factory. They owned their home in Houston and purchased a home in Akron not long after arrival. Miller and all his children secured jobs at Goodyear.<sup>58</sup> He offered his financial management skills and stability to the Akron Division of the UNIA and served as its Treasurer.<sup>59</sup>

The second possible charter member was Reverend James H. Smiley. He was another early advocate of the UNIA in Akron, who supported the growth of the organization both inside and outside of Akron. Rev. Smiley appeared onstage at a UNIA event in Sandusky in February of 1921 where that city's division raised the twenty-five dollars it needed to purchase a charter from the UNIA.<sup>60</sup> Because Smiley was involved with the UNIA before Akron's first public series of meetings took place, it is possible that he was also a charter member. Regardless, it is certain that Smiley and the Akron Division participated in regional Garveyite networks from the commencement of their own division.

One aspect that was advantageous for the success of the Akron (and Barberton) Divisions was the backing by local churches and their pastors. Rev. Royal Allen Jones' commitment to the Garvey Movement was a major asset to Akron's division. He was a long-standing resident of Akron and an important community leader. He moved to Akron around 1890 when its Black

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57. William H. Massey also lived on Newton Street but, according to Akron's city directories, not until 1928. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1918-1928.

58. 1910 United States Census, Houston, Harris County, Texas, s. v. "Steven Miller," *FamilySearch.org*; 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Herm Steve Miller," *FamilySearch.org*.

59. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 37.

60. "U. N. I. A. in Medina, Ohio," *Negro World*, February 19, 1921.

population was recorded as only 196.<sup>61</sup> Rev. Jones was born into slavery near Richmond, Virginia, in 1859.<sup>62</sup> He worked as a coal miner and then for Taplin, Rice & Co. before studying ministry at Buchtel College. He was ordained in 1893 and began to lead the newly founded Second Baptist Church. By the time Garveyism made its way to Akron, Rev. Jones had expanded Second Baptist's congregation to 630 members, obtained financial stability, and acquired a large, beautiful building in the heart of downtown (see fig. 3).<sup>63</sup> Rev. Jones was a gifted organizer. He founded the Northern Ohio Baptist District Association, one of the five affiliates of the Ohio Baptist General Convention, in 1905 and served as its moderator into the twenties.<sup>64</sup> He was celebrated by his peers in the *Ohio State Monitor*, an Ohio Baptist newspaper that ran from 1918-1922: "Through his influence, no less than three hundred and fifty persons have professed a belief in God and have been baptized by him." The paper also added that Rev. Jones "possesses another ability that most ministers do not; that of holding together his people." It went on to say that no fights or brawls have taken place at Second Baptist, nor has any faction broken away.<sup>65</sup> In addition to his personal attributes, his extensive network across Northern Ohio aided in the Garvey Movement's successes there. He once remarked that he "comes in contact quite often with the representatives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the field," referring

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61. "Akron's Black History Timeline," City of Akron, last modified 2016, <https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/site/f0911a7cb2c867bc/index.html>.

62. Mark Price, "Local History: Former Coal Miner Saw Light as Church Pastor," *Akron Beacon Journal*, accessed September 16, 2020, <https://www.beaconjournal.com/news/20190218/local-history-former-coal-miner-saw-light-as-church-pastor>.

63. "Doings of Second Baptist," *Ohio State Monitor*, March 20, 1920.

64. Rev. Kenneth L. Simon, "From the Pastor's Desk," *New Bethel Baptist Church Extended Bulletin* (July 2019), <https://docplayer.net/144780349-New-bethel-baptist-church-extended-bulletin.html>; Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 15.

65. "Doings of Second Baptist," *Ohio State Monitor*, March 20, 1920.

to his work with the Baptist association.<sup>66</sup> Black church networks, especially in the Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal denominations, laid the groundwork for regional UNIA organizing in some regions.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 3. Second Baptist Church, 1948. “Second Baptist Church,” 1948, 81G, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

Porch and the other charter members planned a series of meetings during the first week of March at Second Baptist Church. When George B. Riley, accompanied by officers of the Cleveland Division, arrived in Akron, “they found a large crowd assembled at the church full of

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66. “Interesting Visitors in Harlem,” *Negro World*, October 14, 1922.

67. For a case study in Georgia, see Pierce, “Mobilization Lessons from Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association,” 113–17.



enthusiasm and eager to greet them.”<sup>68</sup> Dissatisfied with segregation, racial violence, and systemic antiblackness in their new home city and captivated with a desire for freedom, attendees welcomed the UNIA’s representatives. This weekend of Riley’s visit included a series of well-attended meetings at the Second Baptist Church where a “motion picture display of the Garvey Movement drew great crowds for three nights.”<sup>69</sup> The black and white silent film began with a close-up of Marcus Garvey riding down the streets of Harlem in a UNIA parade motorcade and captions greeting viewers as his “fellow citizens of Africa.”<sup>70</sup> The film went on to showcase a parade that featured a long line of cars waving black flags and displaying protest banners. They stated things like “All Men Were Created Equal” and “The New Negro Wants Liberty.” After the motorcade, the video showed crowds of people gathered and streets filled with Garveyites of all ages and genders. It introduced viewers to the various auxiliary divisions of the UNIA: the Universal Motor Corps, the Universal African Legions, the Black Cross Nurses, and the juvenile division. When the motion picture was shown in Akron, the crowd showed extra enthusiasm when the Black Cross Nurses walked across the screen in their all-white uniforms.<sup>71</sup> During these initial meetings, Riley and Akron residents organized a Universal African Legion, a children’s band, and a Black Cross Nurses auxiliary in Akron. The principles

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68. Lavinia S. Smith, “U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio: Dr. Riley’s Successful Tour of Ohio,” *Negro World*, April 2, 1921.

69. “U. N. I. A. of Akron, O.,” *Negro World*, April 16, 1921.

70. *Universal Negro Improvement Association Parade Footage 1921*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCrIswxQWqM>; for a study of cinema at the turn of the 20th century as part of Black collective struggle for freedom, see Cara Caddoo, *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Modern Black Life*, *Envisioning Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

71. “U. N. I. A. of Akron, O.,” *Negro World*, April 16, 1921.

of Garveyism, it seemed, resonated with many Black women, men, and children who were involved in the division from its inception.

During the week of Riley's visit, the Akron division gained 130 members, and Rev. Walter J. Tucker was chosen as the division's first president.<sup>72</sup> President Rev. Tucker was born in Huston County, Georgia, in 1886, and had migrated to Akron by 1917.<sup>73</sup> By the time he was involved with the UNIA, he was the husband of Cora Lee Holmes and worked for the Akron Pure Milk Company.<sup>74</sup> During his short presidency, he bolstered excitement for the growing Garvey Movement and increased the division's membership by 250.<sup>75</sup>

According to the *Negro World*, "the Garvey Movement [was] rapidly spreading in this section."<sup>76</sup> Akron Division 215 created an organizational structure to accommodate and encourage its continued expansion. It was divided into ten groups, each led by a captain, with the purpose of increasing membership and fundraising to send a delegate to the UNIA's Second International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World which convened in New York City August 1-31, 1921.<sup>77</sup> The division's strategies had some success because on October 31, 1921, "the Akron Division held its largest meeting since its inception. The Second Baptist Church was

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72. Lavinia S. Smith, "U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio: Dr. Riley's Successful Tour of Ohio," *Negro World*, April 2, 1921; for a complete list of the known leadership of the Akron and Barberton Divisions, see appendix D.

73. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Walter J. Tucker," 1919, *Ancestry.com*; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1915-1917.

74. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Walter J. Tucker," 1919, *Ancestry.com*; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1918-1919, 1922-1924.

75. "Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

76. "U. N. I. A. of Akron, O.," *Negro World*, April 16, 1921.

77. L. L. Toney, "Akron O., Branch of the U. N. I. A.," *Negro World*, July 9, 1921.

filled to capacity—about 1,000 in attendance.”<sup>78</sup> Among them was UNIA High Commissioner of Ohio and Youngstown resident Rev. W. O. Harper. Because planned keynote speaker Dr. J. W. H. Eason, assistant to the chaplain-general of the UNIA and a well-known Baptist minister from Alabama, had to cancel, a Dr. Walker spoke on his behalf.<sup>79</sup> Walker spoke on the UNIA’s program to unite “the 4,000,000 Negroes of the world...for the purpose of bettering our commercial, industrial, educational, social and political condition.”<sup>80</sup> He further explained and appealed for the support of these objectives, and fourteen new members joined following his speech.<sup>81</sup> President Walter J. Tucker then led the division in songs and prayers, as he often did at meetings.<sup>82</sup> By the end of November 1921, Rev. Tucker resigned as president but continued to support the division and the Garvey Movement.<sup>83</sup>

### **Barberton Division 408**

Barberton was a city less than ten miles from Akron that also had an active division of the UNIA. These cities were connected by roads and passenger train, so while these groups organized independently, collaboration between them was convenient. Like the Akron Division, the Barberton Division was established before the second international convention, yet unlike Akron, the origins of the Barberton Division were not laid out in the *Negro World*. Because most Parent Body representatives including George B. Riley documented their travels well, it is

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78. Cary Cook, “Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

79. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. II:614.

80. Cary Cook, “Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

81. Cary Cook, “Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

82. Cary Cook, “Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

83. “Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

unlikely that Riley visited Barberton and hosted an event there. Instead, the Barberton Division may have formed independently or with assistance from the Akron Division. Pre-existing links between the Black residents of Akron and Barberton existed, especially between churches and clergy. Because Black people only began to settle in Barberton in significant numbers in the 1910s, the UNIA division, along with a republican club founded in 1920 with 238 members, and churches such as Galilee Baptist Church and the congregation which would become Allen Chapel AME Church, were some of the first Black organizations to be established in the small city.<sup>84</sup> This speaks to the Black Nationalist interest of Barberton's early Black residents. Correspondingly, Barberton did not form its own chapter of the NAACP until 1971.<sup>85</sup>

Henry E. Lewis is the earliest known president of this division. He was a migrant from Tennessee, born in 1885. From the 1920s until his death in 1953, he lived in Barberton with Mary Lewis, his wife, and Bertha, his daughter. He worked as a kiln setter at a sewer pipe company, and Mary and Bertha did housework for private families. In the mid-twenties, they lived on National Avenue near UNIA member Rev. Alonzo Lewis and later moved to Huston Street, near Galilee Baptist Church and a host of other UNIA members.<sup>86</sup> Barberton members were recognized for their donations to various Parent Body initiatives as early as 1922. The Barberton Division collaborated with the Akron Division, and organized on its own in its early years, but only in 1925, when President of the Toledo Division William Davis visited the division, did it begin sending updates to the Parent Body in New York. Because he was

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84. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 55–56, 147. The congregation that developed into Allen Chapel may have been Thankful Baptist Church, because it was located near Pittsburgh Valve and Tire Co., as Taylor suggests.

85. Taylor, 148.

86. 1930 United States Census, Barberton, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Henry Lewis," *Ancestry.com*; 1930 United States Census, Barberton, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Henry Lewis," *Ancestry.com*.

connected to the larger UNIA network and led his own division, it is likely he was directed by the Parent Body or by the Ohio State Commissioner to visit Barberton and lend support to its division. This meeting must have been successful, because it began a long relationship between William Davis and the Barberton Division. In the following month of August, Davis returned from Toledo to speak three more times. New members joined after each talk.<sup>87</sup> Shortly after, he took over as president of the Barberton Division.

As is evident from the first report of the Barberton Division published in the *Negro World*, Barberton's Garveyite women played central roles in local and regional organizing. During Davis' first visit, the women of Barberton's division hosted and supervised an impressive mass meeting. Mrs. Player of Barberton was the Mistress of Ceremonies and Emma Autry, lady president and head nurse of the Akron Division, gave an "inspiring talk" in addition to William Davis's principal address.<sup>88</sup> Ethel Palmer was one of the division's earliest known lady presidents. Ethel Palmer was from Alabama; she, her husband Houston, and her children migrated to Akron by way of Tennessee in 1920, when she was about twenty-five years old.<sup>89</sup> She took on an important organizing role in the Barberton UNIA and became the division's lady president. This made her responsible for overseeing all women's and juvenile auxiliaries. Women of the Barberton Division continued to do much of the organizing and supported one another by creating organizing and speaking opportunities for one another. Palmer was in charge of the meeting program on June 6, 1926, which members from various divisions from across the state attended and supported. The program included the usual opening hymn, "From Greenland's

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87. Morris Simms, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, September 5, 1925.

88. Morris Simms, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 15, 1925.

89. From various genealogical sources, it appears that her full name was likely Will Ethel (Bowen) Palmer.

Icy Mountains,” a speech by Division President William Davis, and participation by many of the division’s leading women. Head Nurse Catherine Bailey read a paper, Secretary Nealie Bruce spoke before the group, and Mary B. Hopson took notes and reported about the meeting to the Parent Body.<sup>90</sup> For the duration of UNIA organizing in Barberton women continued to play an important role in local, regional, and diasporic organizing.

### **Local Realities**

The actions of UNIA divisions were guided by the Parent Body and shaped by their local realities. The framework of the UNIA was broad and malleable to accommodate the needs of members and divisions everywhere. The UNIA in Akron and Barberton met regularly throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Parent Body expected UNIA divisions to hold weekly mass meetings that followed a similar program. In 1922, the Akron Division met weekly on Friday evenings.<sup>91</sup> Meetings often included musical elements led by the Universal Choir including the singing of the hymn “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains” and the Universal Ethiopian Anthem. The division installed a piano for the choir in 1921.<sup>92</sup> Meetings resembled both a religious service and a political rally with performances by division members and speeches from officers of the division or visiting Garveyites. Embracing this culture united members with UNIA divisions around the world. This section highlights some of the local circumstances, and ways that the UNIA’s ideology manifested there, that led to the Akron Division’s participation in city-organized events, organization of their own spectacular events, and legal opposition to the local Klan.

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90. Mary B. Hopson, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, July 3, 1926.

91. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 37.

92. L. L. Toney, “Akron O., Branch of the U. N. I. A.,” *Negro World*, July 9, 1921.

The Akron Division regularly participated in city events like the City of Akron's 1926 Decoration Day parade.<sup>93</sup> On this occasion, the Cleveland Division came down to join Akron's Legions, Nurses, Motor Corps, and juveniles in a two-block-long presence in the city's parade. Cleveland's Universal Band even performed the "Star-Spangled Banner" at the event.<sup>94</sup> This display of American patriotism and cooperation with the city of Akron may seem contradictory to the UNIA's separatist and nationalist program. The UNIA was very outspoken about race pride which was sure to be antagonistic to a national government based on white supremacy. However, the UNIA held a stance of non-confrontation with the US government. This perspective found its way to Akron through the UNIA representatives who spoke there. The understanding of the UNIA's principles and ideology by each division was, in part, shaped by which representatives visited and how they interpreted the UNIA's mission. For example, in his speech delivered in 1921 in Akron, Dr. W. O. Harper explained to the audience of about 1,000 people, "We desire it to be clearly understood that we have no reason or cause to think of any overt act against this government, no cause to denounce this government, nor a sufficient reason to be disloyal to it. We are willing to accede to the statement that this is a white man's country, because it is undeniably true." Harper continued to explain that white people controlled transportation industries and the economy in general and that the UNIA "will not fall and quarrel with him over this, for he has done here already what we are trying and hope to do in Africa in no distant day." He even went as far as to say that Black people should continue to defend America's honor: "But as long as we remain residents of this country, we expect to help fight its

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93. Ruth Joy, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, April 3, 1926.

94. Louise Davis, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, July 3, 1926.

battles and defend its honor.”<sup>95</sup> In this way, participating in city events was consistent with the UNIA’s position, but the Akron Division likely had dualistic motives. Garveyites in Akron knew its local government was held by Klan members. They likely also knew that the US government hardly recognized their citizenship let alone their humanity. Instead of displays of sincere American patriotism, city events became places to assert themselves and remind the white residents of Akron that they were there to stay.

The Akron division hosted its own parades and attended UNIA parades in other cities, including one for Memorial Day in 1924 which the legions and bands from Alliance and Cleveland came down to support.<sup>96</sup> While their role in City of Akron events and parades was important, in their own events, the UNIA had center stage. The Garvey Movement is known for its parades, which served various functions. They created a celebratory and impactful impression on all its observers. The Legions, the Black Cross Nurses, Juvenile Legions, and the Motor Corps paraded through the streets of Akron wearing uniforms manufactured by the UNIA’s own company. Black women and men marched with dignity through the streets of downtown Akron to make a statement amidst the antiblack environment in which they lived and simultaneously to create a public display of confidence, empowered Garveyites to inspire all of the parade’s Black onlookers. Garveyite parades visualized the increased standards that Black people had for themselves in the movement. Returning the favor later that year, the Akron Division joined other Ohio divisions for a meeting and parade in Youngstown, demonstrating ways that the regional Garveyite network in Ohio could have a local impact.<sup>97</sup>

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95. Cary Cook, “Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

96. “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, June 14, 1924.

97. Mrs. N. R. Barnes, “Youngstown, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 2, 1924.



Finally, the Akron Division took local action to minimize the influence of the Klan and limit their ability to meet. In May of 1922, Klavern No. 27 of the Ku Klux Klan planned to meet publicly at the Akron Armory. Akron's Black organizations acted quickly to petition the city council to ban the meeting.<sup>98</sup> Leon Gordie, George W. Thompson, and Charles R. Lewis, representing the Young Men's Progressive Club, the NAACP, and the UNIA, enlisted the help of attorneys Samuel T. Kelley and Artee Fleming to file the petition asking for a restraining order against the KKK and any of its members from meeting in Summit County.<sup>99</sup> Leon Gordie, George Thompson, and Charles Lewis were prominent citizens of Akron. Leon Gordie was president of the YMPC, George Thompson was executive secretary of the YMCA, and Charles Lewis was a well-respected doctor and representative of the NAACP. None of them held leadership roles in the UNIA, but they all supported it. Leon Gordie was a close friend of UNIA members Moses T. Wimbish and Alexander Davis. He was also the manager at Archer and Wimbish Grocery, and along with Davis, he was one of the founding members of the Young Men's Progressive Club which held meetings at UNIA Hall.<sup>100</sup> Charles R. Lewis also hosted Garvey in his home when he visited.<sup>101</sup>

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98. Leon Gordie, George W. Thompson, and Charles R. Lewis, with the help of attorneys Samuel T. Kelley and Artee Fleming, filed a petition in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas against the Akron KKK. Petition in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas against the Ku Klux Klan Organization, Case No. 41857, Dr. Shirla R. McClain Collection, 1940s-1990s, Box 1, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

99. Petition in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas against the Ku Klux Klan Organization, Case No. 41857, Dr. Shirla R. McClain Collection, 1940s-1990s, Box 1, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

100. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 39; McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 173.

101. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 207.

This group “declared that the Klan was undesirable and had no place in modern civilization.”<sup>102</sup> During a city council meeting, Mayor D. C. Rybolt, later outed as a Klan member, and the council tried to avoid the issue by sending it to committee “where it seemed about to be buried as council moved onto other business.”<sup>103</sup> When pressed to address it, many council members made statements of ignorance of, or support for, the Klan. One committee member said, “I don’t know whether this Klan is good or bad and I am not going to make a report on this resolution without giving it some study.” Another stated, “I think some principles of the Klan are mighty good. For example, that one about 100 per cent Americanism. I stand for that.” However, the petition did receive some support from the council, and it was eventually concluded that the Klan would not be able to meet at the armory in Akron.<sup>104</sup> The decision to ban the Klan from meeting was a direct result of the petition to the city council. In response, Dr. C. L. Harrod, a Klan leader in Columbus, declared in the *Akron Beacon Journal* that despite being banned from public buildings, “it will hold its meetings in open air.”<sup>105</sup> The UNIA, YMPC, and NAACP remained persistent, and filed for an injunction against the open-air meeting of the Klan. After repeated requests, the injunction was granted and Gordie, Thompson, and the others delivered it to the open-air gathering, which was then forced to disperse.<sup>106</sup> This encounter reveals how engrained Klan members and ideologies were in the city government and also

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102. “To Hold Meeting is Word of Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922; “More About Meeting of Ku Klux Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922.

103. “To Hold Meeting is Word of Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922; “More About Meeting of Ku Klux Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922.

104. “To Hold Meeting is Word of Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922; “More About Meeting of Ku Klux Klan,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922.

105. Frank H. Ward, “Will Hold Open Air Meeting in Akron, Asserts Dr. Harrod,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922.

106. Maples, “The Akron, Ohio Ku Klux Klan, 1921-1928,” 21.

reveals the role that the UNIA and prominent African Americans played in challenging their influence.

In the early 1920s the YMPC, NAACP, and UNIA often collaborated in pursuit of shared goals, such as opposing the use of public buildings for Klan meetings. In Akron, these organizations collectively pursued a three-pronged political, legal, and economic strategy for uplifting Black people, working separately at times and collaborating in others. They shared meeting spaces, members, and in many ways—despite heavy national battles between the NAACP and UNIA—a common mission. Charles Lewis was a member of the NAACP and husband of Ednah Lewis, the local chapter’s vice president. The couple’s willingness to host Garvey evidences their support for the UNIA and a lack of animosity between the Akron UNIA and NAACP in this early period.

### **Regional Collaboration**

The Akron and Barberton Divisions were tied into a state and regional network of the UNIA. Garveyite organizers understood that regional networks offered them strength and motivation to continue their local work for the sake of the Diaspora. The history of the Barberton Division illuminates the regional cooperation of both the Akron and Barberton Divisions who frequently collaborated with divisions throughout the Midwest. Therefore, this section will follow the history of the Barberton Division chronologically as it paraded, attended conferences, hosted visitors, and collaborated with divisions in Ohio and across the Midwest.

Barberton’s President William Davis facilitated regional communication between Barberton’s Garveyites and other divisions in Ohio. Davis’s presidency created a strong link between the Toledo Division and the Barberton Division, as leaders from Toledo frequently visited in Barberton and William Davis frequently travelled there. Davis went to other Ohio

divisions as well. He increased communication between Ohio's divisions with all his intrastate travelling, and therefore it was common for "several members and friends from neighboring divisions" to attend meetings.<sup>107</sup> In May, UNIA International Organizer Dr. J. G. St. Clair Drake visited the division. He brought "interesting information concerning the work of the organization and the plans of the new administration in pushing forward the program of Negro uplift and African Redemption."<sup>108</sup> St. Clair Drake also participated as chief speaker at a mass meeting membership drive and appointed William Davis to state organizer of Ohio.<sup>109</sup> This role worked well for him as he already travelled across the state frequently. William H. Bowling, officer of the Barberton Division, reported, "we are sorry to lose a very fine leader, but we are pleased at his promotion to a position where he can do even greater work for the organization."<sup>110</sup> In this new role, Davis travelled to Massillon, Alliance, Youngstown, Cleveland, and Akron within his first month of appointment, fostering the UNIA's regional network and connecting Barberton to it.

UNIA women and men collaborated regionally through travel and correspondence. In 1927, divisions from Akron and Barberton joined other Midwestern divisions within four hundred miles of Chicago for a UNIA reunion. They gathered "by train, motor bus, interurban, cars, and automobiles" to celebrate Black pride with a colorful and joyous parade. Ohio divisions arrived largely by train. Members of the Cleveland Division met at the Wheeling Lake Erie

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107. Bessie Bagland, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 16, 1926. Author's name is not fully legible and may be misspelled.

108. W. H. Bowling, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926.

109. W. H. Bowling, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926.

110. W. H. Bowling, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926.

Station and caught an evening train, picking up passengers in Kent, Akron, and Barberton before heading west towards Chicago and the large reunion of Midwestern divisions.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the promotion to the position of state organizer, William Davis continued to work with the Barberton Division as president. Additionally, in 1927, he collaborated with President Alexander Davis of the Akron Division and presidents of eight other divisions in Ohio to form a “President’s Council” with the goal of supporting one another. Their objective was “to create a better working spirit with the members and presidents, and to co-operate between divisions, and to work for the uplift of each division.”<sup>112</sup> William Davis continued his leadership role with the Barberton Division until May of 1928 when Henry Lewis returned to the position. While many of Barberton’s members worked with Davis and appreciated his leadership, others may have felt animosity towards him. Although he was a UNIA insider, he was a Barberton outsider who found himself in charge of its division. Secretary Nealie Bruce reported to the *Negro World*, “Many of the old members have returned since the president, Mr. Henry Lewis, is again leader of our division.”<sup>113</sup>

In June of 1928, a large regional gathering was held in Akron. UNIA members and supporters from Cleveland, Akron, Alliance Massillon, Warren, Youngstown, Barberton, Canton, and Lorain came to town. Twelve coaches of UNIA members, including officers, band members, and choir members, arrived on the Pennsylvania Railroad from Cleveland. The mass meeting was held at “one of the largest auditoriums in Akron,” Dr. William Bowen School at 70

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111. “Cleveland, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 20, 1927.

112. Willie Lue Johnson, “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1927.

113. Nealie Bruce, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, May 19, 1928.

North Broadway.<sup>114</sup> Speakers included President of the Cleveland Division S. V. Robertson, Cleveland's Chaplain Rev. A. G. Ellenburg, and keynote speaker Madame A. I. Robertson. She spoke about plans for the institution of a national government in Africa.<sup>115</sup> The meeting closed with inspiring music by the Universal Band and Universal Choir of the Cleveland Division and the playing of the Ethiopian National Anthem.<sup>116</sup>

Women of the Barberton Division continued their regional collaboration in a way that elevated women and created a regional network of Pan-Africanist women. Emma McGee from Zanesville visited the Barberton Division for a week to support the membership drive of the Barberton Division. She brought "her husband," president of the Zanesville Division, with her. Both of their presences were appreciated, but in the write-up of the event, Nealie Bruce from Barberton mentioned Emma McGee first and centered her influence during the visit. Bruce explained, that "she aroused and stirred the people of Barberton," she uplifted and supported the division, and they hoped to host her again soon.<sup>117</sup> A few months later, the Barberton Division hosted Octavia Thomas as an honored guest. Josephine Cheatham, second vice president of the Ladies' Division planned the meeting's program where Thomas featured as the keynote speaker.<sup>118</sup> During both visits, these women forged Pan-African women's networks as a central component of their UNIA organizing. They strengthened the regional networks that were

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114. Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 16, 1928; Aaron Turner, "Summit County Schools," Ohio Old Schools, accessed December 9, 2016, [http://www.oldohioschools.com/summit\\_county](http://www.oldohioschools.com/summit_county).

115. Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 16, 1928; "Nicaraguan to talk at mass meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 29, 1928.

116. Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 16, 1928.

117. Nealie Bruce, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 20, 1928.

118. J. W. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 26, 1929.

essential to the growth and success of the Garvey Movement. Like the women of the Barberton Division, Ohio's Garveyite women played an important role in regional organizing. Women organizers of the Massillon Division invited the divisions from Canton, Waynesburg, Alliance, Barberton, Akron, Youngstown, and Warren to participate in a mass meeting in their city. In this case, they planned the program for this mass meeting and were instrumental to uniting neighboring divisions.



Figure 4. Officers of Ohio divisions in Cleveland Conference, 1928. *Bottom row (right to left)*, Miss Lara Jarrett, Executive Secretary of Cincinnati Division and Secretary of Conference; Sir William Ware, High Commissioner and President of the Cincinnati Division; Hon. S. V. Robertson, President of Cleveland Division; Mrs. Leona Caldwell, Secretary of Toledo, and Mr.

Elder Tripp, President of Akron; *second row (left to right)*, Mr. J. P. Watson, Secretary of Alliance; Mr. Benjamin Montgomery, President of Dayton; Mr. Milton McGee, President of Zanesville; Mrs. E. McGee, field worker in Ohio; Hon. Fred E. Johnson, President of Columbus; Mr. G. W. Heard, President of Lorain; and Rev. A. C. Ellenburg, President of Warren; *top row (left to right)*, Mr. George Scott, President of College Hill Chapter, Cincinnati; Rev. Calvin Young, President of Springfield; Rev. J. Westbrook, President of Canton; Mr. Thomas Autry, President of Massillon; Mr. G. R. Coleman, President of Youngstown; Mr. Sam Tentman, delegate from Waynesburg Division, and Mr. J. B. Boykins, first vice president of Hamilton division. "Officers of Ohio Divisions in Cleveland Conference," *Negro World*, September 28, 1928.

Just before visiting Akron, Emma McGee attended a conference at Liberty Hall in Cleveland called by State Commissioner of Ohio William Ware. Also in attendance were presidents and representatives from eighteen of Ohio's divisions including Akron President Elder Tripp. Both McGee and Tripp are pictured in figure 4. The conference centered around the responsibilities of division presidents to their divisions and to the Parent Body. The delegates also pledged their support to Universal Liberty University, the UNIA's new education project in Claremont, Virginia.<sup>119</sup> Garveyite women's networks were critical to this project as well, and the majority of Liberty University students were young women.<sup>120</sup> Regional organizing was pivotal to the growth of the Garvey Movement. It connected nearby divisions which served to support one another in routine organizing or in the face of obstacles. Frequent regional collaboration served the purpose of reminding Akron and Barberton's Garveyites of the global network they were a part of.

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119. "Officers of Ohio Divisions in Cleveland Conference," *Negro World*, September 28, 1928.

120. Bair, "Garveyism and Contested Political Terrain in 1920s Virginia," 231.



## **Akron, Barberton, and the Global Garvey Movement**

During the UNIA's years of negotiation with the Liberian government and eventual conflict with the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, the Akron and Barberton Divisions were actively involved in the global Garveyite network. Due to its intimate connections with both Akron's rubber industry and the UNIA's global aspirations, Liberia held significant importance in the minds of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites. The five thousand miles between these cities and Liberia, and the four hundred miles between them and Harlem, were not enough to disconnect Akron and Barberton's Garveyites from the African Diaspora and the Garvey Movement's Pan-African dreams in Liberia. In the early years of their divisions, they followed developments of the situation in the *Negro World*, and many of their members donated to send UNIA delegations to Liberia. Additionally, Ohio's Garveyites played an active role in the UNIA's Liberian negotiations. Columbus Division President G. Rupert Christian was among the group of experts, including carpenters and engineers, the organization sent to Liberia in 1924.<sup>121</sup> When members of their regional network took leading roles in negotiations in Liberia, Midwestern divisions did not see themselves as peripheral actors but as active participants in the UNIA's global project. They extended support for the UNIA's international shipping ventures and the establishment of a Black Empire in West Africa. The Akron and Barberton Divisions recognized the importance of global Pan-Africanism and actively participated in the UNIA's projects that connected its members to it. Each division of the region forged their own transatlantic links that left an impression on the members of that division as well as on the other

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121. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library, "Group of experts sent by the UNIA to Liberia," New York Public Library Digital Collections, accessed September 18, 2020, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-a075-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

divisions in the region. Akron and Barberton's women, additionally, forged their own Garveyite networks through their diasporic participation. These transatlantic connections testify to the success of the UNIA's Pan-African program and the fact that Akron and Barberton's Garveyites were motivated by the UNIA's Pan-African vision and not only their local environments. Akron and Barberton remained connected to the international program of the UNIA by hosting visitors, travelling, reading and writing to the *Negro World*, and demonstrating their support of the UNIA's Pan-African goals through both words and actions.

Visits from Parent Body representatives and prominent UNIA members reinforced Akron and Barberton's connection to the "diasporic Midwest" and the UNIA's international Pan-Africanism. In the months leading up to the Third International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, which was held throughout the entire month of August in 1922, Marcus Garvey toured through the Midwest, West, and South, spreading excitement for the Garvey Movement, assisting divisions with conflict resolution in local disputes, recruiting members to join local divisions, and encouraging delegations to attend the upcoming convention. Garvey witnessed excitement and enthusiasm as he travelled to Akron, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Gary, Okmulgee, Denver, Ogden, Tacoma, Seattle, Los Angeles, and St. Paul. He even chided his own local division in a telegram: "Western and Southern States are all going strong for U. N. I. A. New York will have to brush up to surpass enthusiasm of Mid-Western, Western and Southern delegations to convention."<sup>122</sup>

On May 11, 1922, Garvey spoke in Akron at the Perkins School auditorium, a large venue located downtown that could accommodate over 1,200 people.<sup>123</sup> At every city on his

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122. "Enthusiasm Broad Cast Throughout the Country for U. N. I. A.," *Negro World*, May 27, 1922.

123. "Organizer Speaks Here," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 11, 1922; Akron (Ohio) Board of Education, *Report of the Public Schools of Akron, Ohio, 1920-21* (Akron: Akron Printing Company, 1920), 75; Aaron Turner,

speaking tour audiences packed each venue, and sometimes people had to be turned away, motivating Garvey to make a return visit, as was the case in Kansas City.<sup>124</sup> Members and supporters from surrounding divisions gathered to hear him speak. Some, like Akron Division member Peter McWain, were inspired to write to the Parent Body with a donation during Garvey's visit. He wrote, "Dear Sirs:--Please accept this small amount of \$5.00 as my contribution to the African Redemption Fund. I trust that each and every Negro will do his and her part for the cause of Africa. Fraternally yours, P. McW."<sup>125</sup> Throughout the tour, audiences took to their feet upon the entrance of Marcus Garvey. He spoke "in his usual and forceful and plain language" about the UNIA and its goal of uniting descendants of Africa around the globe for the political, social, economic, and educational benefit of the race.<sup>126</sup> He told about the growth of the movement from one division to hundreds around the world.<sup>127</sup> The tour mutually encouraged divisions and Garvey about the state of the movement. It reminded both Garvey and his supporters that their aspirations were international.

In addition to Garvey, the Akron and Barberton Divisions received frequent visits from William Sherrill, high commissioner of Ohio, future president-general of the UNIA, and two-time UNIA delegate to the League of Nations. He spoke in the area multiple times a year, often

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"Summit County Schools," Ohio Old Schools, accessed December 9, 2016, [http://www.oldohioschools.com/summit\\_county](http://www.oldohioschools.com/summit_county). The Perkins School was re-built three times before finally being closed in 1975 and demolished in 1978. This meeting was held in the third Perkins School building at 130 W. Exchange Street that was built in 1920.

124. "St. Peters C. M. E. church was packed," *Kansas City Advocate*, May 26, 1922.

125. "African Redemption Fund," *Negro World*, June 3, 1922.

126. "Africa Shall Be Free, Hon. Marcus Garvey Tells Columbus Audience," *Negro World*, June 10, 1922.

127. "Greatest Leader of Colored People Today, Marcus Garvey, Delivers Powerful Talk in Gary, Ind.," *Negro World*, May 27, 1922.

staying for a few nights in a row to speak at Liberty Hall as well as various churches.<sup>128</sup> He delivered a report on the League of Nations Assembly in 1922 and 1923. At the 1922 Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in line with UNIA principle “Africa for the Africans,” the UNIA presented a petition requesting that post-World War I ex-German colonies in Africa be given to Black people under the supervision of the UNIA.<sup>129</sup> The UNIA’s delegates succeeded in having their petition presented, which was not to be taken for granted. The League turned away hundreds of petitions that year. Because it was presented in the final days of the Assembly, it was slated to be discussed the following year.<sup>130</sup> They also got themselves seated amongst the official delegates. The following year, the UNIA attended to follow-up on the petition.<sup>131</sup> Sherill and the delegation’s attendance at the League of Nations Assembly held great importance for the UNIA, which had appointed itself as a representative body for Black people globally, despite the fact that the UNIA was ultimately not entrusted with Germany’s former colonies.<sup>132</sup> To Counsel-General of the UNIA Vernal J. Williams, it meant that world powers had recognized the UNIA as a representative body for Black people worldwide. He further explained, “our existence is justified not only as a national power in this country, not only as a power in the Western Hemisphere, but as an organized international power.”<sup>133</sup> It gave power and legitimacy to the

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128. “Prominent Orator of Negro Race to Speak,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 4, 1924; “Will Speak on Work of Nations’ League,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923; “Want Africa for Negroes of World,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 7, 1922, as cited in McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 198–99.

129. Marcus Garvey, “Delegation to League of Nations Scores First Victory,” *Negro World*, September 16, 1922.

130. Martin, *Race First*, 46.

131. Marcus Garvey to Sir Eric Drummond, August 14, 1923, in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. V:432.

132. Hill, vol. V:xxxiii; Hill, vol. II:512.

133. “Delegation of Negroes to League of Nations,” *Negro World*, September 23, 1922.

UNIA's plans, which were often criticized by non-supporters. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites remained encouraged and inspired by the UNIA's global projects. They demonstrated their support through their enthusiasm exhibited during visits from UNIA representatives like Garvey and Sherill. After Sherill's talk at Friendship Baptist Church in Barberton, William H. Bowling reported to the *Negro World*, "He is the greatest speaker the city has ever had. He held his audience spellbound with his eloquence. He turned the light on so all could see and left the outsider without an excuse for not joining the association. He is a great asset to the association and will be the means of a considerable growth to this division."<sup>134</sup> Akron responded with similar enthusiasm to Sherill's visits. According to Akron Division Reporter Louis N. Toney, the audience was "captivated by powerful discourse" and interrupted him repeatedly with applause.<sup>135</sup> Sherill's visits were windows into the Pan-African world that Akron and Barberton's Garveyites understood themselves to be a part of.

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134. "Barberton, Ohio, News," *Negro World*, March 4, 1922.

135. L. N. Toney, "The U. N. I. A. in Akron, Ohio Division 215," *Negro World*, February 25, 1922.

**Industrial advancement, was the grim reaper. Yet it's cruel necessity, which we have known elsewhere since it first has taken from our age in a fair and loving way, a true brother, and an admirable friend.**

**C. HOWARD BLACKMAN,**  
2321 S. Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill.

—Millions have almost as many illiterate Negro persons, 12 years of age and over, as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia combined.

**Negroes in the Cities**  
(Closest News Service)

A recent government estimate of the Negro population in certain cities gave New York, 181,381; Philadelphia, 123,811; Chicago, 124,241; St. Louis, 71,521; Cleveland, 44,382; Pittsburgh, 42,421; Cincinnati, 32,221; and Columbus, 24,211.

—Many of the migrants from the South are anxious to buy small farms in the North and to get away from the congested industrial centers.

**Places Where MARCUS GARVEY Will Speak for the Month of February**

**LOOK, READ and REMEMBER**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA.**  
SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH  
12th Street, below Bainbridge  
*Monday Night, February 4, 1924*  
At 8:15 o'clock sharp

**INDIANAPOLIS, IND.**  
BETHEL A. M. E. CHURCH  
*Tuesday Night, February 5, 1924*  
Also on the Night of the 6th

**FORT WAYNE, IND.**  
THE HALL  
S. W. Corner Lewis and Calhoun Streets  
*Wednesday Night, February 7, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**GARY, IND.**  
FIRST A. M. E. CHURCH  
20th and Mass Streets  
*Thursday Night, February 8, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**PITTSBURGH, PA.**  
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH  
2206 Wylie Avenue  
*Sunday Afternoon, February 10, 1924*  
at 3 o'clock

**CLEVELAND, OHIO**  
ZION HILL BAPTIST CHURCH  
37th Street, between Woodland and Scoville  
*Monday Night, February 11, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**CINCINNATI, OHIO**  
EMERY AUDITORIUM  
Central Street, Parkway and Walnut  
*Tuesday Night, February 12, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**DAYTON, OHIO**  
MASONIC HALL  
1225 West 3d Street  
*Wednesday Night, February 13, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**AKRON, OHIO**  
SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH  
150 East Center Street  
*Thursday Night, February 14, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**COLUMBUS, OHIO**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
Broad Street  
*Friday Night, February 15, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**DETROIT, MICH.**  
DETROIT ARMORY  
Brush and Leonard Streets  
*Sunday Afternoon, February 17*  
at 2:30 o'clock, and at  
TURNER'S HALL  
1448 Sherman Street  
*Sunday Night, at 8 o'clock*

**BUFFALO, N. Y.**  
MILLER'S HALL  
262 Genesee Street  
*Monday Night, February 18, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock

**NEW YORK CITY**  
LIBERTY HALL  
120 to 140 West 125th Street  
*Wednesday Night, February 20, 1924*  
at 8:15 o'clock  
AND  
EVERY NIGHT for the Month of February and EVERY NIGHT for the Month of March, and  
**MADISON SQUARE GARDEN**  
26th and 27th Streets and Fourth and Madison Avenues  
*Sunday Afternoon and Night*  
March 16, at 3 and 8 o'clock

**AN EVENTFUL OCCASION**  
*A Call to the Negro People of Cleveland and Vicinity*

The Greatest Leader of the Negro Race to Appear  
**The Martyr, the Statesman and Patriot**  
**HON. MARCUS GARVEY**  
President-General Universal Negro Improvement Association and Provisional President of Africa

The man whom PUBLIC OPINION—THE SUPREME ARBITER OF JUSTICE—has proclaimed the world's most FEARLESS, INDOMITABLE, UNCOMPROMISING and MATCHLESS Negro leader, will speak in the city of CLEVELAND, OHIO.

**FEBRUARY 11, 1924**  
AT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH  
on 37th Street, between Scoville and Woodland Avenues  
AT 8:15 O'CLOCK

See and hear the man who has suffered for the FREEDOM of the Negro Race. The man who has stirred the whole world with the cry of  
**LIBERTY for his people**  
Signing of petition of 46 million persons for building a Government for Negroes  
A Great and Magnificent Program for the New Year. Come and Be Convicted

**GENERAL ADMISSION, 50c**

*If You Want to Be*  
**LUCKY, HAPPY AND WELL**  
**TELL YOUR SECRETS TO THE RIGHT MAN!**  
Rapidly in Philadelphia, Boston, Etc.

**LOVE APPLES IN ALL FORMS**  
High John the Conqueror, Adam and Eve,  
all kinds of highly appreciated nips and bums. Call us or see us, write.

**CASH OR CREDIT**  
I Will Credit You It Matters Not Where You Live

**D. ALEXANDER**  
99 Downing Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Always Mention The Negro World in Your Letter

WHEN ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY IS REQUIRED  
**C. LEON ESTWICK & BRO.**  
UNDERTAKERS and EMBALMERS  
126 WEST 136th STREET, NEW YORK CITY  
Phone BR 5-2000  
Always Open  
REMAINS SHIPPED TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD

For the Benefit of All Members of the  
Universal Negro Improvement  
Association and Friends of its  
President-General

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Agents Who Desire to Handle These Pictures Can Also Communicate With Above Address

Figure 5. Marcus Garvey's tour schedule, February 1924. "Places Where Marcus Garvey Will Speak for the Month of February," *Negro World*, February 2, 1924.

On February 14, 1924, the division again hosted Marcus Garvey, this time at Second Baptist Church, and he spoke about establishing a Black empire in Africa.<sup>136</sup> Liberia was on everyone's minds. The Akron Division had watched through the pages of the *Negro World* and heard from visitors to the division about the UNIA's plans in Liberia. At this point, the UNIA had already successfully negotiated with the Liberian government to establish a settlement in the Cavalla Region of Liberia. The idea of a Black empire in Liberia was cherished by Garveyites in Akron and Barberton, both those who imagined themselves relocating to West Africa and also those who never planned to leave the United States. This visit from Garvey gave the UNIA's developments in Liberia center stage in Akron, if they were not already there.

Garveyites in Akron and Barberton forged links within the Diaspora and within the UNIA's Pan-African network through travel. In October of 1922, Rev. Royal Allen and Flora Jones visited the Parent Body office in Harlem, desiring "to become more intimately acquainted with the working of the association."<sup>137</sup> On the trip, the Joneses would have been able to walk around the neighborhood and witness the Universal Steam Laundry and Universal Tailoring and Dressmaking Department, the UNIA Millinery Shop, UNIA Publishing and Printing House, three groceries, two restaurants, and offices, all operated by the UNIA. This visit occurred at the height of the UNIA's economic efforts in Harlem, and it would be difficult to imagine the Joneses would not have left impressed and inspired. Barberton President William Davis and Akron President Elder Tripp attended international conventions of the UNIA, allowing each of them an opportunity to meet and work with Garveyites from around the world face-to-face.

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136. Marcus Garvey's published tour schedule has been reproduced in figure 5; "Places Where Marcus Garvey Will Speak for the Month of February," *Negro World*, February 9, 1924; "Well Known Colored Orators Will Speak," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 14, 1924.

137. "Interesting Visitors in Harlem," *Negro World*, October 14, 1922.

International conventions held great importance to the divisions as well, not only to the delegates that went. Members who did not travel supported the travel of their representatives. People in Akron and Barberton contributed funds to the international conventions and to their delegates.<sup>138</sup>

The women of the Barberton Division used the international conventions to collaborate with Garveyite women and participate in a Garveyite women's network. For example, during the Third International Convention of the Negroes of the World in 1922, Garveyite women collaborated to create a women's industrial exhibit to showcase women's skill, craftsmanship, and entrepreneurship, and allow women to connect with one another during the convention.

Barberton's women contributed to the exhibit, including a bouquet of hand-crafted carnations.<sup>139</sup>

Some Garveyites from Akron and Barberton desired to travel to Liberia. In the thirties, the *Negro World* continued to promote travel to Liberia in its advertisements. Steamship companies advertised trips to Liberia with free ticket contests and columns proclaiming that "Liberia Calls."<sup>140</sup> The *Negro World* also re-printed an article from the *Liberia Express* encouraging migration to Liberia.<sup>141</sup> Walter Sheets, of Barberton, was interested by these offers. In 1931, Sheets entered a popularity contest hosted by the *Negro World* designed to increase its readership. Those who wanted to participate were required to write in and then encourage

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138. "African Redemption Fund," *Negro World*, July 1, 1922; "Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922," *Negro World*, July 15, 1922; "Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922," *Negro World*, July 29, 1922; "Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922," *Negro World*, August 5, 1922; "Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924--Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World," *Negro World*, July 12, 1924.

139. The article notes that C. Moore of Barberton, Ohio, donated red, yellow, white, and pink carnations. "C. Moore" may be a typographical error because she was also listed as being from a few other cities. "The Women's Industrial Exhibit," *Negro World*, September 23, 1922.

140. "Liberia Calls," *Negro World*, August 22, 1931.

141. "President Barclay wants 10,000 immigrants," *Negro World*, June 25, 1932.



readers of the *Negro World* to write in on their behalf and vote for them. The prize was a free ticket to Liberia. If participants reached 250, 400, or 600 votes, they received third-, second-, or first-class passage to Liberia.<sup>142</sup> Walter Sheets never made it to Liberia before he died in 1932.<sup>143</sup> Bessie Woods, of Akron, also hoped to travel to Liberia, but the obstacles facing the UNIA's shipping companies got in her way.<sup>144</sup> Not all of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites wanted to relocate to or even visit Liberia, but the historical record shows that at least a few did. Of those few, the only person known to have made the trip was Akron Garveyite Matthew McDay, who travelled independently to Liberia around 1930 and returned in 1934.<sup>145</sup> Each of these travel experiences strengthened the links between often long-distance collaborators. Travel allowed the imagined community of Garveyites to become a physical one. In most cases, this inspired and motivated local divisions to continue the work for the liberation of Africa and all its peoples. The travel experiences of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites connected them to the UNIA's Pan-African network in a more direct way.

Garveyites in Akron and Barberton joined millions of Garveyites worldwide in the common practice of reading the *Negro World*. They would read the newspaper amongst friends and before meetings, as well as aloud during the meetings—especially the front page written by Marcus Garvey. In Barberton, James McElroy, son of UNIA member Richard McElroy, recalled reading the newspaper at meetings when he was only ten years old.<sup>146</sup> Each week, the UNIA

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142. "Popularity Contest Is Forging Ahead; Great Interest Is Shown," *Negro World*, September 26, 1931.

143. "Ohio, Death Records, 1908-1932, 1938-2018," s. v. "Walter Sheets," *Ancestry.com*.

144. Tonya King, interview by author, December 5, 2019.

145. "New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925-1957," s. v. "Matthew McDay," *FamilySearch.org*.

146. James McElroy, Jr., interview by author, Akron, Ohio, June 30, 2019.

encouraged local divisions to send updates to the Parent Body that were printed in the *Negro World* regarding actions and leadership. The Ohio divisions frequently wrote in. Printed between updates from Cuba, Florida, Missouri, New York, and New Orleans were updates from Cleveland, Cincinnati, Massillon, Columbus, Akron, Barberton, and other Ohio divisions. Here, members from Akron and Barberton saw their accomplishments listed side-by-side with those of Garveyites from around the world.

Akron and Barberton's Garveyites participated in the UNIA's global network by supporting the Parent Body. During Samuel Alfred Haynes' Midwestern tour in 1927, he described a scene where he had spoken of the Parent Body's current fundraiser, the Parent Body Special, and before he could sit down, Akron former-President and Secretary Moses T. Wimbish "took the floor and said dramatically: 'Members, this is a great idea, let's raise \$100,000 this year through the Parent Body Special and so give a year's vacation to each division that it may grow and flourish as it should. We can do it; let Akron play its part tonight.'"<sup>147</sup> This quote recognizes the give-and-take expected of local UNIA divisions. In times of financial hardship, local divisions were expected to put some of their local plans on hold to benefit the Parent Body. Yet it also reveals that Wimbish and the Akron division willingly supported the UNIA's fundraiser for the benefit of all of its divisions, and shows he recognized how interconnected they were and how one division would not find liberation on its own. Wimbish understood that that could only be done collectively. The UNIA collected much of its money from small donations from its many supporters across the Diaspora, and the Akron and Barberton Divisions contributed frequently to the Parent Body's initiatives. As could be said for many of Akron's

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147. S. A. Haynes, "Some Things Garveyites Should Know," *Negro World*, April 16, 1927.



Akron and Barberton's Garveyites extended their support to the Black Star Line and subsequent international shipping efforts by the organization. They purchased stocks in the Black Star Line and the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company and fully supported the UNIA's vision to build an international Black economy. Members of Ohio divisions were in turn "loyal and staunch supporters in the purchasing of the S. S. Booker T. Washington, the first ship owned and controlled by the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Co."<sup>150</sup> The UNIA's shipping ventures were grand gestures that were both practical and symbolic. Black lawyers, engineers, captains, and seamen would gain jobs from this project. It opened the doors for Black international trade and passenger travel on their own terms. Firestone's rubber plantations in Liberia were not an isolated case. The UNIA recognized that Firestone was the result of centuries of global racial capitalism, and its supporters in Ohio agreed that this was an opportunity to create its own independent Black economy that may be able to function outside of the white capitalist market. They donated to additional funds to support these projects.

The Akron Division showed its commitment to the Black Star Line and the inspiration received from it during the North Hill Viaduct's Opening Day Parade. On October 12, 1922, the city opened the North Hill Viaduct which crossed the Little Cuyahoga Valley and connected downtown Akron with North Hill.<sup>151</sup> This occasion was celebrated with one of the largest parades in Akron's history. Almost every organization in the city participated in this event—this included the UNIA, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, and the Akron Klan. With over 150 floats, the parade stretched two miles long and was witnessed by an estimated 150,000 people.<sup>152</sup>

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150. Ellenette Hamilton, "Cincinnati, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 3, 1925.

151. Grismer, *Akron and Summit County*, 414.

152. "Expect 100 Organizations Will Participate In Homecoming Parade," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 5, 1922; Grismer, 416.

Because the parade was so large, it was coordinated through the *Akron Beacon Journal* and divided into nine divisions. The UNIA was in the fifth division, that formed on East York Street between Howard and Schiller Avenues. It was made up of the Colored Band, the Young Men's Progressive Club, the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, the Colored Knights of Pythias, American Woodmen, Ladies' Band, and Busy Boy's Radio Club of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church, and the division marshal was Leon Gordie.

Among the fifth division's display were two floats that highlighted racial struggles in the United States and beyond. "The representation of the Akron colored was perhaps the most impressive," commented an editorial in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. "'We Had 244 Years of This,' read a sign over a gigantic float, one half of which showed a group of colored men and women picking cotton in a southern plantation and the other half a group of drivers administering punishment to a slave."<sup>153</sup> This reenactment would have held great importance for Akronites, because many were only one generation removed from slavery. The *Akron Beacon Journal* continued, "These scenes of the harsh past were followed by a float representing the brighter future. A gigantic black ship symbolized the negro ship of progress."<sup>154</sup> These floats were equally provocative. This segregated parade division laid a claim over public space and asserted their presence in a continually antiblack city, forcing viewers to reckon with the racial violence of slavery and a symbol for unapologetic Black pride and Black power. While journalists from the *Akron Beacon Journal* may not have known it, the black ship in the parade symbolized the UNIA's Black Star Line and independent global Black economy. Not only were

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153. "Foreign Groups Add Touch of Color To Long Line of Marchers and Floats," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 13, 1922.

154. "Foreign Groups Add Touch of Color To Long Line of Marchers and Floats," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 13, 1922.

Akron's Garveyites dedicated to the Black Star Line project, but they put it on display for all of Akron to see at the North Hill Viaduct opening day parade. The Black Star Line and Garvey's new Black economy were not far-off dreams for Akron and Barberton's Garveyites, who were fully invested in supporting the Black Star Line and used it to claim space within Akron.

Years of government surveillance resulted in the false accusation, arrest, and deportation of Marcus Garvey in 1927. He was formally charged with mail fraud in relation to the Black Star Line Project and imprisoned in Atlanta.<sup>155</sup> Garvey's imprisonment restricted him from overseeing the Black Star Line project and led to its failure. It also caused fractures in the organization, miscommunications, and betrayals that hindered the movement. Information on Garvey's incarceration was disseminated through the *Negro World* and by travelling UNIA representatives. William Sherrill, acting president-general, brought the news right to Akron. He visited Akron and delivered a talk on the "Persecution and Imprisonment of Marcus Garvey."<sup>156</sup> However, when Garvey was imprisoned and then deported, the efforts of the Akron and Barberton Divisions did not waiver. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites were devoted to the UNIA's program, including its shipping ventures, despite difficulties. Moses T. Wimbish published a response to an article about the federal indictment against Garvey and three others for allegedly misleading investors in the Black Star Line. He wrote, "We pledge our unflinching support to our President-General and all the members of his Cabinet. We, the Negro men who

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155. For more on Garvey's arrest and deportation, see: Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. VI:xxxv-xlii; Tony Martin, "U.S.A. versus UNIA," in *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover: Majority Press, 1986), 174-214.

156. Mrs. Wm. Crawford, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 26, 1925.

bought shares in the Black Star Line, are satisfied with the outcome in the matter of the Black Star Line Corporation.”<sup>157</sup>

Despite the obstacles for the organization, Akron’s and Barberton’s members chose to remain loyal to both Garvey and the UNIA, even taking a key role in future-planning for the international organization. A few months later, Akron Division President Alexander Davis was invited to attend a week-long conference in New York City with delegates from around the Eastern, Midwestern, and Southern United States and members of the Executive Council such as acting president-general William Sherrill, fourth assistant president general Henrietta V. Davis, and Amy Jacques Garvey.<sup>158</sup> According the *Negro World*, the week of meetings was very productive and had a cooperative spirit as the delegates strategized about the UNIA’s obstacles in the face of Garvey’s incarceration. This convention allowed Davis to work with Garveyites from across the country face to face, greater connecting him to the UNIA’s network. Additionally, Davis and the other delegates were guests for lunch on board of the SS *Booker T. Washington*. The Akron Division had been enthusiastic supporters of the UNIA’s steamship company since it was founded, but this experience must have made the project feel even more real. The delegates thanked Garvey by telegram, sending “greetings and thanks for the splendid work you have done for the organization and desire to reaffirm their unswerving loyalty to you.” They added, “We further rededicate ourselves to the carrying forward of the program of the organization.”<sup>159</sup> After this conference, the Akron Division continued to prioritize the needs of the Parent Body. Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites donated toward Garvey’s legal fees.

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157. “The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey,” *Negro World*, March 11, 1922.

158. “Representatives of U. N. I. A. Divisions Hold Conference,” *Negro World*, October 24, 1925.

159. “Representatives of U. N. I. A. Divisions Hold Conference,” *Negro World*, October 24, 1925.

## UNIA-ACL August 1929 of the World

After Garvey's deportation from the United States in 1927, he continued to run the organization outside of the country's borders. In 1929, the UNIA's Sixth International Convention of the Negroes of the World was held in Kingston, Jamaica, and Garvey officially announced the reestablishment of the UNIA with its headquarters in Kingston as the "Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities' League August 1929 of the World." In 1929, the UNIA split into two factions. The UNIA, Inc., attempted to continue operations out of New York without Garvey, and the UNIA-ACL August 1929 of the World remained loyal to Garvey. Divisions that remained with Garvey's UNIA renewed their charters or applied for new ones. Both Akron and Barberton applied for new charters from Garvey's new organization. Akron Division 215 was replaced with the "New Business League Division No. 178 of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League of the World, 1929."<sup>160</sup> During these years, Elder Tripp was president. Tripp was born in Greensboro, Georgia, to formerly-enslaved parents. He migrated North and fought in World War I. He got involved in the Garvey Movement in February of 1921, when he was in his thirties and living in Cincinnati. Within a few years, he became vice president of the Cincinnati Division of the UNIA. By 1929 he had relocated to Akron, still dedicated to the UNIA. "My mind has not changed the least bit since," he said, referring to when he first embraced Garveyism.<sup>161</sup> Tripp attended the Sixth International Convention held in Kingston, Jamaica.<sup>162</sup> Upon his return, the Akron Division constructed a new Liberty Hall on Howard Street and planned "to unveil the new charter at a

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160. Elder Tripp, "Akron Says, 'Africa Must Be Redeemed,'" *Negro World*, July 26, 1930.

161. Elder Tripp, "Akron Says, 'Africa Must Be Redeemed,'" *Negro World*, July 26, 1930.

162. "List of United States Citizens," *S. S. Am. Norma*, Sailing from Kingston, Jamaica, October 2, 1929, Arriving at Port of Philadelphia, PA, October 8, 1929, s. v. "Elder Tripp," *Ancestry.com*.



monster mass meeting.”<sup>163</sup> Describing an increasing momentum of the local Garvey Movement, he wrote, “the Garvey spirit is rising higher and higher each day.”<sup>164</sup>

The Barberton Division unveiled its own new charter and continued to meet regularly in 1931, with Samuel Bartee as president and Frank Ingol as vice president. While some UNIA divisions began to decline around this time, the Akron and Barberton Divisions were still active locally and supportive of UNIA leadership through the 1930s. In 1931, Barberton UNIA member Samuel J. W. McNeil wrote to the *Negro World*, “I am enclosing my signed ballot for the return of Marcus Garvey to the United States of America.”<sup>165</sup>

Throughout 1931, the Barberton Division also found itself involved in the locally high-profile police brutality case of C. Louis Alexander. Alexander was likely targeted for his politics; although later resigning from the Party, he was active in the Communist Party in Barberton and worked with the Barberton Council of the Unemployed.<sup>166</sup> Alexander, who was Black, was beaten four times by police, jailed, and then disappeared on the first days of February in 1931.<sup>167</sup> When Paul Taylor, Chairman of Welfare Work for the Barberton Division of the UNIA, visited the police station inquiring about Alexander, Police Chief Fred E. Wertz told him that Alexander was in the jail on a vagrancy charge and would be released the following day.<sup>168</sup>

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163. Elder Tripp, “Akron Says, ‘Africa Must Be Redeemed,’” *Negro World*, July 26, 1930.

164. Elder Tripp, “Akron Says, ‘Africa Must Be Redeemed,’” *Negro World*, July 26, 1930.

165. “They All Want Garvey Back,” *Negro World*, September 12, 1931.

166. “Alexander Returns, Talks,” *Akron Times-Press*, July 28, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 20; “Man Disappears, Probe is Opened,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 12, 1931.

167. “Alexander Returns, Talks,” *Akron Times-Press*, July 28, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 20.

168. “Barberton Police Chief [Subpoenaed],” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1931; “Ex-communist Tells Jurors About Attack,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 30, 1931; “Alexander Returns, Talks,” *Akron Times-Press*,

Instead Alexander was threatened, beaten again, and forced out of town. Three officers faced charges of abduction, but all were dismissed, prompting protests.<sup>169</sup> One demonstration at Lake Anna in Barberton escalated into a battle with police after officers fired tear gas at a crowd of hundreds of people.<sup>170</sup> The disappearance, physical altercations with police, newspaper attention, and participation of the UNIA and NAACP resulted in a Grand Jury hearing in Barberton. UNIA members Paul Taylor, Garfield Taylor, Rev. A. L. Lewis, and likely-member Ella Mae Ingol were subpoenaed by the Akron NAACP and testified as witnesses in front of the Grand Jury in support of Alexander.<sup>171</sup>

Paul Taylor's title has significance because it reflects the Barberton Division's prioritization of local needs as opposed to ones dictated by the Parent Body. "Chairman of Welfare Work" was not a position defined in the constitution of the UNIA. It reflected the needs of Barberton's Black residents at the time. Barberton was a rural suburb of Akron. Many streets were unpaved, and many residents lived in one room dwellings without indoor plumbing. Considering the living conditions of Barberton's Black residents, improving the general welfare of Black people seems to have been a high priority for the Barberton Division of the UNIA. Additionally, it is unclear whether Taylor was acting in an official capacity during the C. Louis

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July 28, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 20.

169. "Confirm Report Alexander is Still in Alabama," *Akron Times-Press*, July 24, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 20.

170. "Summit Nearing Riot Probe's End," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 15, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 20.

171. "Jurors Continue Alexander Quiz," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 31, 1931; "Barberton Police Chief [Subpoenaed]," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1931.

Alexander incident. However, if he was, perhaps the responsibility of holding police accountable and challenging police brutality fell under the responsibilities of the chairman of welfare work.

## **Conclusion**

Akron and Barberton's Garveyites simultaneously participated in the UNIA on local, regional, and global levels. They adapted the UNIA's principles to fit their local needs: to protect themselves from violence at the hands of the Klan and the police; assert themselves as residents of Akron; and to build community around the principles of economic independence, education, and Black pride. Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism played important roles in the Black intellectual traditions in these cities. In Barberton, the UNIA was one of the first organizations established and movements embraced in its new, permanent Black community forming in the late 1910s. Therefore, Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism were foundational in Barberton's Black history. In Akron, the UNIA seemed to partake in a three-pronged strategy to challenge white supremacy in the city. The Young Men's Progressive Club worked in the political realm, the NAACP in the legal, and the UNIA in the economic, social, and cultural, collaborating when beneficial. Again, Akron's embrace of the Garvey Movement stresses the historical centrality of Black Nationalist politics to Akron's Black communities. Akron and Barberton's participation in the Garvey Movement connected them to regional and global networks that further strengthened their local projects. They forged Pan-African women's networks as they collaborated regionally and globally. Above all, the Akron and Barberton Divisions demonstrated an unambiguous dedication to the Pan-Africanist dimension of the Garvey Movement and the Parent Body, despite being so far from Harlem or later Kingston, Jamaica. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites envisioned themselves as local, regional, and global actors, rather than neglecting one or another.

They understood all three were connected and benefited from knowing their local struggle was connected with that of millions of others across the world.

## CHAPTER 3

### MEMBERSHIP OF THE AKRON AND BARBERTON DIVISIONS OF THE UNIA

“I am a Garveyite,” proclaimed Elnora Davis of Barberton in an editorial to the *Negro World*. “My eyes have become open to the fact that we must fight for liberty, or it will be death for black men and women. That is why I am a Garveyite.”<sup>1</sup> The history of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton is full of women, men, and children who took up the fight for Black liberation. Aligning itself with historiographical trends and an attention to bottom-up history, this study answers long-standing scholarly calls for attention to Garveyites rather than the UNIA’s international leaders, and falls in line with the works of Emory Tolbert, Mary Rolinson, and Ronald Stephens that aim to uncover the voices of the “rank and file” of the organization.<sup>2</sup> As numerous local studies of UNIA divisions are beginning to reveal, each division was connected to an international network but was also distinctively shaped by its own local context.

This methodology centers members as a way to uncover an organizational history when very few organizational primary sources on the local UNIA are available. Understanding the local membership therefore lays the foundation for understanding the actions of the Akron and Barberton Divisions. Zooming in on membership on an individual level shifts the focus from UNIA leaders and allows us to highlight women, like Elnora Davis, who were very important to these divisions but were underrepresented in their leadership. This chapter describes *who* joined the Garvey Movement in Akron and Barberton. It examines local leaders, how many members were involved, and their birthplaces, occupations, gender, age, family networks, proximity to

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1. Elnora Davis, “Liberty,” *Negro World*, October 30, 1926.

2. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles*; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*; Stephens, “Methodological Considerations for Micro Studies of UNIA Divisions.”

slavery, military experience, and involvement in other organizations. Its attention to local actors honors and recognizes them in their own right but also lends itself to comparisons that contribute to understanding the Garvey Movement as a whole.

### **Sources and Research Methods**

To find out more about the membership of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton, I compiled a database of names from primary source documents that provide direct evidence of participation in the Garvey Movement. The three most important sources used in building the preliminary list of members were the *Negro World*, the *Akron Beacon Journal*, and the *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*. Official membership lists or meeting minutes have not yet been located for the Akron or Barberton Divisions. However, a careful reading of the local updates in the *Negro World* provided the bulk of the names of members. Local updates often described the program of the most recent meetings including speakers, performers, emcees, and organizers. Additionally, donations to the Parent Body's various funds were often published to verify their receipt and proved to be a useful source in uncovering supporters in Akron and Barberton. Local newspapers like the *Akron Beacon Journal* occasionally reported on meetings and division activities and mentioned the names of local leaders, though far less frequently than the *Negro World*. Local newspaper sources were helpful for learning more about Akron and Barberton's Garveyites after they were identified in other sources. Finally, the *Negro Yearbook* listed all of the officers of the Akron Division in 1922.<sup>3</sup> Combining the findings of these sources and a few additional secondary sources, the database includes 245 people from Akron and 109 from Barberton (see appendix E). I was able to cross-reference about half of the people named in the censuses or city

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3. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*; Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*.

directories. The largest hurdle limiting my success in cross-referencing all the names in my database was the inability to distinguish between two Akron or Barberton residents with the same names or initials. Only about a dozen people could not be tracked because they likely came and left Akron and Barberton quickly, and I was only unable to trace a few women because I could not identify their married name. In total, I was able to cross-reference 123 from Akron and 54 from Barberton, whose stories serve as the basis for my analysis in this chapter (see appendix F). Using local newspapers, city directories, and birth, death, marriage, military, property, and church records to uncover the basic contours of their lives, I was able to reconstruct biographies of those Akron and Barberton members whom I knew about and begin to understand their family and community networks. As part of this research, I tried to locate photographs of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites to further recognize their participation in this movement (see appendix G). The individual stories of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites greatly influenced this study.

The biases in this sample must be recognized. Total membership will be examined in the next section, but this sample includes only a fraction of those who participated in the Garvey Movement in these cities. Newspapers were my primary resource in gathering the names of participants, but these sources were necessarily incomplete. Not every program was printed in the paper, and not every person present at the UNIA's meetings was mentioned. Additionally, some donations from Akron and Barberton were made by "a friend," indicating that some supporters of the UNIA were not interested in having their personal information published in the paper.<sup>4</sup> Officers and those who participated in meetings' programs represent the most active and

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4. Davide Turcato suggests that writing the history of anarchism must accommodate for opacity: the intentional scarcity, unreliability, and deceptiveness in sources created by anarchists due to the nature of organizing against the state. See Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889-1900* (Oakland: AK Press, 2016), 10–11. Opacity should also be considered when studying Garveyism and its organizing against white hegemony.

visible members of both divisions. Including the names of those who donated to the Parent Body's fundraisers offers some balance to this and may represent a broader cross-section of the membership. That being said, with available sources, there is no way to verify if these donors were dues-paying members and whether or not they attended meetings frequently. Therefore, in this study, I extend my analysis to both members and supporters of the Garvey Movement. Considering the UNIA's criteria for general membership, which extended to all Black people, in this chapter I will use "members" to describe both confirmed active members and known supporters whose official membership has not yet been confirmed. A final weakness in my sample is the result of a lack of sources. The *Negro World* published issues less frequently in 1932, and finally ceased publication in 1933.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, most known members were involved during the twenties and early thirties. I cannot comment conclusively on sustained membership in the thirties nor on possible waves of new members over time.

### **How Many Members**

To estimate the number of members involved in the Akron and Barberton Divisions, we can compare both qualitative and quantitative sources: numbers as published in the newspaper by Akron's Garveyites, file cards of divisions active in 1926 and 1927 recorded by the Parent Body, and the UNIA's own definition of "membership." Alexander Davis, president of the Akron Division, published estimates of that division's membership in the *Akron Beacon Journal* in 1925.<sup>6</sup> The article tells the history of the division while mentioning its growth under each president of the division up to that point. It explains that the division started with seven people

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5. Marcus Garvey, "Honorable Marcus Garvey Makes a Special Appeal to Divisions, Chapters, Garvey Clubs, Members and Readers on Behalf of the *Negro World*," *Negro World*, March 26, 1932.

6. "Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.



and rapidly increased. According to Davis, the division had 250 members by the end of 1921, over 1,000 by 1923, and 1,200 by 1925.<sup>7</sup> These numbers are supported by a second article published in the *Negro World* describing a gathering on October 31, 1921, at Second Baptist Church, as the largest meeting held since the division's formation. According to this report, one thousand people were present.<sup>8</sup> Large meetings such as these indicate that the Garvey Movement was very appealing to Black residents of Akron. If these estimates are accurate, approximately one in six African Americans in Akron were present at the October meeting, and an even greater fraction belonged to the UNIA. Large meetings continued to be held throughout the division's history. Even after it secured its own space on Center Street, the division continued to rent out larger venues such as Second Baptist Church and the Dr. William Bowen School to accommodate its events and mass meetings.<sup>9</sup> Another source also backs up Davis' membership estimates. When the Akron Division purchased UNIA Liberty Hall on Center Street, it reported in the *Negro World* that the lot cost \$12,500, and that "each member gave from \$10 to \$20 to aid the purchase price."<sup>10</sup> If each member donated this amount and no one made a larger contribution, that would put the membership between 625 and 1,250 in 1923, which corresponds with the estimate given by Davis in 1925.

On five occasions, the Barberton Division published the number of new members that joined during a meeting. The numbers that joined after these meetings total to 71, exceeding the

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7. "Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

8. Cary Cook, "Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting," *Negro World*, November 19, 1921.

9. "Will Speak on Work of Nations' League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923; "Nicaraguan to talk at mass meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 29, 1928.

10. Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie [Autry], and I. Taylor, "Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215," *Negro World*, February 17, 1923.

number of members represented by this study's dataset. Because these numbers only represent five meetings out of hundreds, it can be assumed that the membership of the Barberton Division was larger than 71.

Numbers on official division membership cards found in the archives of the Parent Body differ greatly. Each division was required to send a monthly report back to the Parent Body regarding its dues and membership. Some of these division cards have been preserved, including a few from the Akron and Barberton divisions. For the Akron Division, cards are available for some of 1926 and 1927. The division cards list the date that the monthly report was received, an "x" to indicate if funds were included or not, the total number of members, and the number of new members. On these cards, the highest membership recorded was just 105 in June of 1926. The membership numbers recorded on these division membership cards are significantly lower than those given in 1925 by Davis, who remained president of the division until 1927, and would have overseen monthly division reports during these years. For the Barberton Division, only one report is available from November of 1925, which reported twenty-two members.<sup>11</sup> This discrepancy between numbers can be explained by the way the UNIA defined membership.

It is difficult to discern who was a supporter of the organization and who was a member. The UNIA described two classifications of members, active and ordinary. Active members paid monthly dues and participated in the division's auxiliary groups. "Ordinary members" included "all persons of Negro blood and African descent."<sup>12</sup> Using this last definition, Marcus Garvey, as president-general of the UNIA, claimed to represent a membership of 4 million across four

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11. Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

12. Article IX, section 1, *Constitution and Book of Laws*, 1918, in Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. I:266.

continents. This causes problems when trying to nail down the number of members described in various sources because it is difficult to identify which level of membership each source has recorded. Therefore, I am inclined to accept each source as more or less accurate. Because Akron's Black population was 5,500 in 1920, we can assume that Akron already had 5,500 "ordinary members" even before the division formed there, a number that grew throughout the following decades. Because the division membership cards include much smaller numbers, we can be sure that they were not referring to ordinary members but rather active dues-paying members. Finally, because President Alexander Davis' numbers fall somewhere in between, we can infer that he was describing a category larger than "active members" but smaller than "ordinary members." He may have been describing the number of people who attended mass meetings, contributed funds to the division and to the UNIA's projects, as well as those who actively paid dues and organized in the division. This number, therefore, can be said to include active members and supporters.

### **Akron Division Leadership, 1922**

Leon Gordie's *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* published in 1922 contains the most complete leadership roster of the Akron Division at any one time known to be available (see fig. 7). Because the division was growing and changing over time, this document cannot be taken as representative of Division 215's entire history. However, analyzing it can offer some insight into the division's early leadership. As with the general membership considered in this chapter, the gender, age, birthplaces, occupations, and family networks of Akron's 1922 officers will be considered here as well.

One God!

One Aim!

One Destiny!

Akron Division, No. 215

**Universal Negro Improvement Association**

and African Communities League

Meet Every Friday Evening, at 7:30. at Centenary M. E. Church  
Corner of Hill and James Streets, Akron, Ohio**OFFICERS**

M. T. Wimbish, President	Peter Coker, Vice-President
H. S. Miller, Treasurer	Ocie Gilmore, Secretary
Matthew McDay, Assistant Sec'y	Rev. Thos. Young, Chaplain
William Crawford, President, Legions	

**LADIES' DIVISION**

Mrs. Carrie Turner, President	Mrs. Mary Woods, Secretary
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**JUVENILE DIVISION**

Helen Turner, President	Mamie Carroll, Vice-President
Bertha Gilmore, Secretary	Nettie McWain, Assistant Secretary
Clara Smith, Treasurer	Lucile Humphrey, Chaplain
Mrs. Rosia Gilmore, Guardian	

**ADVISORY BOARD**Charles Grundy, Chairman; J. S. Walker, John Daniel, Philmore  
Carroll, John McEwain, James S. Douglas, Alex Davis**TRUSTEES**

Fred Gilmore, Chairman; James Taylor, J. S. Wilcher, A. A. Mayo

**PREAMBLE**

The Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League is a social, friendly, humanitarian, charitable, educational, insitutional, constructive and expansive society, and is founded by persons, desiring to the utmost, to work for the general uplift of the Negro people of the world. And the members pledge themselves to do all in their power to conserve the rights of their noble race and to respect the rights of all mankind, believing always in the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. The motto of the organization is: "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" Therefore, let justice be done to all mankind, realizing that if the strong oppresses the weak, confusion and discontent will ever mark the path of man, but with love, faith and charity towards all the reign of peace and plenty will be heard into the world and the generations of men shall be called Blessed.

Figure 7. Akron UNIA officers and preamble, 1922. Leon Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* (Eureka Publishing Co.:1922), 37.

In that year, the Akron Division had twenty-seven officers including a president, lady president, vice president, treasurer, secretaries, chaplain, president of the legions, a juvenile division, an advisory board, and trustees. The age range of the officers stretched from eight to forty-six, including the officers of the juvenile division. Eighteen of them were men and nine were women and girls. Lady President Carrie Turner led the ladies' division and subsequently the juvenile division. Mary Belle Woods assisted her as secretary. Notably, the juvenile division's officers were all young women, the oldest of whom was its nineteen-year-old "Guardian" Rosia Gilmore. The officer roster suggests that the juvenile division was the most developed auxiliary at this time. The Legions were only represented by one person, and the ladies' division was only represented by Turner and Woods. The juvenile division gave Akron's young women a unique space to practice leadership skills at a very early age and with support from role models like Gilmore, Turner, and Woods. While young women controlled the leadership of the juvenile division, women were not equally represented among the overall leadership. Only three adult women were officers, and they were restricted to the "Ladies' Division." No women held executive positions that oversaw the entire division.

The officers of the division were largely working-class. The men worked in construction, as repairmen, as concrete layers, and as janitors. Most worked in the city's industries, but there were a few exceptions. Mary Woods did housework. Moses Wimbish operated a grocery store, though his business partner still worked in a rubber factory in addition to co-owning the grocery, and after Wimbish closed his storefronts, he worked as a cement finisher, truck driver, and janitor at the East Market Street Post Office.<sup>13</sup> Alexander Davis ran a printing company and

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13. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924-1926; "U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," s. v. "Moses Thomas Wimbish," *Ancestry.com*.

printed Akron's first Black newspaper, *The Akron Informer*, a four-page weekly publication, published by Amos Foreman between 1921 and 1922.<sup>14</sup> Lady President Carrie Turner was a beautician. Wimbish, Davis, and Turner each had a large presence in the community through their professions, and their work was a source of pride for themselves and also for their community. The working-class makeup of Akron's UNIA leadership contrasted greatly from the officer roster of the Akron chapter of the NAACP, which reflected that organization's integrationist origin and W. E. B. Du Bois' middle-class, educated "talented tenth." Its local "executive committee" included attorney Samuel T. Kelly, medical doctor Charles R. Lewis, attorney Artee Fleming, typist Percy Fleming, grocery store manager Leon Gordie, pastor Royal Allen Jones, white judge C. R. Grant, and white congressman C. L. Knight. While the occupational profiles of the UNIA and NAACP leadership differ, it is interesting to note that at least half of the NAACP executive committee supported or collaborated with the UNIA.

The leadership of the Akron Division was diverse when considering birthplaces, length of residence in Akron, and church membership. All the officers were Southern migrants, but they came from various states including Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. Most migrated to Akron between 1916 and 1920, but some, like James Taylor, already lived in Akron by 1911, and others only migrated there in 1921.

Some family connections existed between officers. Three members of the juvenile division were children of UNIA officers. Helen Turner was the daughter of Lady President Carrie Turner, Mamie Carroll was the daughter of Philmore Carroll of the Advisory Board, and Bertha Gilmore was the daughter of Chairman of the Board of Trustees Fred Gilmore. There is also an obvious presence of the Gilmore family in the officer roster (see fig. 8). Mariah Roberson

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14. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 208.

is at the center of their family tree. Two of her children were Ocie and Fred Gilmore. Ocie Gilmore was married to Rosia Gilmore. Fred Gilmore was Bertha Gilmore's father. Mariah Roberson's brother was John McElwain, another UNIA officer in Akron. John McElwain was married to Rosa (Fields) McElwain, the sister of Sarah J. (Fields) Wimbish, who was married to 1922 President Moses T. Wimbish. Similar family networks can be found throughout the membership of Akron and Barberton Divisions. These types of networks hint at members' faith and dedication to the UNIA. You do not involve your children in an organization that you do not trust, and if you are aiming for total liberation, you want all of your family members to come with you.

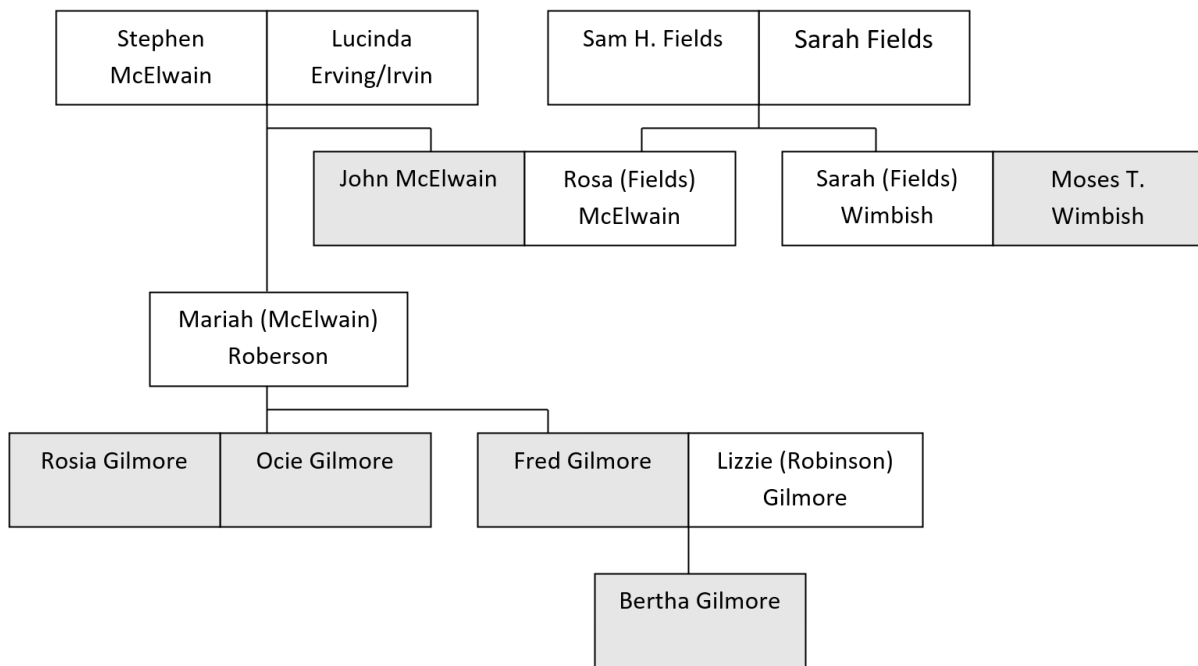


Figure 8. Genealogical chart of family networks in the Akron UNIA's 1922 leadership. The oldest generation is listed at the top, spouses are represented with adjoining rectangles, and individuals who were officers of the Akron Division in 1922 are highlighted in gray. Created by author.

## Birthplaces and Migration

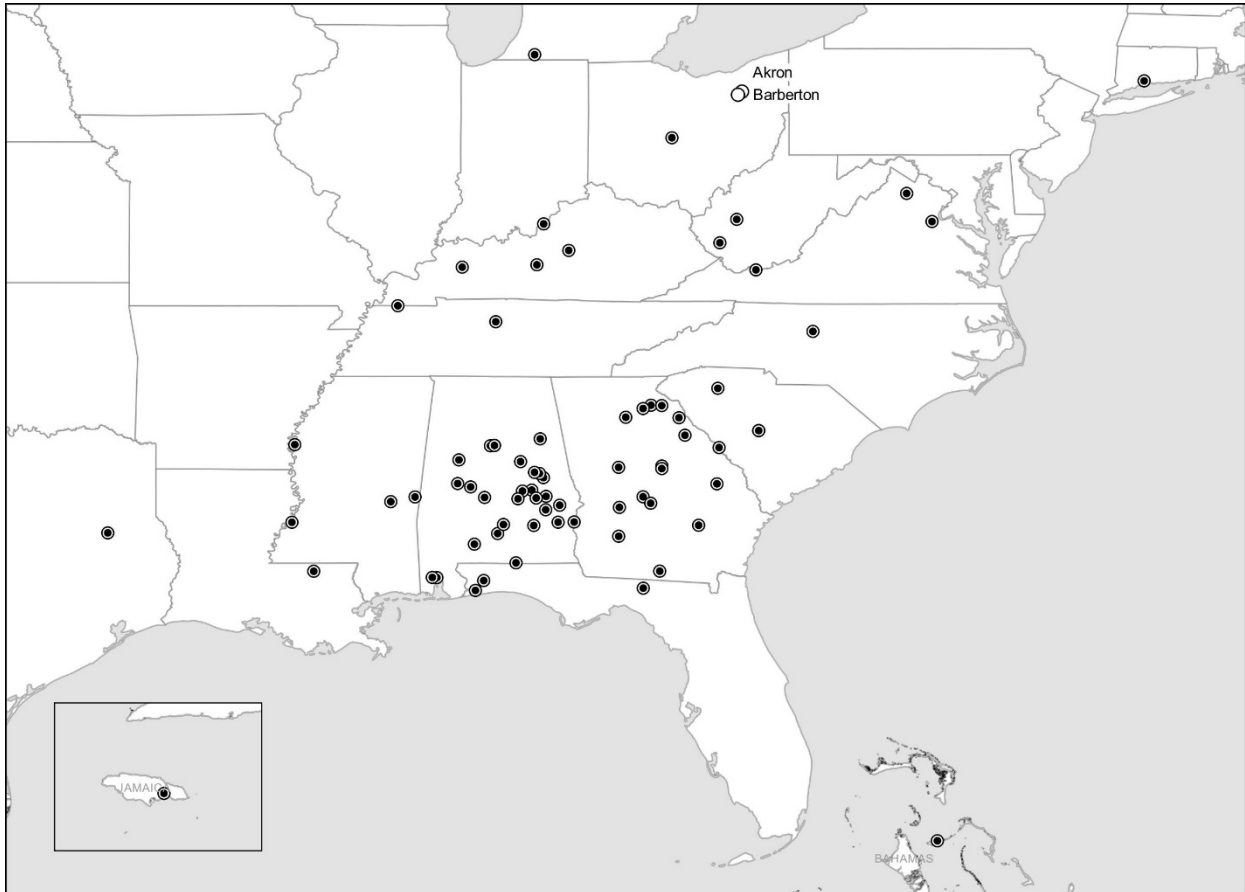


Figure 9. Birthplaces of Akron and Barberton's UNIA members. When birth cities were not available, cities from the earliest available censuses were used instead. Created by author.

Over a million African Americans in the South migrated to the urban South, North, and West between 1915 and 1930. Grounded in struggles against slavery and for political participation after emancipation, their Southern backgrounds of political activities prepared migrants for activism upon arrival in their new homes. From the one hundred and forty-six supporters in my sample with known birthplaces, the large majority of them were Southern migrants (see fig. 9). Only five hailed from outside the US South. This period coincided with the migration of thousands of Caribbean migrants to the US. Garvey, himself, was a product of this



trend. Within the five exceptions who were born in the Midwest, Northeast, or Caribbean, were Joseph W. Sims of Jamaica and Elijah Crawley, Jr., of the Bahamas. Both Southern and Caribbean migrants' understandings were shaped by the cultures they grew up in and brought with them. The importance of Southern culture and continued familial ties to the South impacted migrants' preferred ways of worship, work, and living and contributed to the "southernization of the Midwest."<sup>15</sup> In addition to culture, Black Southern migrants brought with them a hunger for Black self-determination and a better life, which easily lent itself to participation in the UNIA. Winston James, in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, similarly demonstrates the high participation of Caribbean migrants in Black Nationalist organizing in the United States was influenced by their home environments, specifically their "majority consciousness" and prior political and organizational experiences.<sup>16</sup> Studies of UNIA divisions in Miami and Cleveland found that tensions between Caribbean migrants and US-born Garveyites caused factionalism within their divisions.<sup>17</sup> In Akron and Barberton, this type of clash did not happen. These divisions were homogeneously composed of Southern migrants with only a few exceptions.

Sixty-five supporters migrated from Alabama. There was a strong migration network between Alabama and Ohio, so much so that Cleveland, located only forty miles north of Akron and Barberton, was known as "AlabamaNorth."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Akron became a landing spot for

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15. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*; Darlene Clark Hine, "The Great Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 134.

16. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (London ; New York, 1999), 50, 122.

17. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*, 64-66; McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 173.

18. Phillips, *AlabamaNorth*.

migrants who “jumped off the train early.”<sup>19</sup> The largest number by far of these cross-referenced members in my sample were from Alabama, followed by Georgia, and then Kentucky. One to five members each also migrated from Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, South Carolina, West Virginia, Texas, and Louisiana. Similar migration patterns appeared in the samples from Akron and Barberton, but there was one noteworthy difference. While fifty migrants from Alabama and fourteen from Georgia supported the UNIA in Akron, the numbers in Barberton were more balanced. Fifteen migrants from Alabama and fourteen from Georgia supported the UNIA in Barberton.

Migrants came from all over their respective states. In Alabama, migrants who would become UNIA members in Akron or Barberton came from Baldwin, Barbour, Butler, Calhoun, Conecuh, Covington, Dallas, Elmore, Hale, Jefferson, Macon, Mobile, Montgomery, Monroe, Perry, Pike, Russell, Tallapoosa, and Tuscaloosa counties. In Georgia, they migrated from Baldwin, Banks, Colquitt, Dougherty, Elbert, Franklin, Huston, Lowndes, Jeff Davis, Milton, Pulaski, Quitman, Sumter, Tift, and Wilkes counties. Most UNIA members that knew one another before arrival in Akron or Barberton were related. However, there are a few exceptions, and some Southern migrants who would join the UNIA in Akron or Barberton did likely know one another from the communities in which they grew up. For example, Oliver McDonald, Novella McDonald, Emma Autry, and Illerfearris Autry all lived in Repton, Conecuh County, Alabama, in 1910.<sup>20</sup> It was a tiny, newly-incorporated railroad town with the size of one square

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19. Colloquial expression I first heard from Elizabeth Todd-Breland, author of *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), at the 2018 Midwest Historical Association conference.

20. 1910 United States Census, Repton, Conecuh County, Alabama, s. v. “Emma Autry,” *FamilySearch.org*.

mile with 170 residents.<sup>21</sup> In 1913, the Autrys had a daughter named Vonciel, and by 1920, all five of them were living in Akron.<sup>22</sup> Oliver McDonald and the Autrys did not travel together, but they eventually reunited in Akron to take on major roles in the UNIA at about the same time. McDonald was a major in the Universal African Legions and the Autrys became president and lady president of the division around 1925.<sup>23</sup> The probability that they knew one another from Alabama was high. However, this was an exception to the rule.

Some migrants first moved to a major Southern city before relocating north, exemplifying trends of the Great Migration. Founding member Eliza (Gray) Porch was born in the 1850s in Alabama. She married Thomas Porch in Dadeville, Alabama in 1877 and had three children: Jim, Sister, and Coley. By 1917, Eliza Porch and her son Coley—Clifford Coley LeRoy Porch—were living together in Birmingham, Alabama, and by 1919, they had migrated to Akron.<sup>24</sup> Seven more future UNIA members had similar trajectories, including I. M. Yancey, Hopie (Rountree) McWain, Horace McWain, Lillie (Rountree) McWain, Peter McWain, Louis Suttles, and Ola Watts, who all migrated from Birmingham, Alabama. Birmingham was only a stopover for them; they had come from smaller town in Alabama and did not stay. This stopover may have introduced them to the Garvey Movement, which was growing in Southern cities.

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21. “Repton, AL Population,” Population.us, last modified 2016, <https://population.us/al/repton/>.

22. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1919; “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

23. Morris Simms, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 15, 1925; Mrs. Wm. Crawford, “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, December 26, 1925.

24. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1919.

As descendants of Africa in the United States, Southern migrants often had experience with Black Nationalist ideas and African-centered thought before their arrival in Ohio.<sup>25</sup> For example, Alabama was home to Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, and, like Garvey, migrants from Alabama saw Tuskegee as an example of Black economic growth. Marcus Garvey was heavily influenced by this school as an example of Black institution-building, education, and self-determination. Garvey corresponded with Washington from Jamaica and planned to visit him on one of his first trips to the United States, but Washington died before Garvey arrived. The Tuskegee Institute influenced and occasionally trained migrants prior to their departure. Even if migrants were not themselves Tuskegee students, they were surely impacted by its example of Black institution-building, which prepared them for organizing in the UNIA upon arrival in Akron, as was the case for Akron UNIA member Charles C. Hubbard who was born in Tuskegee, Alabama.<sup>26</sup>

Black Southern migrants remembered Africa, and for this reason, easily adopted Garveyism. Oral histories and interactions with Africans maintained diasporic connections. Despite the ban on importing enslaved people in 1808, African people were forcibly smuggled to the United States as late as 1860.<sup>27</sup> Africa was a consistent memory for Africans in the Diaspora. For the preceding century, the American Colonization Society had greatly publicized the idea of leaving the United States for Liberia. Religious organizations took up the cause of African redemption and missionary work on the continent, embracing the phrase "Africa for the

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25. Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

26. "U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," s. v. "Charles Hubbard," *Ancestry.com*.

27. Sylviane A. Diouf, *Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Africans.” White people in the American South even called parts of towns where emancipated slaves settled “Little Liberias.”<sup>28</sup> The memory of Africa among Black Southerners encouraged their attraction to the Garvey Movement. While it was a tool of systemic antiblackness used to send disproportionately high numbers of African Americans to war, reading between the lines of the World War I military draft offers an insight into the mindsets of Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites around the time of their migrations.<sup>29</sup> Alongside employment, age, and family data, draft registrars also recorded the race of draftees. As there was not a uniform practice, we cannot be sure if the racial information was assumed by the registrars or self-reported like the rest of the information on the draft cards. However, if it was self-reported, this indicated that Matthew McDay and Anderson Casey already understood themselves to be “African” and James Murray Ellis already understood himself to be “Ethiopian” before the local divisions were formed.<sup>30</sup>

In some cases, migrants may have been exposed to Garveyism prior to their migration. The *Negro World* began publication in 1918 and, by 1921, was printing and circulating around 75,000 copies.<sup>31</sup> The *Negro World* was the primary vehicle through which Garvey’s ideas were disseminated throughout the South.<sup>32</sup> At the time when Akron and Barberton’s earliest Garveyites migrated, several divisions in the urban South had formed. Before the 1920 convention, ten divisions were established in Virginia, two in North Carolina, one in Mississippi,

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28. Diouf, 129.

29. Paul T. Murray, “Blacks and the Draft: A History of Institutional Racism,” *Journal of Black Studies* 2, no. 1 (1971): 58–60.

30. “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” s. v. “Matthew McDay,” *Ancestry.com*; “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” s. v. “Anderson Casey,” *Ancestry.com*; “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” s. v. “Murray Ellis,” *Ancestry.com*.

31. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. III:506; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 17.

32. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 48, 73.

and one in Georgia.<sup>33</sup> After the first convention, more divisions were formed in southwestern Georgia, the Mississippi Delta, and Alabama. Interestingly, scholars Mary Rolinson and Robin D. G. Kelley have found that Alabama had less UNIA activity than surrounding states.<sup>34</sup> This stands out because so many of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites came from Alabama. While Alabama seems to have had less UNIA activity than surrounding regions such as southwestern Georgia and the Mississippi Delta, it still had thirteen divisions, including Division 660 in Birmingham, Division 744 in Mobile, and Division 807 in Selma.<sup>35</sup> Later migrants to Akron and Barberton may have been exposed to these and other Southern divisions before leaving the South.

A majority of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites were recent arrivals to Northern cities, arriving between 1916 and 1923. This suggests that new Black communities, formed of people from various urban and rural areas of the South and the Caribbean, created upon arrival became incubators for new thoughts and ideas.<sup>36</sup> It also reinforces the importance of Southern Black culture in these "Northern" divisions of the UNIA. A few UNIA supporters were longer-standing residents in Akron, which is also significant because it implies that both long-standing residents and recent migrants found the UNIA's program relevant. Rev. Royal Allen Jones was a life-long advocate for racial justice and an early Black migrant to Akron, arriving in 1890 after working as a coal miner in Wadsworth, Ohio. Elizabeth Epps was born in Andersonville, Georgia and

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33. Pierce, "Mobilization Lessons from Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association," 109; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 202.

34. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 88–89; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 8.

35. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 92, 197.

36. Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*, 468–69.

arrived in Akron by 1909. Lillian Taylor, who trained as a beauty culturist in Kentucky before migrating, and her husband James Taylor, settled in Akron by 1911. Support from even slightly longer-standing residents gave added legitimacy to the organization, and while they were few in number, they became some of the organization's fiercest advocates.

Most UNIA members had migrated to Akron and Barberton by 1920, but others arrived later. From 1910 to 1930, Akron was the fastest growing city in Ohio.<sup>37</sup> The rubber industry continued to boom and workers continued to trickle into town looking for work. For these later arrivals, the UNIA was already established in Akron and Barberton when they joined it. In some cases, new migrants gave new life to the divisions. Presidents Elder Tripp and David Caldwell of the Akron Division, and William Davis of the Barberton division, arrived after their respective divisions were already formed. In the cases of Tripp and Davis, they were officers of other divisions in Ohio before moving to Akron and Barberton, and their move to Akron was likely coordinated regionally within the UNIA, specifically to support and enhance the local organizing in Akron and Barberton.

While many did, migrants did not always stay in Akron and Barberton. For some, Akron and Barberton were only stop-overs. As job opportunities dwindled in the thirties, Akron saw a decrease in population. Some Garveyites returned to their families in the South and others moved to other cities in Ohio and the Midwest. The departure of supporters represents a minority of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites, who may have left the local divisions but likely did not stop their loyalty to the Garvey Movement. Their parting may have caused strain to the local divisions but more likely extended the UNIA's networks to their new hometowns.

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37. Woolford, "A Geographic Appraisal," 12.

## Occupations

For the most part, UNIA members in the 1920s worked as laborers. Even Black migrants who were professionals or skilled workers before migrating were excluded from professional positions upon arrival in Akron and Barberton. Before moving north, the majority of UNIA members in my sample worked and lived on farms, where all members of the family who were old enough worked as farm laborers. Some worked wage labor jobs in urban centers of their home states prior to migration north. Still others left their homes for wage labor in cities in other states. In Akron and Barberton, men in the UNIA worked for the railroad, in factories, and as janitors, auto-washers, bellhops, chauffeurs, truck drivers, and night watchmen. Later, in the thirties, it was common for UNIA members to work for Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. Most women in the UNIA usually worked outside of the home doing domestic work for individual families or for businesses. Viola Hendley was a maid at Buchtel Hotel, and Ella Carter was a laundress at a hospital.<sup>38</sup> Others worked as seamstresses, nurses, and caretakers. Nealie Bruce and Sarah Wimbish likely obtained nursing skills to satisfy their requirements in the Black Cross Nurses auxiliary. After Nealie Bruce's husband died, she advertised in the *Akron Beacon Journal*: "Widow with 14-year-old son wants work; housework on farm or taking care of sick." They were limited to caretaking in a legally unofficial capacity because Akron's nursing school did not admit Black students. Salaria Kee O'Reilly, an Akron resident and aspiring nurse who became the only African American nurse to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, was forced to search outside Akron for her education. When she applied to Akron's nursing school around 1930, she was informed, "We have no provision for training colored

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38. "Seek Relatives Of Dead Watchmaker," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 27, 1929; 1920 United States Census, Barberton, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Granville Carter," *Ancestry.com*.



nurses.”<sup>39</sup> While neither Wimbish nor Bruce had access to formal training, they practiced nursing both inside and outside the UNIA. The Black Cross Nurses served a very important purpose within Akron’s Black community. With increasing health problems due to environmental racism and lack of access to medical services due to racial discrimination, Black nurses and doctors played life-or-death roles in the health of their communities.

Because Akron’s growth was a direct result of the expansion of the rubber industry, many of Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites worked in the rubber plants, despite the UNIA’s conflict with Firestone in Liberia (discussed in chapter 1). By contrast, of the sixty-four women in my sample, only one was identified as working in the rubber industry, and that was not until after World War II.<sup>40</sup> When considering men alone, forty-six percent either worked in rubber or had family members who did so. These numbers are quite impressive especially when considering that African Americans only made up two percent of workers in the Akron-centered national rubber industry in 1920 and 1930.<sup>41</sup> Many of these men made long-term commitments to the companies. For example, Joseph E. Player worked for Goodyear for twenty-five years, and Paul Taylor worked at Firestone for twenty-seven years.<sup>42</sup> In 1948, William Henry Massey was elected secretary-treasurer of the Colored Club of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and Goodyear Aircraft Corporation, and in 1956 he received an award for thirty-five years of

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39. Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 137.

40. Vonciel Autry worked for B. F. Goodrich; see “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

41. Calculations based on Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry*, 31.

42. “Joe E. Player Sr.,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 9, 1941; “45-Yr. Man Heads Firestone Retirees,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 8, 1962.

service.<sup>43</sup> Despite the difficult work and racial inequality in this industry, rubber drove Akron's economy and employed many people in both Akron and Barberton.

Some UNIA members were entrepreneurs or self-employed. Elijah Crawley was a tailor, Charles Grundy was a self-employed confectioner, Amanda Jones owned a rooming house, and several UNIA members were ministers. Especially as the organization grew locally and UNIA members became dedicated to the mission of the organization, some opened businesses of their own. Marcus Garvey's program encouraged entrepreneurship and the establishment of local Black businesses as practical steps toward Black power and self-determination in the places where Black people lived. These objectives were popularized by Garvey and adopted Black communities across the US.<sup>44</sup> Many of the UNIA's local leaders became small business owners. Moses T. Wimbish, president of the Akron Division between December of 1921 and 1924, owned a grocery store with Jenny and William Archer called Archer and Wimbish that was located at 189 Hill Street, just around the corner from UNIA Liberty Hall on Center Street.<sup>45</sup> He also owned a second-hand goods store called Wimbish Furniture Exchange at 164 E. Center Street across from Liberty Hall.<sup>46</sup> Prior to his entrepreneurship, he worked at B. F. Goodrich Rubber Company as a cement finisher and as a truck driver. He retired as a US Postal Service

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43. "C. L. Terry Heads Goodyear Group," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 18, 1948; "26 Honored For Service At Goodyear," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 8, 1956.

44. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes*, 7; for more on the growth of Black businesses in the 1920s, "the golden age of black business," see Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

45. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1920-1922; "The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922; "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 14, 1924; "Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

46. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1928; Ad for Wimbish Furniture Exchange, *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 7, 1928.

employee.<sup>47</sup> Alexander Davis, Akron Division president from 1924 to 1927, owned a printing company that was attached to his home on Bluff Street.<sup>48</sup> William H. Bowling, member of the Barberton Division of the UNIA, moved to Cleveland around 1938, when he married Lucille Slaughter.<sup>49</sup> She was owner of Slaughter Grocery, recognized as the oldest Black grocery store in Cleveland in 1941.<sup>50</sup> The store was founded in 1920 and through most of the time the store was open, both her business and home addresses were located within five blocks of Cleveland's Liberty Hall.<sup>51</sup> Bowling undoubtedly supported his wife as Black businesswoman and grocer in Cleveland. Charles Grundy, Akron UNIA member, worked as a life insurance salesman and a few other jobs before starting his own business. Possibly influenced by an early job as an ice cream maker in 1921, Charles Grundy opened up his own business and was self-employed as a confectioner at 17 W. Lods Street in Akron.<sup>52</sup> Like Crawley, Jones, Wimbish, Bowling, and Grundy, Davis's printing company lent strength to the local Garvey Movement. These businesses provided access to tailoring, housing, food, and the press when these services were not easily available to Akron's Black communities and were institutions that recovered control of resources that would support their community. They were living the UNIA's strategy of self-determination.

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47. "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," s. v. "Moses Thomas Wimbish;" *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924-1926.

48. "Alexander Davis," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 26, 1959.

49. "Mrs. Slaughter Weds," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 29, 1938.

50. Harry Walker, "Cooking School Will Be Trade Show Feature," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 14, 1941.

51. According to Cleveland's city directories, in 1920, Lucille Slaughter lived at 2306 E. 43rd Street; in 1921 and 1922, Slaughter's Grocery Store was located at 2529 East 39th Street; in 1923, Lucille lived at 2306 East 43rd Street and the grocery was located at 2529 East 39th St; and in 1926 and 1928, Slaughter Grocery was located at 5812 Scovill Avenue. The Cleveland Division purchased Liberty Hall at 2200 East 40th Street in 1923. McDuffie, "Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest," 172.

52. "U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," s. v. "Charles Grundy," *Ancestry.com*.

While these businesses functioned as food and service providers, they also served as social spaces that supported community interaction. In some ways these businesses could become extensions of Liberty Hall, expanding and claiming Black space within their larger white supremacist cities. Other businesses, including salons, barbershops, and social clubs, provided services to Akron and Barberton's Black residents and embraced the social possibilities that their spaces provided.

Beauty salons made a similar claim to space, and beauticians often played leading roles in the Garvey Movement during the 1920s.<sup>53</sup> This trend extended to the Akron Division. Lady President Carrie Turner and UNIA members Virginia Hill, Lydia E. Neeley, and Lillian Taylor were beauticians. The Black beauty industry was created and controlled entirely by Black women. Therefore, beauty salons were environments different than almost any other in the world, they held a different potential than white spaces or spaces controlled by Black men. As Tiffany Gill states in *Beauty Shop Politics*, "The black beauty industry since its inception has served as an incubator for black women's political activism and a platform from which to agitate for social and political change."<sup>54</sup> Women from the Akron Division found the beauty industry a place to further their racial uplift work and grassroots organizing whether as salon owners, operators, or workers. Salons created spaces specifically for Black women as well as the opportunity for intimate conversation and grassroots community organizing. Both Turner and Taylor were praised by Harriet Mayo in the *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* as prominent

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53. Tiffany M. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 2, 33, 53–59.

54. Gill, 1.

businesswomen in Akron who had earned a good reputation among their customers.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that they were recognized, respected, and influential amongst Akron's women, which would have helped them while organizing for the UNIA. Mayo also said of Turner, "If it is not convenient for you to go to her establishment, she will deliver her treatments and preparations at your home."<sup>56</sup> Virginia Hill worked exclusively in her home and in the homes of her clients.<sup>57</sup> Beauticians like Turner and Hill were often successful as UNIA organizers because they gained trust and intimacy with their clients and were able to visit women in their homes if they were not able to come out for whatever reason. In addition to asking people to come to UNIA events, beauticians were able to deliver news to their customer's homes.

While Turner, Neely, and Taylor were beauticians in the early twenties, Vonciel Autry and Chrisella Hendricks turned to the industry during the Great Depression. By the 1930s, the beauty industry was deeply engrained in Black culture, so while it struggled, it was able to maintain consistent revenue and adapt, which resulted in the growth of beauty education in the late thirties.<sup>58</sup> The expansion of the industry offered an alternative to domestic work for many Black women.<sup>59</sup> Vonciel Autry and many of Akron's Black beauticians sought out education and a practitioner's license at the Erma Lee Beauty School in Cleveland. The school was founded by Erma Lee and her husband in 1936 to train Black beauticians and barbers to meet the growing

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55. Harriet Mayo, "Women of the Hour" in Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 10; Harriet Mayo, "Successful Business Women" in Opie Evans, ed., *Negro Yearbook of Akron, Ohio*, 1927, 11.

56. Mayo, "Women of the Hour" in Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 10.

57. 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Virginia Hill," *FamilySearch.org*.

58. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 2, 33, 53–59, 62–64.

59. Gill, 35.

demand when her customer base outgrew her already expanded salon.<sup>60</sup> Vonciel Autry was an operator and beautician at the Parisian Beauty Shoppe on Howard Street from 1938 until the beginning of World War II, when women found more opportunities working in industrial jobs, and she found a job at B. F. Goodrich.<sup>61</sup> In the context of the Great Depression, where many other Black businesses were unable to persevere, beauticians were seen as community leaders and respected as “survivalist entrepreneurs” that provided jobs and Black woman ownership during a period of global financial hardship.<sup>62</sup> While they fluctuated between sites promoting respectability, survivalism, and Black empowerment, beauty salons embodied many contradictions yet still created a physical space and a woman-centric community that could redefine Black beauty standards. When other opportunities arose, Vonciel (Autry) Chandler left the beauty industry, but as a Black woman, she still had a stake in the contested beauty standards. At the suggestion of her son, she sported one of the first afros in Akron.<sup>63</sup>

Likely UNIA member Chrisella Hendricks opened Devan Beauty Shop, also on Howard Street, in 1938, while her husband Lovell Hendricks worked in the rubber industry.<sup>64</sup> She owned

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60. Erma Lee’s Beauty School was an extension of Elso Polo Beauty College, founded by her mother Golden Edwards in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, before the family migrated to Cleveland during World War I. “Business Personalities You Ought to Know,” *Cleveland Eagle*, Container 3, Folder 1, The Future Outlook League Records, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, and Regina Williams, *Cleveland, Ohio*, Black America Series (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002), 73, as cited in Quincy T. Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 300.

61. “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002; Parisian Beauty Shoppe, first owned by Lauretta Marshall, opened around 1926 on Main Street and relocated to North Howard Street in 1928, remaining there until Akron’s “urban renewal” projects in the 1970s. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1926-31; *Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory*, (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1969; Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, *Minority Business Directory* (Columbus: Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development, 1973), 10.

62. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 68.

63. Len Chandler, Jr., interview by author, April 27, 2018.

64. 1940 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. “Lovell Hendricks,” *Ancestry.com*.

and operated the shop until 1952, when she began to work for entrepreneur and hotel-owner George Mathews at the Mathews Beauty Shop.<sup>65</sup> Like Vonciel (Autry) Chandler, she was involved in much more than only her salons. Their place as beauticians allowed them to build intimate connections with many women in their city and placed them in a position to be community leaders. In 1947, Hendricks participated as a business representative in a forum held at Second Baptist Church as a part of a week-long vocational opportunity campaign sponsored by the Akron Community Service Center and the National Urban League.<sup>66</sup> Both she and Chandler were also members of the Glamourette Beauticians Club, an affiliate of the Ohio Association of Beauticians, Inc., (OAB), which was organized to unite Black beauty professionals across the state in opposition to the threat of state regulations of the industry for the first time.<sup>67</sup> In Akron, Chapter 14 of the OAB organized style shows, balls, and fundraisers. They also sponsored entertainment events, trainings, hair-style demonstrations, children's programs, and scholarships for students.<sup>68</sup> They frequently raised funds for the Summit County Children's home. In 1959, the Glamourette Beautician's Club "outfitted and staffed" a new beauty shop at the home so the girls there could have professional styles.<sup>69</sup>

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65. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1952; George Mathews was a Black entrepreneur that opened a hotel and barbershop on Howard Street in the 1920s, see Kevin Rickly and Morgan Stocker, "Hotel Matthews," *Round About Akron* (blog), last modified 2020, <https://blogs.uakron.edu/roundaboutakron/matthews-monument-memory/>.

66. "Negro Forum Set Tonight," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 20, 1947.

67. DeVauhgn Hendricks, Carrie Hendricks, and Lucille Sommerville, "Hendricks," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 31, 1967; Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*, 72.

68. "Give Style Show For Beauticians," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 7, 1961; "Beauticians Sponsor Ball," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 3, 1963; Fran Murphy, "Good Afternoon," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 23, 1976; "Beauty Training," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 14, 1959; "Hairstyling," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 7, 1972; "Schedule Luncheon As Benefit," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 23, 1966; "Masked Ball Aids Children," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 30, 1960.

69. "The Full Treatment," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 3, 1959.

Another Garveyite, Matthew McDay, owned a barber shop for fifty years on Andrews Street after he returned from his trip to Liberia.<sup>70</sup> Black barbers in the nineteenth century often rendered their services to white customers and delicately navigated the color line, but in the twentieth century, the rise in Black businesses and the New Negro movement created opportunities for Black barbershops to serve Black clientele.<sup>71</sup> This shift created spaces, like salons, where Black men could gather and discuss daily life and social movements from a Black perspective without a filter required in white “public” space. Barbershops became spaces for education, philosophy, and political development for Black men. They became multi-purpose spaces that affirmed the Black men’s humanity. As described by Vorris Nunley in *Keepin’ It Hushed*, in the barbershop, “Black men could be philosophers and fools, thoughtful and ignorant, progressive and sexist, but mostly where they could be everything that being human allows.”<sup>72</sup> One of the presidents of the Barberton Division of the UNIA, Samuel Bartee worked as an industrial laborer for the American Vitrified Products Company and for Firestone for about a decade each.<sup>73</sup> In the fifties, the Bartees opened Sky View Café, a restaurant, bar, and social club at 475 Frank Avenue.<sup>74</sup> Like beauty salons and barbershops, social clubs and venues like the Sky

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70. “Matthew McDay,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 21, 1983.

71. Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr., *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009); Mills, *Cutting Along the Color Line*.

72. Vorris L. Nunley, *Keepin’ It Hushed: The Barbershop and African American Hush Harbor Rhetoric* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 2.

73. From 1925 to 1933, Samuel Bartee worked at the American Vitrified Products Company and from 1934 to 1943, he worked for Firestone. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1925-1931; *Akron Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1933; *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1934-1939; *Akron Portage Lakes, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1941-1943.

74. *Akron Tallmadge, Portage Lakes, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1948-1951; *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The



View Café remained spaces for communication about everything from personal and familial interests to calls for change and advocacy of Pan-Africanism and Black liberation.

At least sixteen key members were clergy. They preached independently as well as at a variety of churches. Rev. Walter J. Tucker, the Akron Division's first president, was minister at Phillips Tabernacle Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and Rev. Thomas Young was chaplain of the Akron Division in 1922.<sup>75</sup> Rev. Royal Allen Jones was longtime minister at Second Baptist Church.<sup>76</sup> Rev. John Gladman was a member of Second Baptist who later founded Morning Star Baptist Church.<sup>77</sup> Rev. John Riley, the last known secretary of the Akron Division, was a minister at Macedonia Baptist Church, and Rev. David Caldwell, the last president of the Akron Division, was minister at Good Hope Baptist Church.<sup>78</sup> Other ministers involved in the division include Rev. Thomas Wilson Chryer, Rev. Smiley, Rev. Charles C. Hubbard, Rev. Long, and Rev. Stanley. In Barberton, Rev. Alonzo L. Lewis was official chaplain of the division.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Rev. I. M. Yancey and Rev. Abraham Thomas were ministers at Galilee Baptist Church and then at Friendship Baptist Church. Rev. W. S. McGahee of Friendship Baptist Church and Rev. K. S. Freeman of Thankful Baptist Church were involved as well. Based on the locations of the residences of many of Barberton's members, it is clear that these

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Burch Directory Company), 1952-1963; *Akron Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls and Portage Lakes Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1954-55.

75. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1930; Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 37.

76. "Akron Minister For 40 Years, Rev. R. A. Jones Retains Faith," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 11, 1933.

77. Photograph added by "Zella," "Morning Star Baptist Church, founded by Rev. Gladman," Find A Grave, accessed 6 February 2019, memorial page 71751862, Rev. John H. Gladman.

78. "Minister Charged In Farm Thefts," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 1, 1949.

79. Nealie Bruce, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 19, 1928.

congregations were very involved in their local UNIA division. On one occasion, Rev. Freeman “brought with him to the meeting many members of his congregation who [were] interested in the Universal Negro Improvement Association.”<sup>80</sup> The large number of clergymen who participated in the UNIA in Akron and Barberton were trusted and influential members of church communities, and they disseminated Garvey’s mission amongst their congregations. Garvey scholar Randall Burkett has highlighted the significant historical relationship between Black radicalism and Black religion.<sup>81</sup> He argues that the rituals, beliefs, and organizational structure of the UNIA reflect long-established traditions of the Black church, and that Garveyism was a religious movement.

The Akron and Barberton Divisions were largely composed of working-class Black residents, including their officers. The Akron Division received support from Akron’s Black professional class, but the organization remained under working-class leadership. While class conflicts resulted in factionalism within UNIA divisions in other cities, the homogeneity of the division across class lines may have prevented internal disputes based on class.<sup>82</sup>

### **Family Networks**

As previous studies of other locales have found, the UNIA in Akron and Barberton was in many ways a family affair. Married couples, children, and extended families participated in the divisions together. Take the Gilmore family mentioned earlier, for example. Adult siblings John McElwain and Mariah Roberson were both involved in the Akron Division, and Mariah

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80. Mary B. Hopson, “Barberton Ohio,” *Negro World*, September 25, 1926.

81. Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), xii, as cited in Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement*, 5.

82. McDuffie, “Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest,” 172–74.

Roberson raised her children and grandchildren in the movement. Similarly, Pinkie and Charles C. Hubbard married and had a son Elmer in Alabama before moving to Akron as a family in 1920.<sup>83</sup> They raised their son in the UNIA, and he participated in programs at meetings. Both Charles and Pinkie Hubbard's funerals were conducted by UNIA supporter Rev. W. L. Young.<sup>84</sup> Siblings Oliver L. and Novella McDonald from Repton, Alabama, were active in the Akron Division together. He was a major in the Universal African Legions, and she reported on the divisions' activities and sent them to the Parent Body headquarters.<sup>85</sup> Pearlie Benjamin (Johnson) Watts and Moses Watts married in Akron in 1919, where she worked as a maid, and he worked for Miller Rubber Company. They participated in the Akron Division of the UNIA together, Moses Watts was a sergeant in the Universal African Legions, and Pearlie Watts was a member of the UNIA's Motor Corps. In 1925, along with other married couples, they sang solos at the Grand Reunion of the Legions and Motor Corps. This event included lectures, addresses, recitations, and solos, as well as dinner and a drill dance that stretched the event late into the evening.<sup>86</sup>

Family ties also enhanced the multigenerational aspect of the Barberton Division. Joseph Simms was born in Jamaica but built a family after he moved to Alabama, where he married and

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83. 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Elmer Hubbard," *Ancestry.com*. Charles C. and Pinkie Hubbard lived together in Akron from at least 1920 to 1946. They were not listed in Akron's city directories before or after that.

84. "Charles C. Hubbard," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 30, 1950; "Mrs. Pinkie Hubbard," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 12, 1951.

85. Novella McDonald, "Akron, Ohio, U. N. I. A. News," *Negro World*, November 4, 1922; Major A. L. McDonald, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 31, 1925.

86. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Pearlie B. Watts," 1919; Major A. L. McDonald, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 31, 1925; 1930 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Pearlie B. Watts," *Ancestry.com*.

his wife Luvenia had a son, Morris, in 1910.<sup>87</sup> By 1920, they had moved to Barberton together, where they found a place on Snyder Avenue. In 1920 they rented, but by 1930 they owned their home in Barberton's largest Black neighborhood, known as Snyder town. Their whole family were long-term supporters of the UNIA. Luvenia Simms was lady president in 1928. Her husband was a long-term supporter of the movement who contributed to the UNIA's funds as early as 1922 and was still a core organizer in 1931. After the Parent Body was reorganized, Joseph Simms was the one to unveil Barberton's new charter—No. 337.<sup>88</sup> These were Morris Simms' formative years. He participated in secretarial duties and sending reports to the Parent Body.<sup>89</sup> Other Barberton families were deeply intertwined. The Taylors and Bartees of the Barberton Division can likely trace their relationship back to Alabama where they both lived near Montgomery.<sup>90</sup> Garfield and Paul Taylor, children of Jeff Taylor and Martha Bartee, moved to Barberton around 1917.<sup>91</sup> Sam and Mary Bartee migrated around 1923.<sup>92</sup> Siblings Garfield and Paul and relative William Taylor lived together with other family members in various places in Barberton.<sup>93</sup> Both of these families contributed funds to the UNIA's international convention fund, and in 1931, Paul Taylor was chairman of the welfare committee of the Barberton

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87. "Ohio Deaths, 1908-1953," s. v. "Joseph Sims," 1940, *FamilySearch.org*.

88. S. J. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 28, 1931.

89. Morris Simms, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 15, 1925; Morris Simms, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, September 5, 1925.

90. 1900 United States Census, Wetumpka, Elmore County, Alabama, s. v. "Sam Bartee," *Ancestry.com*; 1900 United States Census, Old Elam, Montgomery County, Alabama, s. v. "Paul Taylor," *Ancestry.com*.

91. "Paul Taylor," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 1, 1968.

92. "Mary Bartee Rites Monday," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 22, 1972.

93. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1917-1924.

Division.<sup>94</sup> Couples, siblings, parents, and children participated in the UNIA's nation-building project together.

In some cases, the UNIA facilitated relationships. After the death of Sarah Wimbish, her husband Moses Wimbish remarried Esther Jones, daughter of UNIA member Rev. Royal Allen Jones.<sup>95</sup> Bertha Gilmore, granddaughter of Mariah Roberson and daughter of Fred Gilmore, also met her husband through the UNIA. In 1924, she married Louis Suttles, who was vice president of the Akron Division around this time. They moved together to Cleveland, not far from that city's Liberty Hall. Another UNIA marriage was published in the *Negro World*: "Reverend S. C. Clarke and Mrs. Laura King, both active members of the division, were united in marriage on Saturday, January 16, at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ricketts. Reverend J. Green performed the ceremony which was witnessed by a few intimate friends."<sup>96</sup> Not only were new relationships occasionally formed in the UNIA, but marriage ceremonies were conducted by UNIA members. Granville Carter's marriage service to Gertrude Carter in 1933 was conducted by fellow UNIA member Rev. I. M. Yancey.<sup>97</sup> Rev. Stanley and Rev. Abraham Thomas, both UNIA members, similarly conducted the services of Mariah Roberson's marriage to James Walker.<sup>98</sup>

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94. "Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924--Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World," *Negro World*, July 12, 1924; "Foul Play Hinted in Disappearance," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 16, 1931.

95. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Esther Jones," 1927.

96. I. F. Autry, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 6, 1926.

97. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Granville Carter," 1919.

98. "Summit County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1840-1980," s. v. "Mariah Roberson," 1921.

## Women

As has already been demonstrated, women played central roles in the Akron and Barberton Divisions both as officers and as dedicated members. According to titles like Mr., Mrs., and Miss, as well as census data, sixty-six of the supporters in my sample were women, representing about 37% of the total. Married women, single women, and girls all joined and participated in these divisions. Black women in Akron and Barberton recognized the UNIA as an organization that could lead to Black women's liberation. Harriet Mayo, featured writer in the *Negro Yearbook* who celebrated Black women as organizers and business leaders in Akron, described the situation of Black women in Akron. She explained that Akron's women had come to embrace roles outside of wife and mother. She celebrated Akron's women as organizers and business leaders. She explained, "This great new-woman movement has cut loose these shackles which bound her, and feminine leaders, organizers, captains and generals are rapidly being created throughout the world into a vast unified army of progress which will make their movements irresistible."<sup>99</sup> In a follow-up article, Mayo placed the UNIA amongst organizations that supported Black women in Akron: "There are numerous other organizations, associations and clubs among our women having as their aim a purpose similar to those of the Colored Business Women of Akron. These organizations are great arousers and awakers of feminine ambitions. Among them are The Negro Improvement Association...."<sup>100</sup>

Mayo, a feminist and vocal advocate for Black women, supported the work of the UNIA, and viewed it as an organization beneficial to Black women. The UNIA provided a space for

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99. Mrs. W. E. Mayo, "Women of the Hour," in *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* (Akron: Eureka Publishing Co., 1922), 3, 8.

100. Mrs. W. E. Mayo, "Successful Business Women," in *Negro Yearbook of Akron, Ohio*, 1927, 22.

women to intellectually engage with Garveyism and participate economically and socially in its programs in a way that was not available in other organizations. Barberton Garveyite Elnora Davis agreed. The opening line of her editorial declared, “I am a Garveyite because I am a Black woman.”<sup>101</sup> As we know from recent scholarship, women and girls in the UNIA used the spaces they controlled to advocate for themselves and feminist concerns.<sup>102</sup>

In the wider UNIA, Garveyite women had to fight to assert their presence and organizing ability. They protested at the international conventions, created their own “Our Women and What They Think” page in the *Negro World*, and asserted themselves in their local divisions. In Cleveland, sexism silenced and ultimately removed Secretary Bessie A. Bryce from her division.<sup>103</sup> There is no direct evidence of disputes over gender in Akron or Barberton, but it is still possible that similar tensions occurred.

### **Age and Proximity to Slavery of UNIA Members in Akron and Barberton**

The multi-generational aspect of the Garvey Movement added to its power and influence. Participants in UNIA meetings and auxiliaries ranged from children to those in their eighties; however, about a third of the organization’s members in my sample were in their thirties in 1925.

Table 1. Age of UNIA members in Akron and Barberton in 1925

Age in 1925	0-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79
# of members	15	27	46	32	10	8	1

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101. Elnora Davis, “Liberty,” *Negro World*, October 30, 1926.

102. Bair, “True Women, Real Men”; Ula Y. Taylor, “‘Negro Women Are Great Thinkers as Well as Doers’: Amy Jacques-Garvey and Community Feminism, 1924-1927,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12 (June 1, 2000): 104–26; Blain, *Set the World on Fire*.

103. McDuffie, “Garveyism in Cleveland, Ohio and the History of the Diasporic Midwest,” 173.

The divisions' youngest members participated in programs at mass meetings and in the juvenile division. Like James McElroy, children played integral roles in spreading the Garveyism in Akron and Barberton and keeping members abreast of happenings in the movement.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, the Autry family was very active in the UNIA in Akron. In 1924, Emma Autry was the lady president of the division, and her husband, former Vice President Illerfearis Autry, was the president of the division.<sup>105</sup> Their daughter, Vonciel Autry, born in 1913, participated in the UNIA throughout high school. At one meeting, Vonciel Autry and Evelyn Colvin, her peer, sang a solo and performed an original poem, respectively.<sup>106</sup> They maintained their friendship and worked in community organizations throughout their lives.<sup>107</sup> The oldest Garveyite in these divisions was Millie (Everett) Martin of Barberton. She was born in 1848 in Virginia and lived in Kentucky with her husband and children for over forty years before moving to Barberton by 1920.<sup>108</sup> Her husband died between 1910 and 1920, and she raised her children as a single mother, never remarrying. She was not the only Garveyite born before the Civil War. Rev. Royal Allen Jones was born outside of Richmond, Virginia, in 1859. Akron and Barberton's Black communities were greatly impacted by their proximity to slavery. Akron was home to many

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104. James McElroy, Jr., interview by author, June 6, 2019.

105. Mrs. Wm. Crawford, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 26, 1925; Morris Simms, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 15, 1925; D. Conrad Sellers, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 24, 1924. These articles identify Emma Autry as head nurse and lady president and I. F. Autry as president.

106. D. Conrad Sellers, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 2, 1925.

107. "Colvin Birthday," 1945, 365E, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; "Colvin Home," 1944, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

108. 1880 United States Census, Munfordville, Hart County, Ohio, s. v. "Millie Martin," *FamilySearch.org*; 1920 United States Census, Barberton, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Millie Martin," *FamilySearch.org*.



formerly enslaved people, including Sarah Mann, who was interviewed by the WPA Writer's Project in 1936.<sup>109</sup> Many UNIA members were also descendants of people who were enslaved. For example, Alexander Davis' grandmother was born in Washington, DC, in 1819.<sup>110</sup> Elder R. Tripp, Akron UNIA president from 1930 to 1935, was born in 1890 in Greensboro, Georgia. He carries the surname of a plantation owner in Greene County, Georgia, and his father, Clark Tripp, may have been enslaved on the Tripp plantation.<sup>111</sup> The Akron Division was founded fifty-six years after the Civil War. This means that most UNIA members had grandparents, parents, or were themselves born during slavery. This proximity to slavery set the tone for organizing in Akron and Barberton's Garvey Movement. Since 1863, Black people in Ohio celebrated Emancipation Day on September 22, the day that Abraham Lincoln signed a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. Emancipation Day celebrations were organized annually by Akron's Black organizations including the UNIA. In 1921, Rev. Jones and the Akron Division invited UNIA Secretary-General Hon. J. D. Brooks to return to speak for Emancipation Day.<sup>112</sup> Garveyites were still looking for the freedom that did not come after the end of legal slavery.

## **Military Experience**

Military experience is often seen as a motivating factor for men to join the Garvey Movement, and specifically the Universal African Legions (UAL). Many Black soldiers became

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109. Sarah Mann, interview by George Conn, June 16, 1937, *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 12, Ohio, Anderson-Williams*, 1936, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn120/>, 70.

110. 1900 United States Census, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama, s. v. "Louisa Davis," *Ancestry.com*.

111. "Georgia, Property Tax Digests, 1793-1892," s. v. "Clark Tripp," *Ancestry.com*.

112. Rev. Jones, "500 Persons in Akron, O., Telegraph for Dr. Brooks to Deliver Emancipation Address," *Negro World*, July 16, 1921.

disillusioned after fighting for the United States and, even then, not receiving the rights of full citizenship. For some, WWI prepared and motivated them to join the uniformed ranks of the UAL. This was a place where they could use their military skills and training to benefit the race. A few Garveyites in Akron and Barberton had military experience from World War I, and all men between the ages of 21 and 30 were required to register for the US military draft. However, not all of the UAL's recruits had military experience. Even for those without, participating in the UAL aligned closely with their goals and priorities of finding and fighting for Black liberation. The UAL was a place where the UNIA expressed the Black pride of the New Negro Movement. Its parades and military drills elevated Garveyites perception of themselves.<sup>113</sup>

Oliver L. McDonald was a major in the UAL of the Akron Division. He was from Repton, Alabama, but was laboring in the St. Bernard Mining Company's coal mines in Providence, Kentucky, when he registered for the draft in 1917. He hoped for an exemption from service on account of a "defected eye," but was drafted and served in World War I. Upon returning, he became a leader in the Universal African Legions. He also contributed to the international convention fund and collaborated with the legion's auxiliaries in Alliance and Cleveland to plan a Memorial Day parade in Akron.<sup>114</sup> Some members served in other conflicts. David Conrad Sellers was born in Alabama in 1908 and was too young to be drafted during WWI, but he enlisted in 1946 and served in World War II, the Korean War, and in the Panama Canal Zone.<sup>115</sup> Amos Black, another life-long organizer for Black freedom, registered for the draft in New Orleans, "and was inducted into the Ninety-First Engineers, trained at Alexandria,

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113. Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

114. "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 14, 1924.

115. "David C. Sellers," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 20, 1990.

Louisiana. He stated here that he would pursue a program of morale uplift for Negroes in the armed forces now and after the war.”<sup>116</sup> While some veterans were drawn to the UNIA after their service, Black was drawn to the military after participation in the UNIA because it was another battleground where Black freedom was contested.

## **Churches**

Members in Akron and Barberton’s divisions participated in various churches. As the large number of clergy among the membership implied, many were active church members. In Barberton, UNIA members were largely involved in Friendship Baptist Church, Galilee Baptist Church, Thankful Baptist Church, and Allen Chapel AME Church. UNIA members were also ministers at each of these churches. A few UNIA members later joined Livingstone Baptist Church which was founded in the 1950s.<sup>117</sup> These churches correspond with the areas where many UNIA members lived. In Akron, because members were spread throughout the city, members were involved in a larger range of churches including Second Baptist Church, Phillips Chapel Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, Macedonia Baptist Church, Morning Star Baptist Church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Shiloh Baptist Church, Wesley Temple AME Zion Church, Providence Baptist Church, and Church of the Living God. As with many other Black organizations, most of these churches had a social justice dimension.

## **The UNIA and Other Organizations**

Akron’s Garveyites were also active in secular organizations focused on improving the conditions of life for Black Americans. Garveyites were committed to seeing improvement in the

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116. “Sgt. Amos Black Now Out of Army,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1944.

117. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 57.

lives of Black people in their communities. At times this led them to collaborate with and participate in other organizations that might further this goal. Many leaders of the Akron Division were involved with the Young Men's Progressive Club, an organization that strived to improve the lives of Black people economically and politically, primarily by securing Black representation in local government. Rev. Royal Allen Jones founded the Equal Rights Club in Wadsworth in the 1880s and in 1890 became a representative of the National League of Afro-Americans, the first national Civil Rights organization in the United States, which laid the groundwork for the legal strategy that would be carried out during the Civil Rights era.<sup>118</sup> Emma Autry, lady president of the Akron Division, was also president of the Council of Negro Women, which focused on Black women's economic, political, and educational empowerment. She was involved in several other organizations, as well, and her daughter followed in her footsteps. Rev. James Smiley relocated to Massillon by 1930. He likely continued work with the UNIA because he lived nearby to officers of the Massillon Division. He also became vice chairman of the vice chairman of the Unemployed Citizens' league and president of the United Workers.<sup>119</sup>

Other UNIA members were active in the Association for Colored Community Work (ACCW). This organization began when Rev. R. A. Jones, Attorney Thomas E. Greene, and others "asked the local YMCA for assistance."<sup>120</sup> At that same time, white advocates and business owners, including executives from Firestone, Sieberling, Goodyear, and The University of Akron, were investigating the needs of the Black community in Akron. In March of 1925,

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118. Shawn Leigh Alexander, *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), xi–xii.

119. "Shrock Speaks For Unemployed," *Evening Independent* (Massillon, Ohio), June 1, 1933.

120. Akron Urban League, "A Long and Local History," accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.akronurbanleague.org/history>.

well-known Black lawyer and Secretary of the YMCA George W. Thompson was invited to a meeting at the home of Harvey Firestone where the ACCW formally began.<sup>121</sup> It is peculiar that Firestone and his company would take an interest in the well-being of Black people at this time, when Black employees at the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company were almost all janitors or laborers in the most dangerous departments, and were banned from living in Firestone Park, the neighborhood Firestone had built for its workers. However, this was also the moment when Firestone was engaging in negotiations with the Republic of Liberia, which was very concerned about subjecting itself to the white supremacist capital of Firestone (as discussed in chapter 1). Firestone connected its philanthropy in African American communities to its desire to expand into Liberia.<sup>122</sup> The public image of the company had to seem progressive for Firestone to be able to succeed in its neocolonial exploits in West Africa, where it relied solely on Black indigenous labor. While Harvey Firestone and other white philanthropists made a gesture of aid to African Americans in Akron, even the ACCW remained segregated: “In the beginning, the Association functioned under two separate boards. The Board of Trustees, a white governing body, was responsible for the finances of the agency and controlled the titles to the property. The Board of Directors, a group of black men, was responsible for creating and conducting programs that would meet the needs of the black citizens of the community to the greatest extent possible with the agency’s limited facilities and budget.”<sup>123</sup>

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121. Akron Urban League, “A Long and Local History,” accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.akronurbanleague.org/history>.

122. Northrup, *The Negro in the Rubber Tire Industry*, 30.

123. Akron Urban League, “A Long and Local History,” accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.akronurbanleague.org/history>; for a recent critique of white leadership in the non-profit industrial complex, see Lawrence Grandpre and Dayvon Love, *The Black Book: Reflections from the Baltimore Grassroots* (Baltimore: Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, 2014), 126–60.

Finally, some UNIA members were involved in the NAACP. The NAACP in Akron was formed in 1919, and it collaborated with the UNIA on various occasions. The two organizations marched in the 1922 Viaduct Parade together, petitioned against the Akron Klan together, and they worked together on the C. Louis Alexander police brutality case. NAACP members Dr. Charles and Ednah Lewis even hosted Marcus Garvey in their home when he came to speak.<sup>124</sup> In the early 1920s, both the UNIA and NAACP held mass meetings at Second Baptist Church. For these reasons, it is not surprising that there was overlap in membership. Some Garveyites also joined the NAACP after the decline of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton. Vonciel Autry became a lifetime member, and Adolphus Brooks participated in an African American census conducted by the NAACP in 1958.<sup>125</sup> This stands out from Tolbert's findings in Los Angeles where there was almost no overlap in NAACP and UNIA membership.<sup>126</sup>

Garveyites were also involved in social and fraternal organizations. Members of the Akron and Barberton Divisions frequently collaborated with and participated in the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOEW). This proximity can be attributed to overlapping leadership. Alexander Davis, president of the Akron Division from 1924 to 1927, was a member of the Rubber City Elks Lodge.<sup>127</sup> Attorney Thomas E. Greene provided legal support for both the Rubber City Lodge and the UNIA. In Barberton, some UNIA members were also members of Sun Lodge No. 485 of the Elks. Omar Alexander and William H. Bowling were "Esteemed Leading Knights," and Rev. I. M. Yancey gave the invocation at one of their

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124. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 207.

125. "NAACP Chapter Will Hold Charter Ceremonies Jan. 23," *Evening Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio), January 10, 1958; "Vonciel Chandler," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

126. Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles*, 92.

127. "Alexander Davis," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 26, 1959.

memorial services in 1928.<sup>128</sup> Lady President of the Akron Division, Emma Autry, was a member of the Mary Exalted Temple 95, the women's auxiliary of the Rubber City Elks Lodge, as well as the Daughters of Jerusalem. Vonciel and Len Chandler were also involved in a host of fraternal benevolent organizations. Vonciel (Autry) Chandler was a past member of the Worthy Matron of Mary Chapter 47 of the Eastern Star, and belonged to the Mary Exalted Temple 95, the Daughters of Isis, and the Daughters of Jerusalem.<sup>129</sup> Rev. T. W. Chryer's religious career took him to various churches across the Midwest. He was a member of the Masonic Harmony Lodges No. 77, of Dayton, at the time of his death, and masonic services were conducted at his funeral.<sup>130</sup> The UNIA shared characteristics in structure, governing, titles, and public displays with those of fraternal benevolent orders.<sup>131</sup> It was common for membership of fraternal organizations to overlap with that of the UNIA. D. Conrad Sellers was slightly younger; he was born in 1908 and became a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, probably when he attended three years of college. Black fraternal orders and college fraternities were both established in opposition to white supremacist environments that excluded African Americans from participation. Members considered these organizations advantageous for networking when faced with exclusion.

Many of these organizations shared common objectives that allowed them to find common ground. Garveyites were willing to try social, political, legal, and economic strategies in collaboration with various organizations. Additionally, many organizations in which

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128. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 148.

129. "Vonciel Chandler," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

130. "Rev. T. W. Chryer, St. Stephen's AME Pastor, Stricken," *Sandusky Register*, February 13, 1951.

131. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. I:lxii.

Garveyites participated also connected them to local, regional, and national networks. Religious, fraternal, and social justice groups alike had networks both inside and outside of Akron and Barberton. These networks overlapped and mutually benefitted one another and expanded the strength of the Garvey Movement.

## **Conclusion**

These membership trends of the Akron and Barberton Divisions lend insight into local Garveyite organizing that was uniquely local while at the same time connected to the larger global social movement. In this chapter, the membership of the Akron and Barberton Divisions have been preliminarily compared to available local studies but will also benefit future comparative studies of divisions in other industrializing cities in the Midwest and around the world. In Akron, a city built on the industrial success of the rubber industry, and in its neighbor Barberton, the UNIA attracted thousands of members and supporters. It was relatively small in size and population, and Barberton was arguably rural. Akron was urban in its density, but roads were undeveloped, and many homes did not have running water even in the 1920s. The Black populations in these cities were in the extreme minority. The membership of these divisions were made up largely if not exclusively of Southern migrants, most of whom were working-class, although the presence of the UNIA did lead to an increase in small business ownership. Clergy members played key roles in these divisions and many members attended church. Single women, single men, and families alike participated in the UNIA, making it a multigenerational organization, and its oldest members were born before slavery was abolished in the United States. The message of Garvey was “universal” and adaptable to differing environments and circumstances. The UNIA had an incredible attraction for people in Akron and Barberton in its message of Black self-determination and African redemption. Just as with other divisions across



North America, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and Australia, the divisions in Akron and Barberton sought to transform the specific local realities of white supremacy they found upon arrival in the rubber capital of the world into a Pan-Africanist, Black Nationalist haven of their own.

## CHAPTER 4

### LIBERTY HALL AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNIA IN AKRON AND BARBERTON

During the heyday of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Harlem was the center of the Garvey Movement. It was home to the UNIA's global headquarters, offices, printing company, and university, as well as a Garveyite hotel, laundries, restaurants, and groceries.<sup>1</sup> It was the UNIA's influence in Harlem that ultimately boosted Garvey's platform to one that reached across the world. Liberty Hall was the UNIA's space for hosting mass meetings and its international conventions. Week after week it was packed with enthusiastic Garveyites for lectures, debates, meetings, parties, and even weddings and funerals. Like the model set in Harlem, each new division was encouraged to build or open its own "Liberty Hall" that would similarly function as a community center and a home base for the organization. Recognizing the value in having their own space, the Akron and Barberton Divisions acquired Liberty Halls in their respective cities. This chapter will examine the geographical presence of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton, considering where members lived, worked, and worshipped as well as where division activities took place, demonstrating the broad spatial influence the UNIA had in these cities. Secondly, it will demonstrate the significance of the pre-existing communities in each neighborhood where Liberty Halls were established. Finally, this chapter pairs each location with a theme that recognizes the significance of Liberty Halls in Akron and Barberton. It explains how Akron and Barberton's Garveyites created a physical and conceptual space for social change; made a claim to space in their cities, representing an assertion of power within a

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1. Stephen Robertson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Harlem," *Digital Harlem Blog* (blog), April 25, 2011, <https://drstephenrobertson.com/digitalharlemblog/maps/unia-harlem/>.

landscape of antiblackness; developed aspects of nationhood in their own cities; and created an opportunity for unity within their cities and within the global Garveyite network.

## **Akron**

Members of the Akron Division resided throughout the city in nearly all neighborhoods where Black people lived. Deliberate structural racism implemented by local political policy and hate crimes created an environment of racial segregation and racialized space.<sup>2</sup> Racialized violence and exclusion forced Black Akronites into segregated parts of the city, crowded households, or self-built shelters in “shantytowns.”<sup>3</sup> According to Warren Louis Woolford’s geographical study of population change in Akron, by 1930 African Americans had settled in four main areas. The oldest Black neighborhood was along North Street and East of Howard Street. Residents like Sarah Mann lived on nearby Furnace Street as early as 1883, but considering an influx of migrants in the late 1910s, Woolford explains, “This cluster was the culmination of black settlements which started thirteen years earlier on the low land area adjacent to the Little Cuyahoga River,” near downtown and industry.<sup>4</sup> John Tully describes this area by “the marshy river bottoms” as a place where the city’s African American population lived in “poverty, harassed by local chapters of the Ku Klux Klan, and the racism of genteel

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2. Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Barbara Perry, *In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Jeff R. Crump, “Producing and Enforcing the Geography of Hate: Race, Housing Segregation, and Housing-Related Hate Crimes in the United States,” in *Spaces of Hate: Geographies of Discrimination and Intolerance in the U.S.A.*, ed. Colin Flint (New York: Routledge, 2004).

3. McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 157–58.

4. Sarah Mann, interview by George Conn, June 16, 1937, *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 12, Ohio, Anderson-Williams*, 1936, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn120/>, 70; Woolford, “A Geographic Appraisal,” 16.

white folks who wished to keep their suburbs racially ‘pure.’”<sup>5</sup> The next largest concentration of African American residents was west of Grant Street where one of the B. F. Goodrich’s industrial complexes was located.<sup>6</sup> Shirla McClain interviewed an employee there who described the “shantytowns” nearby.<sup>7</sup> The other two areas were to the west of Grant Street and Euclid Street and Perkins Hill.<sup>8</sup> Residents of each of these areas participated in the Garvey Movement. Akron’s UNIA presence mirrors residential segregation patterns and demonstrates broad interest in the Garvey Movement. The UNIA network was not an isolated phenomenon confined to one

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5. Tully, *The Devil’s Milk*, 142.

6. Woolford, “A Geographic Appraisal,” 18.

7. McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 157.

8. Woolford, “A Geographic Appraisal,” 19.

specific neighborhood but had broad appeal to Akron’s residents, as illustrated in figure 10.

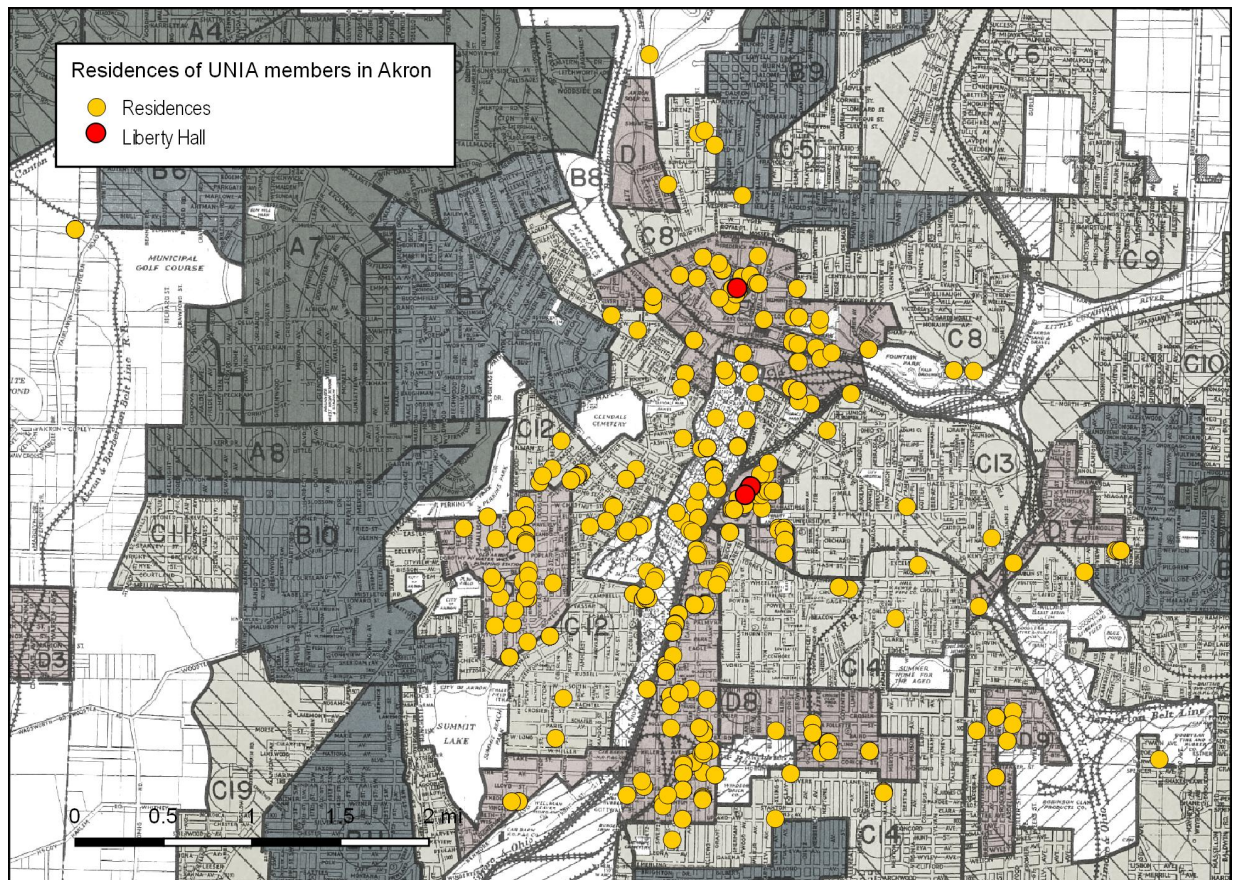


Figure 10. Residences of UNIA members in Akron, 1920-1941. Created by author from Akron city directories and US census data.

### Center Street Neighborhood

The pre-existing neighborhood on Center Street was crucial to the growth of the UNIA in Akron. As expected, the UNIA did not form its own neighborhood but grew out of an existing Black community. This neighborhood had its own tradition of Black organizing that predated the Garvey Movement. Rev. Royal Allen Jones moved his Second Baptist congregation to Hill and James Streets in 1893. By the 1890s, Second Baptist and other Black churches in Akron were already inviting out-of-town guests who spoke about Black pride, Black independence, and

“unity of the colored race.”<sup>9</sup> In 1902, G. F. Richings, on a speaking tour with his book, *Evidences of Progress Among Colored People*, lectured at Second Baptist Church and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church about Black institutions and businesses including the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.<sup>10</sup> Then in 1904, Akron hosted Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute and one of Marcus Garvey’s inspirations.<sup>11</sup> For decades, the E. Center Street neighborhood fostered an intellectual community that was already engaging with the Black Radical Tradition, creating an environment ripe for the Garvey Movement to emerge. Many members of Second Baptist became members or supporters of the UNIA. Known members who were affiliated with both include Rev. R. A. Jones, John Gladman, Robert Burton, James Taylor, John McElwain, Louise Davis, Alexander Davis, Louis Toney, Cary Cook, Vonciel (Autry) Chandler, Emma Autry, and Corene Hurst. With Rev. Jones as pastor, it is likely that the majority of Second Baptist’s congregation sympathized with the goals of the UNIA. This church became a virtual extension of Liberty Hall. The UNIA rented out Second Baptist for events that were likely to exceed the capacity of Liberty Hall, like when Parent Body speakers visited.

Because the neighborhood was located in close proximity to downtown industry and the International Harvester Corporation, employment opportunities drew Black people to this area. Employees participated in UNIA activities even after working long hours because they did not have to make an extra commute. James Taylor, James Hawthorne, John McElwain, Joseph E. Player, Joseph L. Phagan, Louis Johnson, Major O. L. McDonald, and Matthew McDay all

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9. McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 106–8.

10. G. F. Richings, *Evidences of Progress among Colored People* (Philadelphia: G.S. Ferguson, 1902); McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 123.

11. McClain, “The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975,” 106–8.

worked for International Harvester, some of whom took on leadership roles in the Akron Division.

The UNIA found support from people who lived, worked, or worshipped in the neighborhood before the Akron Division was established. Archer and Wimbish Grocery Store, co-owned by Moses Wimbish and managed by Leon Gordie with Sarah Wimbish as salesclerk, was opened at 189 Hill Street in 1920.<sup>12</sup> John McElwain frequented the neighborhood, before the UNIA established a space there, as an employee and International Harvester Corporation and a member of Second Baptist.<sup>13</sup> Phoebe and Thomas Young lived on James Street since 1918, and Viola Hendley by 1920.<sup>14</sup> Most UNIA members already lived in Akron before relocating to this neighborhood, but for Phoebe and Thomas Young and Viola Hendley and her husband, this area was one of their first residences in Akron after migrating from Mississippi and Georgia.<sup>15</sup> All three donated to the 1922 International Convention Fund and remained in the neighborhood until the thirties.<sup>16</sup> Matthew McDay and his wife Agnes McDay, lived at 172 E. Buchtel Avenue in 1920, and future-Lieutenant of the UAL Alvin Gilmore roomed with them.<sup>17</sup> Matthew McDay became assistant secretary of the Akron Division in 1922, and went to Liberia around 1930,

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12. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1920-1922; Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, back cover.

13. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1918-1922; Gordie, 13.

14. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1919-1931; *Akron Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1933; *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1934-35.

15. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1920; 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Pheobe Young," *Ancestry.com*; 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Viola Hendley," *Ancestry.com*.

16. "Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922," *Negro World*, July 15, 1922; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1930.

17. 1920 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Alvin Gilmore," *Ancestry.com*.

returning in 1934.<sup>18</sup> Through McDay and other Garveyites who planned to go to Liberia, this small Center Street community remained connected to the African Diaspora and Garveyites around the world. Because members of this neighborhood embraced the UNIA early on, they contributed to its growth. This sort of support and participation laid the groundwork for the organization to expand to 1,200 members in the coming years.<sup>19</sup> The networks of the Center Street neighborhood aligned themselves with the Garvey Movement and grew into a hub for Black enterprise, self-determination, and the local Garvey Movement.

### **Hill and James Streets**

The Akron Division found a physical place to call their own Liberty Hall, concurrently creating a conceptual space for social change. The Akron Division held some of its early meetings at the Young Men's Progressive Club at 59 E. Exchange and at local churches such as Second Baptist, Centenary Methodist Episcopal, and Mount Pilgrim Baptist.<sup>20</sup> During these meetings, the Akron Division temporarily transformed these spaces with the culture of the UNIA, but they strived for something more permanent. The first Liberty Hall in Akron, known locally as "UNIA Hall" or "UNIA Liberty Hall," was located at the corner of Hill and James Streets at the Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church building. This physical space provided a new opportunity for Garveyites to speak freely about the world's antiblackness and the freedom they intended to achieve.<sup>21</sup> Like other social movement spaces, Liberty Hall afforded Garveyites

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18. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 37; "New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925-1957," s. v. "Matthew McDay," *FamilySearch.org*.

19. "Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

20. W. J. Tucker, "Plan Mass Meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 3, 1921; "Progressive Club Meets," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 2, 1920.

21. Nunley, *Keepin' It Hushed*.



and potential-members the opportunity to encounter new people, ideas, and ways of doing things.<sup>22</sup> The space facilitated casual encounters, formal weekly meetings, and visits from out-of-town speakers, each encouraging intellectual and social engagement as well as building relationships, friendships, and networks of solidarity around the causes of Black freedom and African redemption.<sup>23</sup> Liberty Hall performed another important role in Akron. Because of Akron's overwhelming whiteness, and the antiblackness that necessarily accompanied it, Liberty Hall allowed for a temporary evasion from the de facto white city outside its doors.<sup>24</sup> Inside of Liberty Hall, UNIA members could set their own cultural norms. In a speech at the 1920 International Convention of the Negroes of the World in Harlem, Garvey referred to Liberty Hall as a "cradle of liberty,"<sup>25</sup> emphasizing the power that Liberty Hall held as a Black-controlled space. Akron's Liberty Hall resided at this location from approximately November of 1921 until February of 1923, when the division purchased a lot and moved around the corner.

### **157 East Center Street**

In February of 1923, the Akron Division made a new claim to space in their city and asserted power within a landscape of antiblackness as it purchased a lot at 157 E. Center Street. The officers of the division wrote, "We have begun to make the people of the great Rubber City

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22. Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

23. Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*, 37.

24. For discussion of norming and racing of space, see Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 42.

25. Hill, vol. II:481, cited in Philip Anthony McCormick, "'One God, One Aim, One Destiny': The Religious Response to Colonial Power in the United in the Early Twentieth Century" (master's thesis, Oxford, Ohio, Miami University, 2008), 42.

sit up and take notice of the fact that we are here and here to stay.”<sup>26</sup> By obtaining the first space they managed independently, the UNIA felt it was making a statement to the people of Akron. It was staking its claim on the city it called home. Each member of the Akron UNIA gave \$10 to \$20, to raise a total of \$12,500, to purchase a lot on Center Street. To acquire the property, the Akron Division worked with Black attorney Thomas E. Greene, who also contributed \$10 to the purchase price.<sup>27</sup> This achievement was a source of pride for the division because the lot they purchased was not any lot but rather “one of the best situated lots in Akron.”<sup>28</sup> The space they claimed to be their Pan-African headquarters, center for celebrating Black people and Black history, and hub for organizing Black freedom was located downtown, only a few blocks from the courthouse and The University of Akron. Like most of Akron and especially like downtown, this was “white space” that the Akron Division claimed for itself, an act that challenged the white hegemony of the city.<sup>29</sup> The division repurposed this formerly-white space to challenge white supremacy and to support Black people in Akron. The following year, Alexander Davis became chairman of the drive to raise \$30,000 to build the new hall.<sup>30</sup> They hoped to build a five-story brick building. This reveals the ambition of the division and the size of its intended

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26. Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie, and I. Taylor, “Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215,” *Negro World*, February 17, 1923.

27. Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie, and I. Taylor, “Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215,” *Negro World*, February 17, 1923.

28. Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie, and I. Taylor, “Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215,” *Negro World*, February 17, 1923.

29. Elijah Anderson, ““The White Space,”” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 10–21.

30. “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, June 14, 1924.

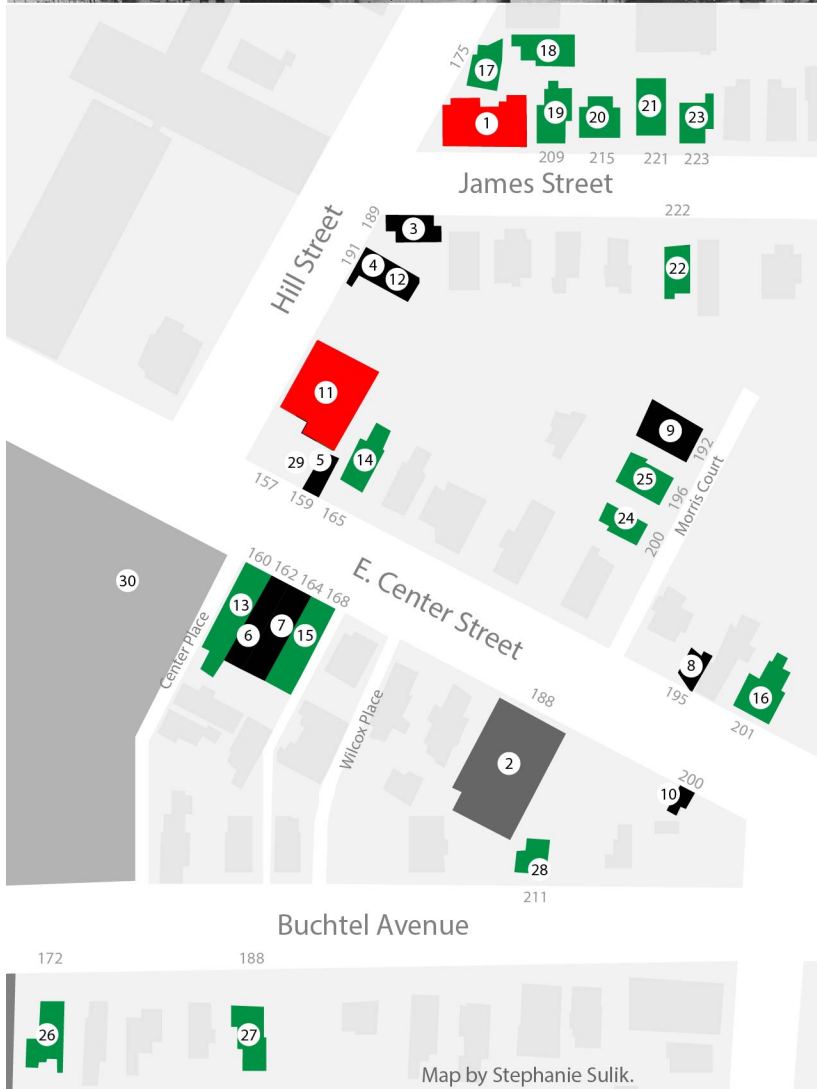
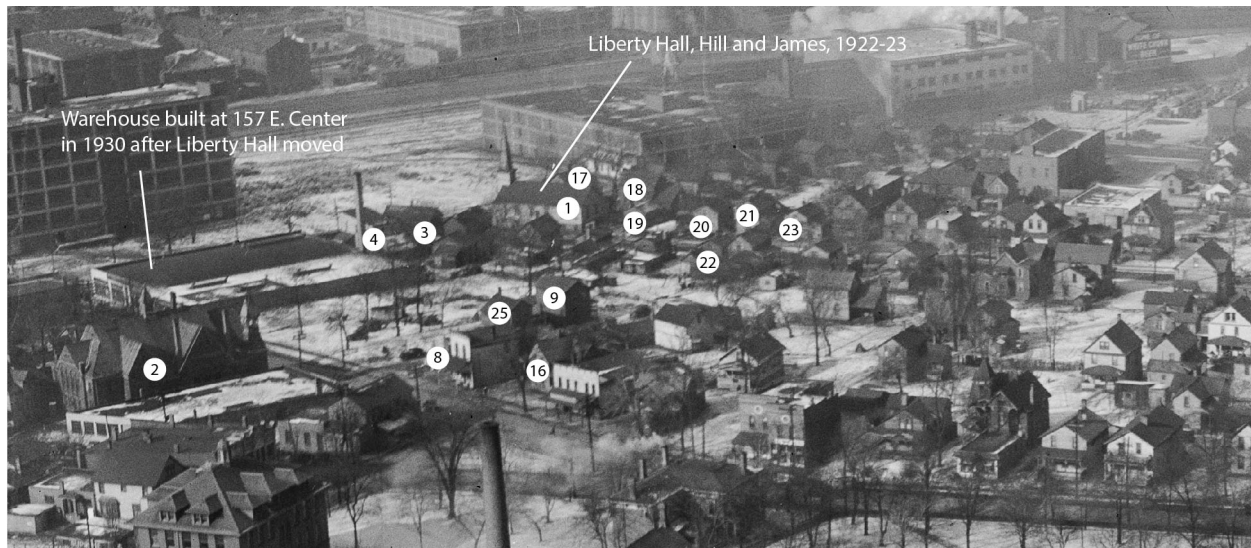
projects. Like its officers wrote, they wanted the city of Akron to “take notice.”<sup>31</sup> According to historical Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, they instead built an approximately 40’ by 50’ building with three large rooms on the first floor, and an additional attic room above one of the front rooms, that likely served as an apartment for Eliza Porch and her son Clifford Porch who lived there in 1924.<sup>32</sup>

Liberty Hall was a catalyst that encouraged the growth of Garveyism. UNIA members relocated to the neighborhood and established businesses, expanding the realm of the UNIA beyond the one building called Liberty Hall and expanding their claim to space in the city of Akron (see fig. 11). Liberty Hall’s new location became the center of Akron’s UNIA neighborhood. UNIA members lived next door, across the street, and down the block. Businesses were opened by UNIA members on all sides. The neighborhood grew to be able to meet the needs of Akron’s Garveyites and support their efforts. Garveyite spaces supported a community that in turn supported the movement. The neighborhood provided food, second-hand goods, furniture, tailoring, financial support, a place of worship, and a place to realize Garveyism.

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31. Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie, and I. Taylor, “Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215,” *Negro World*, February 17, 1923.

32. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924.



**UNIA in the E. Center Street Neighborhood**

**Liberty Hall**

Hill and James Streets, 1922-23  
157 E. Center, 1924-30

**Churches**

1. Second Baptist, Hill and James, 1893-1921  
Centenary ME Church, Hill and James, 1922-28  
2. Second Baptist Church, 188 E. Center, 1921-75

**Businesses & Associations**

3. Archer and Wimbish, 189 Hill, 1920-23  
Gordie Store, 189 Hill, 1924  
4. Gordie's Grocery, 191 Hill, 1925-1931  
5. Elijah Crawley (tailor), 159 E. Center, 1925  
6. Elijah Crawley (tailor), 162 E. Center, 1924, 1926-28  
7. Wimbish Furniture Exchange, 164 E. Center, 1928  
8. Gordie's Grocery, 195 E. Center, 1930  
9. Elijah Crawley (tailor), 192 Morris Court, 1930  
10. Afro Mutual Benefit Assn., 200 E. Center, 1926-28

**Residences**

11. Eliza Porch, 157 E. Center, 1924  
12. Leon Gordie, 191 Hill, 1925-1931  
13. Atry Family, rear 160 Center, 1925  
Leola McCorvey, rear 160 Center, 1925  
14. Fannie Martin, 165 E. Center, 1925  
Ocie and Rosia Gilmore, 165 E. Center, 1925  
15. Elizabeth and William Wade, rear 168 E. Center, 1925  
16. Cary Cook, 201 E. Center, 1924  
17. Player Family, 175 Hill, 1924-27  
18. Phoebia and Thomas Young, 209 1/2 James, 1918-19  
19. Viola Hendley, 209 James, 1925  
Carroll Family, 209 James, 1924-26  
20. Phoebia and Thomas Young, 215 James, 1920  
21. John Riley, 221 James, 1922-33  
22. Joseph Phagan, 222 James, 1926  
23. Joseph Player, 223 1/2 James, 1929-30  
Phoebia and Thomas Young, 223 James, 1922-31  
24. Ocie Gilmore, 200 Morris Court, 1933-37  
25. Ocie Gilmore, 196 Morris Court, 1928-31  
John McElwain, 196 Morris Court, 1931-35  
26. Matthew and Agnes McDay, 172 E. Buchtel, 1920, 1928  
Alvin Gilmore, 172 E. Buchtel, 1920  
27. Nellie Shelly, 188 E. Buchtel, 1928-30  
Alvin Gilmore, 188 E. Buchtel, 1922  
28. Bertha and Louis Suttles, 211 E. Buchtel, 1925  
Ocie Gilmore, 211 E. Buchtel, 1926

**Employment**

29. John McElwain, 159 E. Center, 1926-28  
30. International Harvester Corporation

Map by Stephanie Sulik.

Figure 11. UNIA in the E. Center Street neighborhood of Akron, 1921-1930.<sup>33</sup>

After the UNIA was founded, an influx of Garveyites started businesses in the neighborhood. Moses Wimbish opened a second-hand goods and furniture exchange store at 164 E. Center in addition to his grocery. Elijah Crawley, the son of a seamstress, tailored and pressed clothes for most of his life. Originally from the Bahamas, he worked as a tailor in Miami before moving to Akron in 1919.<sup>34</sup> Crawley was involved with the UNIA as early as 1922 and brought his tailoring business to the neighborhood in 1924.<sup>35</sup> The Afro Mutual Benefit Association also formed in the neighborhood in 1926.<sup>36</sup> These spaces were direct extensions of UNIA's mission. They were symbols of self-determination for Black people, increased Black capital, and claimed Black space in an antiblack city. Black people in Akron faced the everyday violence of systemic racism, were excluded from housing in certain areas, and had to contend with an active chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. In these circumstances, securing businesses and claiming space in Akron asserted their presence and their long-term plans for development.

Other members and families who assumed early leadership roles relocated to the neighborhood, making homes on East Center Street, Hill Street, James Street, Morris Court, and East Buchtel Avenue which was connected to Center Street by a series of alleyways. In addition to Eliza Porch, who likely took on larger responsibilities for the organization while residing at Liberty Hall, the Gilmores, Carrolls, and Autrys came to the neighborhood. Ocie and Rosia

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33. *Top*, Akron Aerials, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company Records, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron, numbers and annotations added by author (unobstructed view available in appendix H); *bottom*, map by author, adapted from Sanborn maps and Akron city directories. To locate this map in present-day Akron, see supplementary images in appendix H.

34. "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," s. v. "Elijah Crawley," *Ancestry.com*; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1919.

35. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924-1928; "Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922," *Negro World*, July 15, 1922.

36. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1926.

Gilmore moved to the neighborhood in 1925, first living at 165 E. Center Street, where Ocie Gilmore worked as an auto mechanic, right next door to John McElwain and Liberty Hall.<sup>37</sup> The Carroll and Autry families also moved to the neighborhood in 1924 and 1925 respectively.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Cary Cook, who served as the division's reporter to the Parent Body and featured as a speaker at some of the division's earliest meetings, lived at 201 E. Center Street in 1924.<sup>39</sup> The relocation of these UNIA members and families, shortly after Liberty Hall was established, increased the organization's activity in the neighborhood and further encouraged its growth.

Many other members also relocated to the neighborhood and increased involvement in the organization. This was true for Fannie Mae Martin who lived at 165 E. Center in 1925.<sup>40</sup> In this same year, she sang a solo at the Grand Reunion of the Universal African Legions auxiliary of the Akron Division.<sup>41</sup> Effie and Joseph E. Player relocated to Hill Street in 1924 and increased their participation as well.<sup>42</sup> At the suggestion of Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey Day was observed every first Sunday of the month during her husband's incarceration.<sup>43</sup> On one Garvey Day at Liberty Hall in Akron, the Player family participated in the celebration's program. Reporter Mrs. William Crawford explained, "Since it was Garvey Day, the minds of all loyal

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37. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1925.

38. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924-1925.

39. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1924; Cary Cook, "Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting," *Negro World*, November 19, 1921; W. J. Tucker, "Plan Mass Meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 3, 1921.

40. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1925.

41. Major A. L. McDonald, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 31, 1925.

42. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1925-1927.

43. Hill, *Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. X:309.

members of the division were turned toward Atlanta and our leader imprisoned there.”<sup>44</sup> With this in mind, Joseph Player performed a solo, their daughter Ruth (Player) Jackson a recitation, and Effie Player two duets. Her second duet was with their niece Nellie Shelly who also moved to the neighborhood a few years later.<sup>45</sup> Joseph L. Phagan and Elizabeth M. and William M. Walker also moved to the neighborhood in 1926.<sup>46</sup>

The rising number of Garvey supporters in the Center Street neighborhood increased the influence of Liberty Hall. In a neighborhood occupied by Garveyites and their businesses, the Garveyism cultivated within Liberty Hall could spill out into the streets, making an even larger claim to space in downtown Akron. Akron’s Garveyites were trying to build the world of their dreams in the present. They wanted to live in a world where Black people were free. While people in Akron were active supporters of the UNIA’s projects in Liberia and elsewhere in the world, they were fighting for freedom in their own hometown by establishing Liberty Hall, businesses, and a residential community.

The establishment and maintenance of Akron’s Liberty Hall and expansion of Garveyism in the neighborhood allowed for an increase in activities to take place in Akron, which created more opportunities for Garveyites to claim space—even public space—in their city. By 1925, the Akron Division swelled to 1,200 members.<sup>47</sup> The UNIA continued its weekly meetings in addition to hosting parades, lectures from members of the Parent Body, regional UNIA meetings, and other local organizations. During parades, the Akron Division invited divisions from across

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44. Mrs. Wm. Crawford, “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, December 26, 1925.

45. Mrs. Wm. Crawford, “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, December 26, 1925; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1928-1930.

46. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1926-1927, 1931.

47. “Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925.

the state to participate. On one occasion, twelve coaches arrived on the Pennsylvania Railroad full of Garveyites from Cleveland, bringing the Universal Choir and Universal Band with them to add music to the festivities.<sup>48</sup> Convening at Liberty Hall and leaving from there, these parades of huge numbers of uniformed Garveyites and loud music were reclamations of space. These parades were a powerful statement that Black people were present in mass and were uniting in the cause of Black freedom and redemption of Africa from colonialism. Through these public assertions of space, they proved to themselves that they deserved more than what society offered them intellectually, politically, socially, and economically.

In 1930, Liberty Hall moved from Center Street to Howard Street, and the building at 157 East Center Street was demolished and an International Harvester warehouse was built in its place almost immediately. Within a year after Liberty Hall moved, many of the UNIA businesses moved or closed. Some members left the neighborhood. John Riley, the UNIA's last-known secretary in Akron, was a home owner at 221 James, residing there since 1922, but he moved out of the area in 1933.<sup>49</sup> However, Second Baptist remained until 1975.<sup>50</sup> Some members followed the UNIA to Howard Street. For example, Joseph L. Phagan lived at 222 James Street in 1926, and then at 589 N. Howard Street in 1931.<sup>51</sup>

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48. Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 16, 1928.

49. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1922-1931; *Akron Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1933.

50. Price, "Local History: Former Coal Miner Saw Light as Church Pastor."

51. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1926-1927, 1931.



### **325 North Howard Street**

Similar to the situation on Center Street, the UNIA was drawn to the Howard Street neighborhood because of its pre-existing Black presence. By the 1920s, the 100-block of Howard Street was home to many of Akron's Black businesses and offices of Akron's Black professionals. Dr. Charles Lewis, dentists Dr. John W. Dunbar and Dr. Walter E. Mayo, and lawyers Samuel T. Kelly and Artee Fleming had offices there. Black-owned businesses such as Davis' Drug Store, L. L. Lumpkins' Expressing and Hauling, and George Matthews' barbershop were located on Howard Street. Hotel Thomas owned by Fannie Thomas complemented this business district on the 100-block of North Howard street. These businesses provided the foundation for the Howard Street business district to develop into "Akron's Harlem," complete with its own division of the UNIA.<sup>52</sup>

By the 1930s more Black-owned restaurants, night clubs, hotels, and businesses opened up on Howard Street. This area flourished as both a business and cultural district. It became a hub for jazz and blues music in Akron. Entertainers such as Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie performed on Howard Street and stayed at one of the area's Black-owned hotels, Hotel Matthews, which opened in 1925.<sup>53</sup> The neighborhood welcomed travelling musicians but also was a site of flourishing local arts and culture. J. C. Wade, an Akron resident who achieved fame in New York as a tap dancer, returned to Akron and set up a dance studio teaching tap, ballet, and all other types of dance. In 1935, he moved the studio to Howard

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52. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 220.

53. The Ohio Centennial Commission, The Longaberger Company, Artists of Rubber City, The Summit County Historical Society, and The Ohio Historical Society, *Howard Street District*, 2000, Ohio Historical Marker, Akron, Ohio.

Street.<sup>54</sup> In 1934, Evelyn and Horace Stewart opened their photography studio on Howard Street. They photographed and developed portraits, family photos, graduation photos, licenses, photos for special events, and for newspaper stories.<sup>55</sup> Many of Akron's residents patronized Stewart's Studio between the 1930s and the 1970s, when it closed.

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54. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 227.

55. McClain, 351; Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.



Figure 12. Liberty Hall at 325 N. Howard Street. "UNIA Hall," Opie Evans Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

During Elder Tripp’s presidency, the division relocated to 325 North Howard Street (see fig. 12), where Liberty Hall continued to serve as a practical space for the organization’s use, a place to foster collective memories, and also a place where a new world—or in this case a new nation—could be imagined and forged in the present. Akron’s members embraced symbols of nationhood as they sang the Universal Ethiopian Anthem and waved the Red, Black, and Green, transforming the building they inhabited into a national embassy. It offered a glimpse of Black freedom and created a small, welcoming national “home” to welcome Garveyites visiting from out-of-town. The division’s headquarters remained here until 1940. Many UNIA members resided or worked on Howard Street and in its surrounding area throughout the 1920s. In 1930, when Liberty Hall moved to Howard Street, at least eight UNIA members lived nearby (see fig. 13). Eliza Porch, Charles Grundy, Jerry Jones, and Israel Hale already lived there; Emma and Vonciel Autry, Joseph Phagan, and Elder Tripp moved to the area in the same year.<sup>56</sup> Tripp and his wife lived in the rear apartment behind Liberty Hall.<sup>57</sup> Eliza Porch lived at 11 ½ Howard Street until her death in 1935. She moved to Howard Street before the UNIA did. She may not have followed Liberty Hall to the Howard Street Business District, but this shows that UNIA members already had a presence on Howard Street before the hall moved there. Vonciel Autry worked as a beautician at the Parisian Beauty Shoppe on Howard Street during the late 1930s and 1940s.<sup>58</sup> She was also a member of Second Baptist Church for over sixty years and

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56. It is likely that many more members lived in the area at this time, but data is unavailable. The membership list used in this project was largely compiled from the *Negro World* newspaper published between 1918 and 1933. The Akron Division published articles between 1921 and 1930. Therefore, some active members were known between these years, but very few members are known in the 1930-1940 period. Membership may have changed, increased, or declined, but that information is not available.

57. “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

58. *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1938-1940; “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

continued to frequent both the Center Street and Howard Street neighborhoods.<sup>59</sup> Both Eliza Porch and Vonciel and Emma Autry were involved in the Akron Division in the early twenties and likely continued their involvement into the 1930s.



Figure 13. Residences of UNIA members near Howard Street, 1920-1941. Created by author from Akron city directories and US census data.

## Barberton

As in Akron, policies of exclusion and racial violence maintained de facto segregation in Barberton and shaped the realities of Barberton’s Black residents. Seeking locations near employers but barred from certain parts of the city, Black people found themselves living tucked away in pockets near the canal and in Snyderstown, which was separated from the rest of

59. “Vonciel Chandler,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 2, 2002.

Barberton by two chemical ponds, two sets of railroad tracks, the Ohio Canal, Tuscarawas River, and town founder O. C. Barber's estate. Examining the residential locations of known members of Barberton's UNIA division reveals broad support for the Garvey Movement in Barberton and how Barberton's geography connected members and supported their organizing.

Known members of the Barberton Division lived in four distinct but connected clusters across the city. The first residential cluster was around Brady Street, where it intersected with Newell Street on the northern side of Barberton. The Pittsburg Valve and Fitting Company stretched about four square blocks to the east of Newell Street and on the north side of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1916, Pittsburg Valve and Fitting Co. built four houses for its workers on Newell Street.<sup>60</sup> Many UNIA members lived in this area between 1925 and 1931, including Rev. I. M. Yancey and President of the Division William M. Davis. William H. Bowling still lived there as late as 1938.<sup>61</sup> Bowling and other UNIA members in this area had at least one household member who worked for the Pittsburg Valve and Fitting Company or the Pennsylvania Railroad. Omar Alexander, Eva Sheets, Walter Sheets, Catherine Bailey, Ethel Palmer, Samuel J. W. McNeil, Willie Lu Johnson, Paul Taylor, and Horace Ward, meanwhile, had household members who worked at American Vitrified Company, a sewer pipe company started by Barberton's founder O. C. Barber.<sup>62</sup>

The second cluster of UNIA members in Barberton was on Huston Street, located only five blocks from the Brady Street neighborhood. UNIA members lived in this area as early as

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60. Taylor, *100 Years of Magic*, 147.

61. *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1938.

62. American Vitrified Company was previously known as National Sewer Pipe Company, American Sewer Pipe Company, and locally as simply "the Sewer Pipe."

1919 and some remained there for their entire lives. Throughout these decades, Huston Street, a small road that terminated at the train tracks and the Ohio Canal, was home to a thriving community that engaged in organizing, entertainment, and worship. It was and still is only one block long, but accommodated at least fifty households, two churches, and tenement housing during its most populated years. Division Presidents Henry E. Lewis, William Davis, and Samuel Bartee each lived on Huston Street. Bartee only lived there for a short time, but Lewis resided there with his wife Mary until he died. They were active members of Friendship Baptist Church and Galilee Missionary Baptist Church, now one of the biggest draws that still keeps people returning to Huston Street.<sup>63</sup> Other UNIA members who lived on Huston Street include Samuel J. W. McNeil, Richard McElroy, and Garfield, Paul, and William M. Taylor. McNeil was born in Georgia and worked as a trackman for the Pennsylvania Railroad for most of his time in Barberton. In 1940, he and his family relocated to Akron.

The third cluster of UNIA membership was found in South Barberton, in a neighborhood known as Snyder town. Like on Huston Street, Snyder town was built on what had previously been rural farmland, owned by the Snyder family. In 1916, Barberton publicly discussed re-districting Snyder town to be used for housing for Black citizens, and two years later it was annexed by the city of Barberton.<sup>64</sup> The result was decades of de facto segregation, with Snyder town being home to the highest concentration of Barberton's Black residents.<sup>65</sup> It also remained the poorest section of the city. UNIA members living in residential areas near Brady

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63. Rev. Abraham Thomas and Rev. I. M. Yancey were leaders of Galilee Missionary Baptist Church in the early 1920s and active in the founding of Friendship Baptist Church. They were also members of the UNIA.

64. "Seek More Homes for Colored Folk, Real Estate Men Favor Housing Them at Snyder town," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 24, 1916.

65. Gregory Pappas, *The Magic City: Unemployment in a Working-Class Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 10, 112.

Street, Huston Street, and Snydertown represent both the northern and southern sides of Barberton and nearly all of the places where Black people lived in Barberton in the 1920s and 30s (see fig. 14). Garveyites could be found in each neighborhood and found wide support in Barberton.

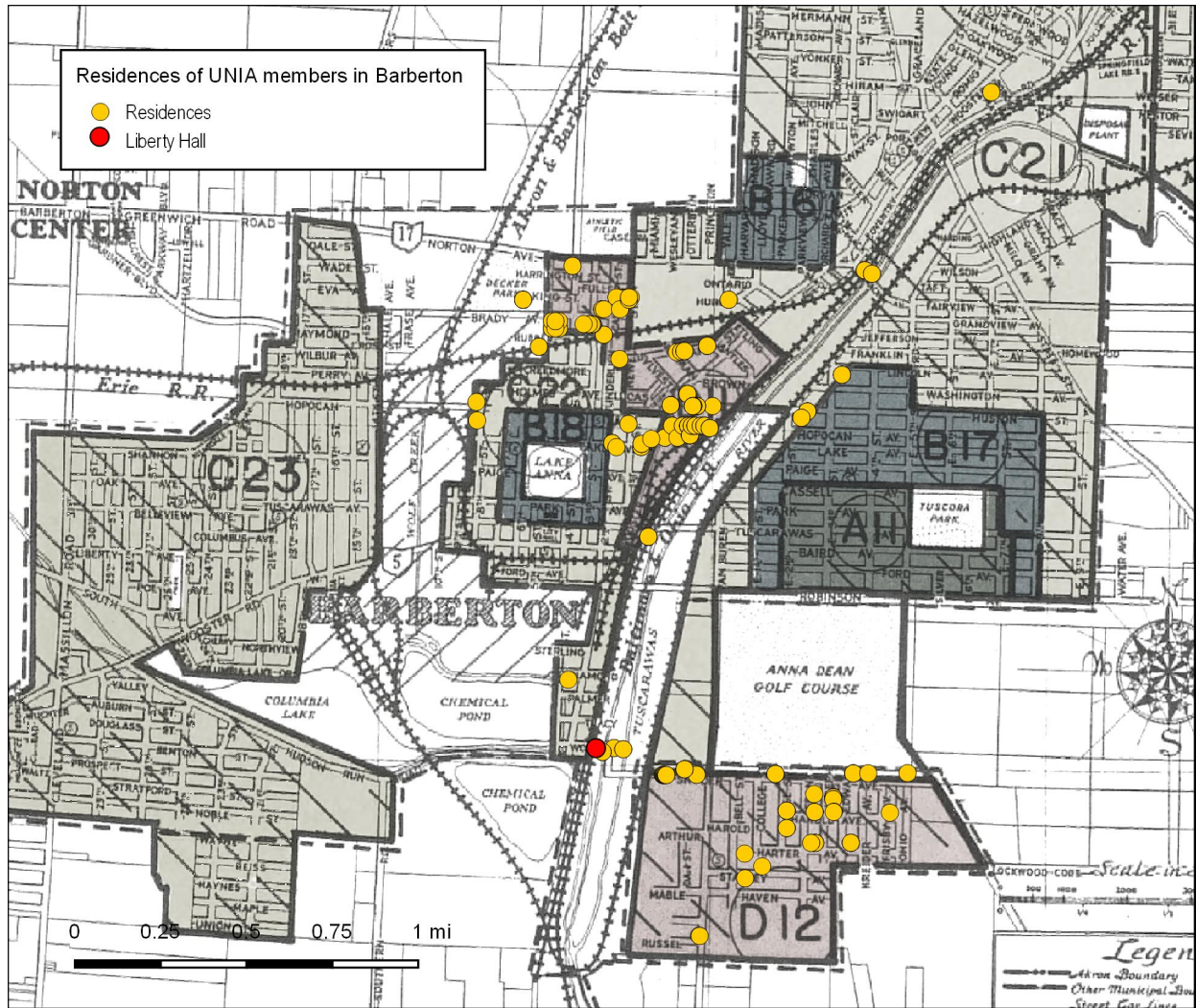


Figure 14. Residences of UNIA members in Barberton, 1920-1941. Created by author from Akron city directories and US census data.



## Wolf Street<sup>66</sup>

The final residential cluster was centrally located between the other three clusters and home to Liberty Hall. It geographically united Barberton's Garveyites and at the same time united Barberton's Garveyites with the UNIA's global Pan-African network. Wolf Street housed the Barberton Division's Liberty Hall and a few of the division's members. Notably, Richard McElroy lived there from 1925 to 1928. He lived in three of the four areas where known UNIA members lived: on Amanda Avenue off of Newell, on Huston, and on Wolf. It was a small street stretching only about one block. This street was largely overcrowded and residential with the exception of a Black-owned coffee shop.<sup>67</sup> Just west of Wolf Street were two large chemical ponds, and midway through the block, it intersected with the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Both made this a fairly dangerous place to live. At the east end of the street was a bridge to cross the canal, and on the other side were more small dwellings, tenement housing, and a small road that connected to Snyder Avenue and Snyder town. From 1925 to 1928, Liberty Hall was located at 234 Wolf Street as illustrated in figure 15. This was the official address on record with the Parent Body. Both President William Davis and Secretary Bessie Rogland listed this as their mailing address during this time. This building was sandwiched to the east of the tracks and west of the Ohio Canal with a few other dwellings. It was larger than many of the one-room dwellings in Barberton at the time and included a common space or hall as well as a residential space (see fig. 15). Then in 1928, two reports mentioned that Barberton Division meetings took place at "315 Wolfe Street," which was not listed as an address on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the

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66. Sources describe this area as Wolfe Street, Wolf Street, and Wolfe Avenue.

67. Phyllis Taylor, *Talk of the Town: Stories from the Barberton Herald* (Akron: Summit County Historical Society Press, 1996), 92.

1921 Akron Platbook, or the city directories. During this period, many streets in Barberton were unpaved and house numbers were not always consistent, so there is some uncertainty about where exactly on Wolf Street this second Liberty Hall was located. But either way, the Barberton Division made Wolf Street the headquarters of the local Garvey Movement.

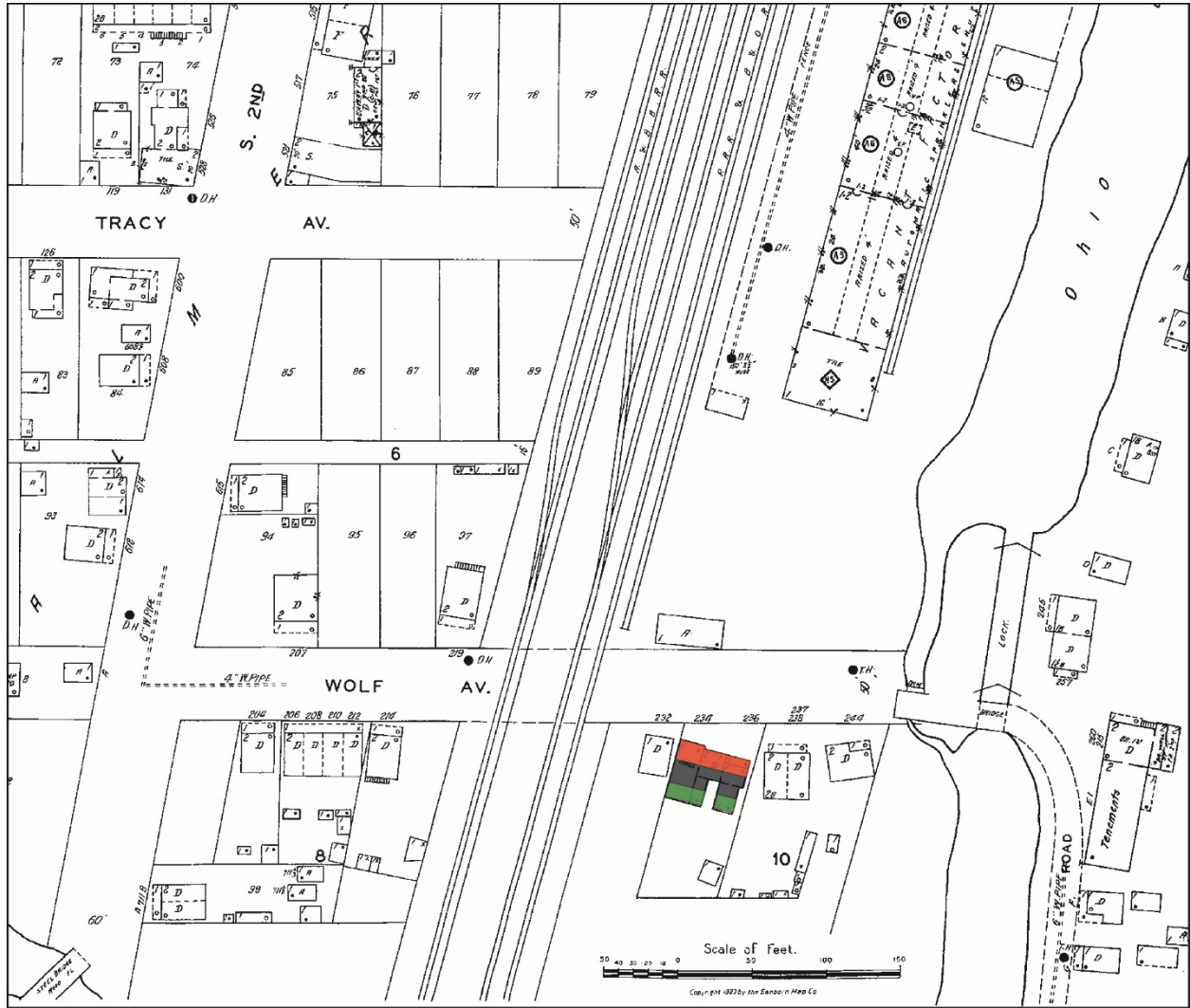


Figure 15. Liberty Hall on Wolf Street. Created by author and adapted from 1927 Sanborn Insurance Maps of Barberton available through the Cleveland Public Library.

Barberton's Garveyites were uniquely connected by the city's geography and Wolf Street was at the center. These same rivers, canals, and tracks that segregated Barberton's Black population from the rest of the city also connected the seemingly scattered clusters of Black families in Barberton. Barberton's Black residents could easily walk along the train tracks or down the footpath next to the canal from Snyderstown up to Huston Street. This functioned as a means of travel but also as a place for experiences and enjoyment. Many children learned to swim in the canal and many teens hopped rides on freight trains.<sup>68</sup> Wolf Street was located right at the junction of these routes, and this could be one of the reasons that Liberty Hall was established in this location. This meant that its meetings were centrally located amongst Barberton's Black population and at the same time isolated, allowing for privacy and secrecy while organizing. Liberty Hall in Barberton represented a point of geographical unity among Barberton's Black residents and diasporic unity that connected Barberton's Garveyites with a global Garveyite network. The Garvey Movement's project of obtaining spaces in cities across the globe had significance for both local Divisions and for the Garvey Movement as a whole, allowing members to see the vastness and strength of the organization they belonged to. As has been shown in previous chapters, the Barberton Division was actively involved in regional and global Garveyite projects, making Liberty Hall on Wolfe Street a significant location in the UNIA's network.

## **Conclusion**

Geographical examinations of both the Akron and Barberton Divisions show broad support for the Garvey Movement across each city, only limited by segregation. While

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68. James McElroy, Jr., interview by author, June 6, 2019.

neighborhoods where Liberty Halls were established served great importance for each division, in neither city, was support restricted to these neighborhoods. Especially evident in our discussion of the E. Center Street and Howard Street areas, the pre-existing communities in each neighborhood paved the way for the growth of the Garvey Movement. The UNIA flourished in Akron and Barberton because people from these cities embraced the movement and saw that it was beneficial to their local realities and their larger dreams. In Akron and Barberton, Liberty Hall became much more than a building. It became a space for social change, a tool to claim space for themselves, an environment to practice their national aspirations on a small-scale, and a structure that united them locally and to the UNIA's global Pan-African network.

## CONCLUSION

### THE LASTING IMPACT OF THE UNIA IN AKRON AND BARBERTON

The aims and dreams of the Garvey Movement—self-determination, economic independence, Black pride, and African unity—have persisted from the 1920s to the present day. They gained popular attention during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the sixties and seventies, and again today as a global spotlight shines on systemic antiblackness and the racialized murder of Black people by police. In fact, the UNIA has continued to exist as an organization, albeit much smaller than in its heyday, up to the present. As of 2020, the international headquarters of the UNIA remain in Cleveland under the leadership of President-General Cleophus Miller, Jr. Two members from Akron sit on the Executive Council.<sup>1</sup> Divisions are active in US cities such as New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Columbus, and Raleigh, and in countries including Jamaica, Belize, Costa Rica, and Kenya. In collaboration with the Executive Council, Garveyites in Akron are in the early stages of re-establishing a division in that city.<sup>2</sup> This concluding chapter begins with the decline in the organizational activity of the Akron and Barberton Divisions in the 1940s and then, by telling the stories of a few Garveyites and their families, traces the lasting impact of the UNIA in Akron and Barberton through the lives of its members and their descendants to the Akronites who would revive its mission almost 100 years later.

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1. Cleophus Miller, Jr., “From the President,” Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League 1918 and 1929 of the World, accessed June 26, 2020, <https://www.theunia-acl.com/index.php/about-us/from-the-president>; Kwabena T. Shelton, interview by author, July 25, 2020; Gerald Gould, interview by author, July 24, 2020.

2. Cleophus Miller, Jr., interview by author, June 6, 2020.

## Decline of the Akron and Barberton Divisions

After years of vibrant organizing and accomplishments in Akron, activity in these divisions declined in the late 1930s. Elder Tripp led the Akron Division and published meeting information for the division in Akron's city directories from 1931 until 1935.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after, he relocated to Hamilton, Ohio. After Tripp left Akron, the division was taken over by President Rev. David Caldwell and Secretary Rev. John Riley. Lillie (Smith) and David Caldwell, originally from Georgia, migrated to Indianapolis and, in 1934, to Akron. The Caldwells had a large family, and Rev. Caldwell was pastor of Good Hope Baptist Church and worked for Goodyear. Although he came to Akron much later than the founders of the Akron Division, he joined the division's leadership soon after arriving. He opposed police brutality against Akron's Black residents, led the Akron UNIA, and also became active in the NAACP.<sup>4</sup> Available evidence documents that the UNIA in Akron was active until at least 1941 and in Barberton until at least 1932, but I suspect both continued slightly longer. After a visit from International Organizer M. L. T. DeMena in 1932 and the establishment of new a juvenile division and juvenile UAL auxiliary, the Barberton Division had significant momentum and new energy in the early 1930s.<sup>5</sup> The *Negro World* was discontinued after 1933, and therefore no further published reports to the Parent Body are available after that date. However, most leaders of the division had children, making it likely that they passed the values of Garveyism on to them. Given these circumstances, there is no reason to believe this division ended in the early thirties,

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3. *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1931; *Akron Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1933; *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1934-35.

4. "Rev. David Caldwell," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 26, 1979.

5. Granville Cartier, "Barberton, Ohio, Div. No. 326," *Negro World*, February 27, 1932.

but more information about the division's activities are unknown. When John Riley called a meeting in 1936 to report back from the international convention in Toronto, it was the last UNIA meeting advertised or reported on in the *Akron Beacon Journal*.<sup>6</sup> The Akron Division maintained Liberty Hall on Howard Street until 1940, and the Akron Division was still listed in the UNIA Commissioner of Ohio's directory in 1941.<sup>7</sup> But by the forties, neither the Akron nor Barberton Divisions were as involved in regional organizing as they had been previously. No references were found to their participation in UNIA conferences in this period in known repositories of UNIA sources.<sup>8</sup> However, as with the Barberton Division, details of the Akron Division's decline are obscure.

The correlation of Marcus Garvey's passing in 1940 and the dissolution of these divisions may prompt an assumption of causality, but it is more likely that a combination of factors impacted the divisions. Following the death of Marcus Garvey, factionalism contributed to confusion and undermined the structure of the UNIA. At an emergency conference, James Stewart was elected president-general and moved the UNIA to Cleveland, Ohio. Then in 1949, Stewart moved the organization to Liberia in an effort to fulfill the Pan-African aspirations of the organization. Shortly after Stewart departed from the United States, an opposing faction of the

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6. "Akron News Briefly Told," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 28, 1936.

7. Thomas Harvey became the State Commissioner of Ohio in 1941. He had a directory of "Commissioner Important Membership: List of the State of Ohio" that listed two divisions in Akron. Division 179 at the address 325 N. Howard Street and Division 178 at 234 Campbell Street. David Caldwell was the president and John Riley was the secretary of Division 179. "List of Divisions" in Commissioner Important Membership: List of the State of Ohio, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

8. No mention of Akron or Barberton was found in the following repositories and newspapers: Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Western Reserve Historical Society, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library at Emory University, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the *New Negro World*, and the *Blackman*.

UNIA elected William Sherrill of Detroit to president-general.<sup>9</sup> Much of the growth of the UNIA can be attributed to travelling Parent Body representatives, a strong regional network, and the circulation of the *Negro World*. However, by this time, as the UNIA was struggling financially and sending fewer representatives, and the *Negro World* had been discontinued. Many divisions in Ohio began to struggle. With fewer recruiting tools, the Akron and Barberton Divisions dwindled as their members passed away.

An important cause of the divisions' declining activity was the death of their own members. At least twenty-seven members had died and fourteen members had moved away by 1941. Among those who died in this period were division leaders discussed throughout this study: Sarah J. (Fields) Wimbish, Bertha (Gilmore) Suttles, Illerfearris Autry, Charles Bruce, Will Ethel Lee (Bowens) Palmer, Peter Coker, Herman Stephen Miller, Eliza Porch, Elijah Alexander Crawley, Jr., Joseph W. Simms, and Rev. Royal Allen Jones. The loss of these organizers unquestionably took a toll on these divisions.

Garvey's followers had been prepared for Garvey's death early on. His challenges against global white supremacy put a giant target on his back. Moses Wimbish wrote in 1922, "If he dies, the cause shall live, and we of the Akron Division 215 do hereby call on all our loyal sons of Ethiopia to let us stretch our hands to God, seeking His Divine guidance."<sup>10</sup> When Garvey was incarcerated in Atlanta, he again thought his death was possibility. In his first letter from the prison he wrote:

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9. Erik S. McDuffie, "'A New Day Has Dawned for the UNIA': Garveyism, the Diasporic Midwest, and West Africa, 1920-80," *Journal of West African History* 2, no. 1 (2016): 75.

10. "The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922.



After my enemies are satisfied, in life or death I shall come back to you to serve even as I have served before. In life I shall be the same; in death I shall be a terror to the foes of Negro liberty.

He further echoed this sentiment in his closing promise:

When I am dead, wrap the mantle of the Red, the Black and the Green around me, for in the New Life I shall rise with God's grace and blessing to lead the millions up the heights of triumph with the colors that you well know. Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for, with God's grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of Black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.<sup>11</sup>

Garvey promised that in death, his leadership, guidance, and recruitment amongst the ancestors would further strengthen the UNIA and its mission. Garveyites might find strength in Garvey's promises, but the organization's leadership did not live up to his predictions. Nothing could replace their local organizers.

### **Another Chance in Liberia?**

With Akron's ties to both the rubber industry and the Garvey Movement, Akron's Black residents remained interested in Liberia and the possibility of Black business opportunities there. In 1944, a delegation of Liberians visited Akron at the invitation of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company (see fig. 16). While in Akron, the delegation met with Leon Gordie, George W. Thompson, James E. Miller, and Rev. C. B. Blunt.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Marcus Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, Or, Africa for the Africans* (Dover: Majority Press, 1986), 238–39.

12. "Liberian Delegates Meet Akron Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 30, 1944; "U. S. Negroes 'Invited' To Liberia," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 30, 1944.



Figure 16. Liberian Delegation, 1944. *Seated*, Leon Gordie, Walter F. Walker, William E. Dennis, George W. Thompson; *standing*, Rev. C. B. Blunt, and James E. Miller. Liberian Delegation, 1944, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

Repeating a sentiment that ebbed and flowed throughout the Garvey era, the delegation announced that Black Americans were encouraged to relocate to Liberia to improve their economic and social opportunities and contribute their skills to Liberia as “pioneers” or entrepreneurs. Liberian Secretary of Treasury William E. Dennis mentioned, as Garveyites had before, the significance of Liberia’s success for the realities for Black people everywhere.<sup>13</sup> At the time of the meeting, Gordie was president of the Akron branch of the NAACP, but Gordie,

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13. “Liberian Delegates Meet Akron Negroes,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 30, 1944.

Thompson, and Miller each had previous ties to Akron's Garveyites. As discussed throughout the previous chapters, Leon Gordie collaborated with the UNIA on countless occasions, and when McClain interviewed him about Akron's Black history in 1974, he felt it was important enough to mention that Garvey had visited Akron fifty years earlier.<sup>14</sup> Thompson, lawyer and secretary at the Association for Colored Community Work, had also worked with the UNIA to oppose the Klan in Akron.<sup>15</sup> Finally, James E. Miller, board chairman for the Association for Colored Community Work, was the son of Herman S. Miller, Treasurer of the Akron Division in 1922. While evidence of his involvement in the UNIA has not been found, it is very likely that he supported the Garvey Movement and his participation contributed to his development as a community activist and business owner. For three men living amidst the rubber industry and the Garvey Movement, Liberia held increasing significance for them. But imagine what this diasporic meeting and invitation to go to Liberia would have meant to James Miller's father, or to Bessie Woods or Walter Sheets, who wanted to go to Liberia but never made it.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, this meeting evidences some of the same contradictions that hampered the UNIA's effort to relocate its headquarters to the Cavalla Region of Liberia in 1924. The delegation was composed of William E. Dennis, Liberian consul general in New York Walter F. Walker, and wealthy rubber farmer James F. Cooper, all supporters of Firestone. In their press conference they praised Firestone for its development of the country and contribution to "security," rather than pointing out the company's labor abuses and exploitation.<sup>17</sup> Throughout

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14. McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975," 199.

15. "Gordie Now Heads N.A.A.C.P. Officers," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 8, 1943.

16. "Popularity Contest Is Forging Ahead; Great Interest Is Shown," *Negro World*, September 26, 1931; Tonya King, interview by author, December 5, 2019.

17. "U. S. Negroes 'Invited' To Liberia," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 30, 1944.

his career, Dennis and the True Whig Party to which he belonged welcomed neocolonial business ventures into Liberia. He was involved in mining as well as rubber, owning and operating his own private rubber farm and serving as “President of the Liberia Rubber Planters’ Association which he served diligently for many years before retiring.”<sup>18</sup> The members of this delegation were part of the minority of Liberians who profited from Firestone’s presence in the country. Since the company’s arrival, Harvey Firestone had convinced members of the Americo-Liberian government to invest in rubber in Liberia, making strategic alliances to protect its investment.<sup>19</sup> The Akronites at this meeting were entangled with Firestone as well, through their organizations. While the Association for Colored Community Work did important work in Akron’s Black communities, Firestone was one of the main parties involved in its origin.<sup>20</sup> The NAACP had also attempted to gain the financial support of Harvey Firestone, Jr., and invited him to become a member on behalf of his company.<sup>21</sup> These ties with Firestone suggest that the meeting may also have been all part of Firestone’s philanthropic plan to be on the good side of both Liberians and Akron’s prominent community organizers.

While Dennis and the others invited Black Akronites to start business ventures in Liberia, those opportunities were tangled in Liberia’s neocolonial relationship with Firestone and the US. During the same trip to the United States, Dennis was one of the signers of the charter of the

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18. “William Edward Dennis, ‘Million Dollar Secretary of the Treasury,’” *Liberia Official Gazette*, July 18, 1977, accessed October 9, 2018, Historical Preservation Society of Liberia, <https://www.facebook.com/hpsol.liberia/photos/a.192614920761696/1976096789080158>.

19. Kenneth Best, “Rubber Planters in Liberian Business,” *Liberian Observer*, January 5, 2014, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://liberianobserver.com/history-us/rubber-planters-liberian-business>; Lief, *The Firestone Story*, 325; Saha, *Culture in Liberia*, 56.

20. Akron Urban League, “A Long and Local History,” accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.akronurbanleague.org/history>.

21. Walter White to Harvey Firestone, Jr., August 3, 1931, NAACP Branch Files, Akron, Ohio, 1918-1939, Papers of the NAACP, University Publications of America, Reel 19.

International Monetary Fund, which ushered in an era of globalization and racialized capitalism that was at odds with Garveyism. It laid the groundwork to maintain European power in Africa, even after formal independence was won. This visit was thus a lost opportunity to revive a significant diasporic connection, undermine Firestone's intentions, and offer the possibility of a rekindling of the UNIA's mission which, if taken to its furthest conclusion, would expel Firestone from Liberia and allow Liberia's resources to build power for the nation rather than export and exploiting it. Instead, global racial capitalism trumped Pan-African liberation and solidarity.

### **Garveyites after Garvey**

The spirit of Garveyism and the UNIA lived on in its members even after the organization's decline, showing continuity between the active period of these divisions and the present day. While strategies, analyses, and historical contexts have changed over time, Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism have endured as political philosophies throughout the twentieth century within the African Diaspora in general and in Akron and Barberton specifically. This section demonstrates this continuity by looking primarily at individuals who outlived their divisions. As Barberton member and pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Reverend W. S. McGahee, declared, he "would always be a member of the association and help as long as he lives for the cause."<sup>22</sup> This sentiment was true for many of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites. Their dreams of freedom and solidarity with African people continued for the rest of their lives. After finding joy, strength, and power in the Garvey Movement and glimpsing the possibility of

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22. Nealie Bruce, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 19, 1928. Genealogical documents could not be located to cross-reference and verify further details about Rev. McGahee. There may be a misspelling in the original document.

a new world, these fundamental experiences were not easily forgotten. Therefore, following a few individuals beyond their formal participation in the UNIA shows a variety of ways that Garveyites continued to embrace Garveyism. Some continued their UNIA involvement in divisions in other cities or found new ways to connect with Africa. Others continued businesses, ran for political office, participated in and led other organizations that advocated for Black people, and led religious congregations. Still others told stories about the glorious years of the UNIA, ships connecting their communities to Africa, and their dreams of freedom, and raised children surrounded with these memories. The following stories of Elder Tripp, Martha and Adolphus Brooks, and Amos Black offer examples of the ways Garveyites engaged with Garveyism, both within and outside of the UNIA, after activity in the Akron and Barberton's divisions decreased.

Even though the Akron and Barberton Divisions dissolved, the UNIA persevered, providing opportunities for Garveyites in Akron and Barberton like Elder Tripp to relocate and continue formal involvement in the organization. Tripp was a longtime follower of Marcus Garvey, who served as a division leader in multiple cities and travelled to the international convention held in Kingston, Jamaica, in August of 1929.<sup>23</sup> He witnessed charismatic speakers from the Parent Body including Marcus Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, and William Sherrill among others. He experienced the global network of the UNIA firsthand and found a way to continue its work. Elder Tripp was second vice president of the Cincinnati Division in 1925, president of the Akron Division from 1930-1935, and in the late 1930s, relocated to Hamilton,

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23. "List of United States Citizens," *S. S. Am. Norma*, Sailing from Kingston, Jamaica, October 2, 1929, Arriving at Port of Philadelphia, PA, October 8, 1929, s. v. "Elder Tripp," *Ancestry.com*; "Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Passenger List Index Cards, 1883-1948," s. v. "Elder Tripp," 1929, *FamilySearch.org*.

Ohio, where he had some relatives.<sup>24</sup> While living in Hamilton, Tripp likely networked with local Garveyites, as the Hamilton Division was still active, though small, during this period.<sup>25</sup>

For many years, Sherill had served as the assistant president-general, “Leader of American Negroes,” and had travelled extensively throughout the UNIA’s network, making several visits to Akron throughout the years. He maintained support from many Midwestern divisions, including the Cincinnati Division under Tripp’s leadership, throughout the 1950s. Still, the Parent Body struggled financially during this period and was forced to temporarily stop publishing *Garvey’s Voice*, the new paper of the UNIA that began in 1950.<sup>26</sup> The instability of the Parent Body in the fifties was reflected in the local divisions. By 1953, the Hamilton Division’s activity slowed, and President-General William Sherill instructed UNIA organizer Nathaniel Patton to direct efforts towards reviving the divisions in Hamilton as well as other cities in the Midwest that had declined in the previous decades.<sup>27</sup> Tripp, now Reverend Elder R. Tripp, occasionally visited Cincinnati to participate in the Garvey Movement there. He and R. H. Bachelor, former president of the Cincinnati Division, spoke at a meeting of the Mozhiah Club at

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24. E. R. Gilkes, “Cincinnati, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 22, 1925; *Akron Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1931; *Akron Cuyahoga Falls and Barberton Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1933; *Akron Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls Official City Directory* (Akron: The Burch Directory Company), 1934-35.

25. Mary Freeman attended the Second Regional Conference of the UNIA of Canada and the United States on behalf of the Hamilton Division. She explained to the group that “her division had very few active members, but she intends to do all she can to help the progress of her division and the Parent Body.” Marcus Garvey and Ethel M. Collins, “Official Minutes of Second Regional Conference of the Universal Negro Improvement Association of Canada and United States held at Community Hall – 355 College Street, Toronto, Canada, August 24th to 31st, 1937,” Box 15, Folder 47, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

26. “UNIA Timeline,” UNIA-ACL, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.theunia-acl.com/index.php/history/unia-timeline>.

27. Correspondence from William L. Sherrill to Nathaniel Patton, 30 September 1953, Box 4, Folder 2, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

the Metropolitan Baptist Club in 1950.<sup>28</sup> A few years later, Tripp returned to Cincinnati and, in March of 1954, was elected president of the Division. The Cincinnati Division faced similar instability to that of Hamilton. Tripp explained that when he inherited the division from President W. D. Anderson, he found only a few members still active.

Despite difficulties, in the fifties the UNIA maintained its focus on both the development of local divisions and the freedom of Africa from colonialism. Tripp very quickly got to work, starting by moving into and fixing up a new Liberty Hall and making plans to expand the division. He also hosted the UNIA's Regional Conference of the Executive Council, and he led the division in organizing a fifteen-day "Salute to Africa Festival," all within the first few months of his presidency.<sup>29</sup> The zeal of Tripp and the Cincinnati Division in this period show his lasting dedication to Garveyism and to the Parent Body. Tripp described some of his organizing priorities at the President's Council Conference in Detroit in 1954:

We must give the members in the division jobs to do. I have started to form Gold Coast Clubs in different parts of the city of Cincinnati for the Gold Coast conferences. We must do all in our power to promote the welfare of the Parent Body and the organization in general. That is what I do in my division, and I find that my members are becoming more conscious of the needs of the Parent Body. They know that to help the Parent Body, they must help their own division. Strong divisions make a strong Parent Body.<sup>30</sup>

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28. "A Meeting of the Mozhiah Club," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 28, 1950.

29. Minutes from UNIA Regional Conference, August 13, 1954, Box 15, Folder 38, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University; "Africa Is Best Surety, UNIA President Avers," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 17, 1954.

30. "Minutes of the President's Conference," Detroit, June 12-13, 1954, Box 16, Folder 30, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



Tripp's outlook reveals his continued dedication to both Garveyism and the Parent Body during his involvement in the Cincinnati Division. The UNIA saw itself as a key anti-colonial force that ultimately led to African decolonization. William Sherrill attended the Ghana's independence ceremony in Accra as an official guest and met with Garveyite and new Ghanaian prime minister Kwame Nkrumah, who encouraged the UNIA to continue its work in Ghana. Sherrill returned to the United States on a speaking tour, sharing what he witnessed and celebrating the role of the Garvey Movement in Africa's independence movements.<sup>31</sup> Historian John Henrik Clarke echoed this view when he dedicated his monograph *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* to "Amy Jacques Garvey and all of the Garveyites throughout the world who held on to the dream of nationhood for African people until the dream was realized."<sup>32</sup>

Garvey therefore succeeded at his mission to strengthen diasporic bonds between Africans across the globe and Africans on the continent, paving the way for mainstream Black anti-colonial activism in the 1940s and 50s. World War II marked the weakening of unified European global dominance and ushered in a rise in anti-colonial movements in Africa. These developments led to a mainstream embrace of anti-colonialism among Black Americans who began to see their fate as tied to that of Africans on the continent. Even NAACP Executive Director Walter White began to see the struggle against Jim Crow as intricately intertwined with colonial exploitation around the world.<sup>33</sup> So when some of Akron and Barberton's former UNIA members, like Adolphus Brooks and Vonciel Autry, turned to the NAACP, their global Africa-

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31. McDuffie, "A New Day Has Dawned for the UNIA," 75.

32. Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, vii.

33. Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 3, 7.

centered mindset was welcomed. Many Garveyites from the Akron and Barberton Divisions continued to advocate for Black people outside of formal UNIA activity.

After his participation with the Akron Division, Amos Black relocated frequently and organized on behalf of Black people in each location. This demonstrates a Pan-African understanding that a victory for African people in one place is a victory for all. It reveals not only his dedication, but also the national and international systems of white supremacy and antiblackness that created similar situations of discrimination and dehumanization of Black people in every city he visited. By 1935, Black had left Akron for Los Angeles, where he worked with the Young Men's Progressive Club, and joined a boycott against Pepsi-Cola to demand that African Americans be employed at its local plant.<sup>34</sup> The boycott was successful; four African Americans were hired there, and Black became a distributor.<sup>35</sup> In 1940, he went to New Orleans to work in the local offices of the rapidly expanding Black newspapers, the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*.<sup>36</sup> While there, he organized the New Orleans Press Club, "an organization of newsmen with a long record of accomplishments in favor of race advancement and served as its first president."<sup>37</sup> Again, Black took his pursuit for justice to another arena. He registered for the draft in New Orleans, "and was inducted into the Ninety-First Engineers, trained at Alexandria, La."<sup>38</sup> He was a sergeant in the U. S. Army in World War II.<sup>39</sup> He

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34. Bob Hayes, "Here and There," *Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1935; "Hot Shots from Political Camps," *Wilmington Daily Press Journal* (Wilmington, California), August 8, 1938.

35. "Boycott Gets Job at Beverage Firm," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 31, 1937.

36. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 8.

37. "Sgt. Amos Black Now Out Of Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1944.

38. "Sgt. Amos Black Now Out Of Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1944.

39. "California, Death Index, 1940-1997," s. v. "Amos Black," 1974, *Ancestry.com*.

discussed his underlying motivations and explained that he would “pursue a program of morale uplift for Negroes in the armed forces now and after the war.”<sup>40</sup>

Others who had been involved in the UNIA in Akron when the division flourished continued to engage in Pan-Africanism by finding ways to create more ties to Africa. Martha and Adolphus Brooks, who later moved to Warren and then East Liverpool, Ohio, showed their continuing Pan-African consciousness when they hosted Zambian exchange student Moses Musonda, who went on to become a professor at the University of Zambia and an ambassador for the Zambian government.<sup>41</sup> Adolphus Brooks died in 1968 at the age of seventy.<sup>42</sup> Throughout his life he was devoted to Garveyism and the advancement of Black people, and even during his last years of life, he was dedicated to Pan-Africanism and showed it by supporting Musonda through his university career.

A few Garveyites continued their activism by running for political office. One example is Akron UNIA member Louis Suttles who moved to Gary, Indiana, with he around 1930, where his family got involved in developing youth programs like little league, scouting, and summer camps.<sup>43</sup> Then in 1952, Suttles was elected as republican committeeman for Gary’s 88th Precinct.<sup>44</sup> By the thirties, the UNIA had started a political union and had to begin to see electoral politics as one avenue that could lead to concrete changes that would impact the daily

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40. “Sgt. Amos Black Now Out Of Army,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1944.

41. “Moses Musonda,” Prabook, World Biographical Encyclopedia, Inc., accessed June 26, 2020, <https://prabook.com/web/moses.musonda/325292>; “Publications for Prof. Musonda, Moses,” Zambia Open University, accessed June 26, 2020, <http://zaou.ac.zm/index.php/publications-for-prof-musonda-moses/>.

42. “Ohio, Death Records, 1908-1932, 1938-2018,” s. v. “Adolphus Brooks,” 1968, *Ancestry.com*.

43. “Camp Life for Kids is Theme of Discussion,” *Times* (Munster, Indiana), April 27, 1939; “Suttles, Louis Earnest,” *Post-Tribune* (Gary, Indiana), June 15, 1976.

44. “Legal Notices,” *Times* (Munster, Indiana), April 17, 1952; “Lake County GOP Precinct Committeemen,” *Times* (Munster, Indiana), May 7, 1954.

lives of its members. Obtaining political positions was a supplementary strategy for obtaining Black political power. Through UNIA activity, community activism, African exchange programs, political engagement, and family networks, Garveyites continued to practice Pan-Africanism after the Akron and Barberton Divisions ceased to meet formally.

### **Their Descendants**

In 1979, James, Audrey, and Reggie Poole, Akron residents and descendants of the Garvey Movement, travelled to Kenya when James obtained a job there with the YMCA. James Poole explained in a newspaper interview that his “interest in Africa was first kindled when members of [his] family and supporters of the Marcus Garvey Universal Negro Improvement Association talked about the idea of going to Africa.”<sup>45</sup> Garveyites planted the seed for the interest and desire to go to Africa for this family, and forty years after the last known UNIA meeting in Akron, James Poole still remembered. Through stories and through actions, Akron and Barberton’s Garveyites passed on the main tenets of Garveyism to their children, many of whom responded to the call to organize and fight for Black people. Well-known Civil Rights and Black Power leaders such as Malcolm X and Rosa Parks came from Garveyite families and attributed their early political education to Garveyism. Louise Little of Grenada and Earl Little of Georgia, Malcolm X’s parents, were both active in the Garvey Movement as early as 1918, participating in the movement in Montreal, Omaha, Milwaukee, and Lansing. The Littles raised Malcolm to value self-determination and race pride and prepared him for his political development.<sup>46</sup> For Parks, it was her grandparents who introduced her to race-consciousness and

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45. “Akron Family is Packing for Five-Year East Africa Stay,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 5, 1979.

46. McDuffie, “The Diasporic Journeys of Louise Little,” 159–60; Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), 3–6.

Garveyism before she even reached ten years old. Their affinity for Garveyism grew from the increased Klan violence and the immediate need for self-defense where they lived in Tuskegee, Alabama. Parks and her grandfather used to sit outside on the porch at night with a rifle to protect the house.<sup>47</sup> These formative experiences at such a young age set her on a trajectory to struggle for Black Freedom long before she became a nationally-known hero of the Civil Rights movement. This section shows how Akron and Barberton's Garveyites, similarly, passed on their values to the next generation, some of whom found themselves as leaders on the local and even national stage.

Sprinkled through the pages of the *Negro World* are announcements of births to Garveyites parents around the globe. They were often celebrated as new Garveyites. At the time of the birth of their child, the president of the New Haven, Connecticut Division, Joseph Ward, and his wife wrote, "We only hope that baby Joseph, Jr., will grow up with that same sense of duty to his race and take his place alongside his father for the Cause of Africa."<sup>48</sup> From the day of their birth, Garveyite parents aimed in instill in their children the legacy of the Garvey Movement. They knew that that securing an ideology of self-determination, economic independence, race consciousness, and respect and admiration for Africa in their children would create opportunities for their children and support a movement whose implications were large enough to impact the whole world.

Many families bestowed the legacy of the Garvey Movement upon their children by naming them after Marcus Garvey himself. Nationwide, the name Marcus saw a spike in popularity amongst African American parents in the 1920s. There were over one thousand more

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47. Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), 2–3.

48. "Stork Visits New Haven Division," *Negro World*, February 14, 1925.

African Americans with the name Marcus listed in the 1930 census than there had been in the previous decade (see appendix I). Announced in the *Negro World*, Reverend and Mrs. S. A. Winn, of Spiro, Oklahoma, named their son Marcus Garvey Winn, and Mr. and Mrs. Marcellius Strong, of New York City, named their child Marcus Bruce Strong.<sup>49</sup> In Akron, Garveyites Pearlle B. and Moses Watts named their son, born in 1924, Marcus as well.<sup>50</sup> Giving their son such a powerful name instilled an intergenerational memory in their son, who would carry the memory of the Garvey Movement with him throughout this life. The next generation saw a resurgence in popularity of the name Marcus, demonstrating a renewed popular interest in Garvey and his politics during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras. Taking Illinois birth records as their sample, Stanley Lieberman and Kelly S. Mikelson found the name grew in popularity again, starting in the sixties and seventies, finally becoming the fifth most popular name chosen by Black parents in 1983.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to nurturing and naming, Garveyites also left to their children the enduring networks they had built over the previous decades. The UNIA in Akron and Barberton built connections and strengthened preexisting ones through their organizing and advocacy work, leaving a legacy of these networks that is seen in Akron and Barberton's communities to this day. Church communities, neighborhoods, friendships, and relationships reflect the local networks that Garveyites strengthened. Several families who organized alongside one another for the cause of African redemption married together several generations later. The Davis and Autry

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49. "Birth," *Negro World*, May 16, 1925; "Marcus Bruce Strong Here," *Negro World*, May 2, 1925.

50. 1910 United States Census, Akron, Summit County, Ohio, s. v. "Pearlle B. Watts," *Ancestry.com*.

51. Stanley Lieberman and Kelly S. Mikelson, "Distinctive African American Names: An Experimental, Historical, and Linguistic Analysis of Innovation," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 6 (1995): 940; Liseli A. Fitzpatrick, "African Names and Naming Practices: The Impact Slavery and European Domination Had on the African Psyche, Identity and Protest" (master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 2012), 65–66.

families intermarried and the Ingol and McDay families did the same, three or four generations after their ancestors joined the Garvey Movement. Because these networks were forged through racial solidarity, they supported the UNIA's descendants as they challenged white supremacy in their personal lives, businesses, and community organizing.

Descendants of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites became business owners and continued striving for Black economic independence. William Henry Massey and his son James P. Massey worked for Goodyear for more than thirty-five years each.<sup>52</sup> W. H. Massey owned his home on Newton Street, and James, after growing up in that home, converted it into Massey and Sons Auto Body Shop.<sup>53</sup> The business remains on Newton Street and in the family to this day. UNIA member Jerry Jones and his son Jerry Jones, Jr., also worked in the rubber industry. Jerry, Sr., was a janitor at Firestone for over thirty-two years.<sup>54</sup> Jerry, Jr., also worked in the rubber industry until graduating college at The University of Akron, receiving a scholarship from the Akron Community Service Center to attend the Cincinnati College of Embalming, and opening Jones Funeral Home in 1958.<sup>55</sup> Business ownership was one way that descendants of Garveyites enacted values received from their parents or other Garveyites who came before them, whether they realized it or not.

Like Rosa Parks and Malcolm X, some descendants of Garveyites in Akron and Barberton emerged as activists. Len Chandler, Jr., was raised by Len Chandler, Sr., and UNIA member Vonciel (Autry) Chandler. She introduced him to music and to Black freedom struggles.

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52. "James P. Massey," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 4, 2005; "26 Honored For Service At Goodyear," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 8, 1956.

53. "James P. Massey," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 4, 2005.

54. "Jerry Jones Sr.," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 15, 1959.

55. "Former Akron Athlete Opens Funeral Home," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 14, 1958.

When he was a nineteen-year-old student at The University of Akron, Summit Beach Park had a segregated swimming pool. At the annual Sunday school picnic where Akron's Black churches of all denominations gathered, his mother encouraged him to swim in the exclusively white pool, but he was refused entry. One of the owners told him that he had to be a member to swim, and to be a member, he needed two other members to vouch for him. He wrote a passionate letter to the *Akron Beacon Journal* about his experience, challenging the residents of Akron by asking when their city would see "liberty and justice for all."<sup>56</sup> He was contacted by the NAACP, and together they made a plan for an interracial group to strategically gain admittance to the pool. They found two white people willing to vouch for the Black applicants. They were able to enter, but the owner of Summit Beach Park commented, "Before I let you N\*\*\*\*\* swim, I'll fill this pool with cement." And he did. The pool was closed the following day.<sup>57</sup> As Chandler, Jr. wrote in his letter, although being "willing to bear the responsibilities of citizenship," he "found he was forced into the position of a second class citizen."<sup>58</sup> This experience, along with many others, helped Chandler to deeply understand the inequalities he would continue to face and to find his voice to challenge them.

Chandler went on to become a recognized folk musician and member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who backed up his music with activism everywhere he went.<sup>59</sup> He played his version of the Civil Rights anthem, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," at the

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56. Len Chandler, Jr., "Can This Be Liberty and Justice for All Americans?," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 15, 1954.

57. Len Chandler, Jr., interview by author, April 27, 2018.

58. Len Chandler, Jr., "Can This Be Liberty and Justice for All Americans?," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 15, 1954.

59. Denise Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing: Black Power Music from Blues to Hip-Hop* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011), 52; in contrast to other folk musicians, like Bob Dylan who only sang a few rallies in the South and did not stay long, Chandler organized in this region for many months and spent time in numerous southern jails,



1964 March on Washington with Bob Dylan and Joan Baez.<sup>60</sup> He participated in the fifty-four-mile march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and spent months in Alabama organizing with SNCC and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) for Black political power. LCFO was an independent Black political party that mobilized enough Black voters to elect candidates to the positions of sheriff, county commissioner, and mayor of one of Lowndes County's towns, with the intention of using their newly found political power to make concrete changes that impacted the daily lives of Black people. Chandler wrote a song about the LCFO's mascot, the black panther, from which the Black Panther Party also drew its inspiration. In it, Chandler sang: "Black sheep in the country, black sheep in the town/ Black sheep doesn't have half a chance/ With so many wolves around/ You got to walk with the black panther/ That's all you gotta do/ Cause when you're walking with a big cat/ No wolves are gonna bother you."<sup>61</sup> These lyrics reflected the racial solidarity and self-determination that grounded Chandler and the LCFO's organizing.

His music inspired the movement, and he was in turn inspired by it. His song "Time of the Tiger" may reflect an evolution in Chandler's thinking or foreshadow the growing militancy of Black freedom struggles.<sup>62</sup> The lyrics of this energetic song proclaim: "The tiger is stalking his keeper! The tiger is eager and young! The tiger is too young to fear the hoop, or the whip, or

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see Dick Weissman, *Which Side Are You On?: An Inside History of the Folk Music Revival in America* (London: Continuum, 2006), 140.

60. Sullivan, *Keep on Pushing*, 23.

61. Sullivan, 55.

62. Tammy L. Kernodle, "'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free': Nina Simone and the Redefining of the Freedom Song of the 1960s," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 3 (August 2008): 298.

the gun!” Like his mother and his grandparents, Len Chandler, Jr., continued his advocacy for Black freedom through music and organizing throughout his life.

Gerald Vinson, another descendant of the Akron Division, also evidences the enduring influence of Garveyism in Akron and the generational transmission of these ideas. He was the grandson of Akron Division’s Agnes and Matthew McDay and son of Gladys Vinson, activist in her own right and surely a large influence for her son. Gladys Vinson, born in 1920, embraced Garveyism’s economic independence and was “always enterprising.”<sup>63</sup> She was a businesswoman, cook, and franchise owner who directed her business efforts towards community service. She was involved in the NAACP, the Civil Rights movement, and other political ventures. She also travelled extensively, including to Africa. Her combination of economic, political, diasporic, and service-oriented goals show an embrace of Garveyism’s core principles that her parents embraced during her childhood and that she shared with her son. Gerald Vinson, like Malcolm X, gravitated to the Nation of Islam (NOI), a direct outgrowth of the UNIA. With great respect for Garvey, the founders of the NOI combined the UNIA’s nationalist and internationalist race-first platform with religious nationalism to build their organization, even looking to Garveyites as potential recruits. Elijah Muhammad, leader of the organization from the 1930s to the 70s, explained, “The followers of...Marcus Garvey should now follow me and co-operate with us in our work because we are only trying to finish up what those before us started.”<sup>64</sup> Vinson remained a member of the American Muslim Mission, the NOI’s successor, into the eighties, but his advocacy for Black self-determination extended far

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63. “Gladys E. Vinson,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 13, 2000.

64. Essien U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: The Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 63.

beyond one organization.<sup>65</sup> Vinson participated in Kwanza celebrations and gave presentations on Black history with an emphasis on both ancient and modern periods, just like the UNIA leaders who had visited Akron in the twenties and thirties.<sup>66</sup> In the eighties, he was vice president of the Akron Black Action Committee, one of the sponsors of the African American Liberation Academy. The Liberation Academy bore resemblance of the educational programs organized by the UNIA's juvenile divisions. It taught African and African American history, math, science, communication skills, self-defense, physical development, and Kiswahili to youth between the ages of four and fourteen, making sure "to teach all the subjects from a black perspective."<sup>67</sup> A graduate of Case Western Reserve University, Vinson was a social worker who specialized in culture-specific counseling and alcohol rehabilitation for Akron's Black residents. Through his many initiatives, he maintained a race-first focus that harkens back to the ideals of the Garvey Movement that appealed to his grandparents and Akron and Barberton's Garveyites fifty years earlier.

## **Conclusion**

Black residents of Akron and Barberton, despite their distance from Harlem or Liberia, established UNIA divisions and were inspired by the global Garvey Movement. This history places these Midwestern cities into the Pan-African world of the Garvey Movement, and it recognizes the importance of Black (inter)nationalism and Pan-Africanism in their local histories, offering important implications for the significance of these ideas in other locales

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65. "Akron priorities called distorted," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 6, 1981.

66. "Kwanza Celebration Ends," *The Reporter*, January 10, 1987, [ohiomemory.org](http://ohiomemory.org).

67. "Liberation Academy Opens," *The Reporter*, January 24, 1981, [ohiomemory.org](http://ohiomemory.org).

across the Midwest and around the globe. Future micro studies, even in cities where few organizational records are available, have the potential to unearth genealogies of the Garvey Movement in countless cities and rural areas or to uncover entire state and regional networks of the UNIA. These histories make valuable, concrete links between those fighting for Black freedom today and those who came before us.

It is my hope that this study can provide a usable past to those who continue to use Black (inter)nationalism and Pan-Africanism as frameworks to dismantle systemic antiblackness today. While not all the details of the Akron and Barberton Divisions' innerworkings are available and we may not be able to draw specific strategies from this example, this history is nevertheless a reminder of the lasting impact of local Garveyism. This study attests to the tradition of organizing and devotion to Black liberation that has long existed in Akron, Barberton, and in many Black communities around the world.

The Garvey Movement caught the imaginations of millions because it offered a radically different world in both the future and the present. It had significantly higher aspirations than other movements, and its well-organized and multi-dimensional framework lent itself to the movement's expansion across the state of Ohio, the Midwest, and the globe. Garveyites in Akron and Barberton mobilized en masse because, through the UNIA's program, they saw the potential for a new world—for Black liberation. Through institution building, economic empowerment, education in Black history, and Black unity, Garveyism transformed Black people's perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

Garveyites in Akron and Barberton raised their families, worshipped, started businesses, and took care of one another in ways that affirmed their aspirations for Black liberation. They established Liberty Halls, claiming spaces in their cities and transforming them into places to

practice nationhood. They extended these claims through parades, and they hosted Marcus Garvey, William Sherill, Henrietta Vinton Davis, Amy Jacques Garvey, and other Parent Body representatives to maintain a close connection to the UNIA's Pan-African network. They organized regionally with divisions across the Midwest, and they used the strength of their organizing to challenge the Klan and police departments in their own cities. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites connected their local and regional struggles with the UNIA's global aspirations to subvert white supremacy and colonialism in Africa. They were devoted to these causes and continued to wage their own struggles against antiblackness throughout their lives.

While the Civil Rights movement often takes center stage in popular narratives of Black history, the Garvey Movement was much larger in numbers and geographic reach. As this study confirms, it was foundational to all Black freedom struggles that came after it. This study pushes advocates of the "long movement" approach to look back even further for the antecedents of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites did not stop their community organizing when the UNIA became less active. Through continued involvement with the UNIA, connections to Africa, and by way of local social, political, and economic ventures, they utilized the core values of the Garvey Movement to continue their struggles for Black freedom. Many members continued to live the values of Garveyism for their whole lives and then passed its principles on to their children. Their genealogies are living testaments of the Black Radical Tradition and reveal the continuity of Black Nationalist and Pan-Africanist organizing between the Garvey Movement and into the 1960s. Akron and Barberton's Garveyites and their descendants have carried the legacy of the Garvey Movement in these cities from their last formal meetings to the present day. Almost 100 years after Akron and Barberton's divisions were formed, the influence of Garveyism is still evident in these communities.

## APPENDIX A

### TIMELINE OF THE AKRON AND BARBERTON UNIA DIVISIONS

This timeline seeks to create a comprehensive list of the happenings of the Akron and Barberton Divisions of the UNIA. It includes events that took place in Akron and Barberton and in other locations to reflect their regional and international networks. It is compiled from primary and secondary sources including the *Negro World*, *Akron Beacon Journal*, *Ohio State Monitor*, Shirla McClain's *The Contributions of Blacks in Akron*, Robert Hill's *Marcus Garvey Papers*, and Leon Gordie's *Negro Yearbook*.

#### Notes on style

1. Quoted texts are transcribed as they were written including capitalization, punctuation, and misspellings.
2. If corrections are necessary for clarity, they are made in square brackets after the word in question.
3. The timeline is primarily organized by the date an event occurred. If no date is available, the entry is listed on the date that it was published. This is indicated with words "Published that" at the introduction of the entry.
4. Each entry starts with a place name in square brackets that indicates where the event took place. If the location where the event took place is unknown or has secondary importance, the bracketed place name describes which division the entry relates to.
5. To preserve the voices of Akron and Barberton's Garveyites, the full text of sources they wrote have been included as often as possible. When a source written by Akron or Barberton's Garveyites contained more than one paragraph, the full text of the source has been included as a block quote. When the entry was composed of only one paragraph, it appears in quotes and aligned with the rest of the text.

#### 1921

January 31: [Akron] The Akron Division of the UNIA was "organized in the basement of a home on Newton st." It started with seven members. Eliza Porch was one of the charter members ("Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925; "The Grand Old Woman of Akron Division, U.N.I.A.," *Negro World*, April 11, 1925).

February 4: [Cincinnati] Marcus Garvey spoke in Cincinnati. Elder Tripp, future-president of the Akron Division, was in attendance. (Elder Tripp, "Akron Says, 'Africa Must Be Redeemed,'" *Negro World*, July 26, 1930; for excerpts from his speech, see Hill, *Marcus*

*Garvey Papers*, vol. III:161; “Provisional President of Africa Moves City of Cincinnati With His Great Eloquence,” *Negro World*, February 26, 1921).

February 19: [Medina] Published that the Medina Division raised the \$25 to purchase a charter. Rev. James H. Smiley of Akron was on the stage at the event (“U. N. I. A. in Medina, Ohio,” *Negro World*, February 19, 1921).

March 7: [Akron] Dr. George B. Riley, a representative of the Parent Body, and some officers of the Cleveland Division came to Akron. “They found a large crowd assembled at the church full of enthusiasm and eager to greet them. Here a division of 130 members was set up under the efficient leadership of Rev. J. T. Tucker” (Lavinia S. Smith, “U. N. I. A. News of Cleveland, Ohio: Dr. Riley’s Successful Tour of Ohio,” *Negro World*, April 2, 1921). Riley’s visit included a series of well-attended meetings at the Second Baptist Church:

The Akron Branch of the U. N. I. A. and A. C. L. completed a wonderful drive under the supervision of President George B. Riley. Meetings were held at Second Baptist Church. All meetings were well attended. A motion picture display of the Garvey Movement drew great crowds for three nights. Enthusiasm ran high when the Black Cross parade was exhibited. President Riley was successful in setting the Legion, children’s band and Black Cross. The Garvey movement is rapidly spreading in this section. Mr. Riley delivered a wonderful address on April 3. He was interrupted by great applause as he gave a glowing tribute to the United States flag, which brought his audience to tears. When he mentioned the Red, Black, and Green flag there went up a thundering roar of applause.

The officers of the Akron Branch earnestly co-operated with President Riley in putting over the drive. Akron is active in the work. (“U. N. I. A. of Akron, O.,” *Negro World*, April 16, 1921;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCrIswxQWqM>)

April 3: [Akron] George B. Riley spoke in Akron again (“U. N. I. A. of Akron, O.,” *Negro World*, April 16, 1921).

June 19: [Akron] Mr. Harry Archer, executive secretary of the Cleveland branch, “delivered a brilliant address, and gave us an abundance of facts concerning the U. N. I. A movement” (L. L. Toney, “Akron O., Branch of the U. N. I. A.,” *Negro World*, July 9, 1921).

July 3: [Akron] Rev. Jones, representing 500 people at a mass meeting in Akron, sent a telegram to W. H. Ferris, editor of the *Negro World*, asking Secretary-General Hon. J. D. Brooks to return to Akron and speak for Emancipation Day:

The following telegram was received by W. H. Ferris, editor of The Negro World, regarding the Hon. J. D. Brooks, secretary general of the U. N. I. A.:

Western Union Telegram.

Akron, Ohio, July 3, 10.24 p. m.

W. H. Ferris, 56 West 135<sup>th</sup> street, New York, N. Y.:

Five hundred persons in mass meeting ask Dr. Brooks to return and speak Emancipation day. Great enthusiasm. REV. JONES. (Rev. Jones, "500 Persons in Akron, O., Telegraph for Dr. Brooks to Deliver Emancipation Address," *Negro World*, July 16, 1921)

July 9: [Akron] Published about the growth of the division, plans to send a delegate to the Second International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, and support for the Black Star Line: "The Akron branch of the U. N. I. A. is still showing life and growth. Activity has developed, looking forward to the great convention which is to be held in New York in the near future. The officers of this local division have divided the membership into ten groups and each group is lead by a captain. The purpose of these groups is to increase the membership and to raise expense money for the delegate to the general convention. We are blessed with the spirit of go, ahead, and each member is ready to say yes to any forward move. Some industrial plans are being formulated among them being the installing of a piano for the choir. Mr. Harry Archer, executive secretary of the Cleveland branch, met the Akron Division Jun 19. He delivered a brilliant address, and gave us an abundance of facts concerning the U. N. I. A. movement. Amidst the great industrial depression the Akron division is still actively working. Any mentioning of the Black Star Line fires the emotions of the audience and brings roaring applause. L. L. TONEY. 295 Hickory street" (L. L. Toney, "Akron O., Branch of the U. N. I. A.," *Negro World*, July 9, 1921).

October 31: [Akron] The Akron Division held its largest meeting since its inception at Second Baptist Church, with about one thousand people in attendance:

On Monday night Oct. 31, the local division held the greatest meeting, since its organization. Dr. J. H. Eason, the American leader scheduled to speak but unfortunately had to cancel his engagement and rush to Chicago. His assistant, Dr. Walker, took his place on the program. The meeting was held at the Second Baptist Church, whose pastor, Dr. R. A. Jones, is one of the loyal members of the division. This is the largest Negro church in Akron and on the night of the meeting the auditorium was filled to its capacity. About 1,000 people were present.

Song—From Greenland's Icy Mountains.

Prayer—Rev. Stanley.

Song—My Faith Looks Up To Thee

Reading of preamble—Rev. Walter J. Tucker, president

The president, Rev. Tucker, made a short address relative to the redemption of Africa and introduced Rev. Harper of Youngstown, who is supreme commissioner of Ohio. He spoke at length concerning the accomplishments of the U. N. I. A. Also its attitude toward this and other countries. Advised Negroes of America and the world to heed President Harding's advice to stop trying to become best possible imitation of a white man and become best possible Negro.

Song—We've Fought Every Body's Battles But Our Own—Sung by Mrs. Ethel Preston.



Rev. Harper then presented Dr. Walker. He told of the struggles Marcus Garvey had in organizing the U. N. I. A. The opposition of the Negroes of New York and Garvey's final triumph. That the U. N. I. A. will deliver unborn generations of Negroes from economic slavery. Made an appeal to the Negroes of Akron to support the Black Cross Nurses. Spoke of the former greatness of the Negro race and the fertility and riches of Africa. Made an eloquent appeal to the intelligent and intellectual Negro asking them to support the U. N. I. A. Closed by making an appeal for members. Fourteen came forward and joined.

Collection \$[39?]

CARY COOK, Reporter.

The following is a part of the speech by Dr. W. O. Harper, in Akron, Ohio....  
(Cary Cook, "Akron, Ohio Division Holds Great Meeting," *Negro World*, November 19, 1921)

November 4 (Friday): [Akron] UNIA held a mass meeting at 8 in the evening at 59 E. Exchange St. Carey Cook was a speaker, and W. J. Tucker was president of the division (W. J. Tucker, "Plan Mass Meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 3, 1921).

December 4: [Akron] "The U. N. I. A. and A. C. L." held a public meeting at 59 E. Exchange St. to install new officers ("The U. N. I. A. and A. C. L.," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 3, 1921).

## 1922

February 3-4: [Barberton] William L. Sherrill, High Commissioner of Ohio, spoke in Barberton:

Barberton, Ohio. Feb. 6, 1922.

The Negro World, New York:—

High Commissioner for Ohio, the Hon. William L. Sherrill spoke here on Friday and Saturday nights, Feb. 3 and 4, to a large and enthusiastic audience at Friendship Baptist church, Cornell St. He is the greatest speaker the city has ever had. He held his audience spellbound with his eloquence. He turned the light on so all could see and left the outsider without an excuse for not joining the association. He is a great asset to the association and will be the means of a considerable growth to this division.

Hoping that success may crown the work of the Hon. William L. Sherrill and all other workers and co-workers of the U. N. I. A., I am your servant, WILLIAM H. BOWLING, [327/127] Moore Ave., Barberton, Ohio. ("Barberton, Ohio, News," *Negro World*, March 4, 1922)

February 17: [Akron] A UNIA leader spoke at Centenary M. E. Church on Hill and James Streets ("Leader Will Talk," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 16, 1922).

February 25: [Akron] Published that William L. Sherrill, Commissioner of Ohio, discussed the "New Negro" and possibilities for the UNIA. He was a forceful orator and was interrupted by applause repeatedly:

W. L. Sherrill, Commissioner of Ohio, brought a stirring message. He discussed the “New Negro” and the objects of the U. N. I. A. He gave a brilliant talk, full of spicy thoughts. He talked to a crowded house, and the audience was captivated by powerful discourse. He showed himself to be a forceful orator. There were visitors from Cleveland, Ohio, notably Mr. Harry Archer.

The speaker discussed the future possibilities of the Negro in the U. N. I. A. He presented the objects and aims of Garveyism in an interesting manner.

The speaker was repeatedly interrupted by applause. We are certain the division is greatly benefited by the visit of the High Commissioner. We are anxiously looking forward to his next visit. Our president arranged for this great occasion, and with the aid of his staff everything was in complete order. L. N. TONEY, Reporter. (L. N. Toney, “The U. N. I. A. in Akron, Ohio Division 215,” *Negro World*, February 25, 1922)

February 26: [Akron] M. T. Wimbish, president of the Akron Division 215, wrote to the editor of the *Negro World* on behalf of the officers and members of the division:

Editor The Negro World,  
56 West 135<sup>th</sup> street,  
New York City

Mr. Editor: The officers and members of Akron Division No. 215 hereby request that you publish the following:

Whereas, Through the columns of the New York World dated February 17 the following was published, “Federal Indictment Charges Garvey and Three Others Duped Investors in the Black Star Line.” We, the officers and members of the Akron Division, do hereby request that it be made-known to all loyal members of the U. N. I. A. that we pledge our unflinching support to our President-General and all the members of his Cabinet. We, the Negro men who bought shares in the Black Star Line, are satisfied with the outcome in the matter of the Black Star Line Corporation. If Ireland can be for the Irish, India for the Indians and Egypt for the Egyptians, then let it be known that Africa is for the Africans at home and abroad. Long live Marcus Garvey. If he dies the cause shall live, and we of the Akron Division No. 215 do hereby call on all our loyal sons of Ethiopia to let us stretch our hands to God, seeking His Divine guidance.

In the midst of our trials let our motto be in deeds, one God, one aim, one destiny.

A new song in honor of Hon. Marcus Garvey, the title of which is, “I Am Climbing Garvey’s Ladder.” We hope someday to have this song sung the world over. Rev. Dr. Mayfield, one of Akron’s greatest speakers, will speak for us Sunday, March 5. We shall never be content until the Red, the Black, and the Green have been planted on the hilltops of Africa and hear the voice of Marcus Garvey, ‘Africa has been redeemed.’

Yours for the cause,

M. T. WIMBISH,

President

February 26, 1922. ("The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922)

March 5: [Akron] Rev. Dr. Mayfield, "one of the best speakers in Akron" according to Akron President M. T. Wimbish, spoke to the division ("The Akron U. N. I. A. Believes in Sincerity of Rt. Hon. Marcus Garvey," *Negro World*, March 11, 1922).

May 11: [Akron] Marcus Garvey spoke at Perkins Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. ("Organizer Speaks Here," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 11, 1922).

May 24: [Akron] Leon Gordie, Geo. W. Thompson, and Charles R. Lewis, with the help of attorneys Samuel T. Kelley and Artee Fleming, filed a petition in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas (Case No. 41857) against the "Ku Klux Klan Organization." The petition read: "Your petitioners here present that there is about to be held in Summit County Ohio, on or about May 25<sup>th</sup> 1922 a meeting of and by an organization known as the Ku Klux Klan who are the Defendants in the above action. Your petitioners further present that said meeting and said organization are calculated to do irreputable harm and danger to the people and community and county and the Plaintiffs herein, by creating race hatred, religious intolerance and by creating general disturbance among the people in the community by arraying the races against each other and nationalities against each other and by fomenting religious hatred and intolerance." They proceeded to ask for a restraining order against this organization and any of its members so that they could not meet in Summit County (Petition in the Summit County Court of Common Pleas against the Ku Klux Klan Organization, Case No. 41857, Dr. Shirla R. McClain Collection, 1940s-1990s, Box 1, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron). This petition and the city council meeting where it was addressed was covered in the *Akron Beacon Journal*: "Young Men's Progressive Club, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association declared that the Klan was undesirable and had no place in modern civilization." Additionally, "they condemned the action of Captain Walter Price, custodian, in renting the armory. Immediately Mayor Rybolt referred the protest to the social service committee, and there it seemed about to be buried as council moved onto other business. Councilman Kinnan by motion floor, saying that here was a question that had to be settled at once, as the meeting was to be held Wednesday night. He asked for a committee report." Council made statements of ignorance and support for the Klan, but it was eventually concluded that the Klan would not be able to meet at the armory in Akron. The decision to ban the Klan from meeting was a direct result of the petition to city council ("To Hold Meeting is Word of Klan," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922; "More About Meeting of Ku Klux Klan," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922). Dr. C. L. Harrod, Klan leader in Columbus published on this same page of the *Akron Beacon Journal* that despite being banned from public buildings, it will hold its meetings in open air" (Frank H. Ward, "Will Hold Open Air Meeting in Akron, Asserts Dr. Harrod," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 24, 1922).

June 3: [Akron] Published a letter and donation made by Akron member Peter McWain to the African Redemption Fund. "Akron, Ohio, May 10, 1922. Dear Sirs:--Please accept this

small amount of \$5.00 as my contribution to the African Redemption Fund. I trust that each and every Negro will do his and her part for the cause of Africa. Fraternally yours, P. McW.” (“African Redemption Fund,” *Negro World*, June 3, 1922).

June 24: [Barberton] Published that J. W. McFadden and W. H. Bowling donated to the 1922 Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, June 24, 1922).

July 1: [Akron/Barberton] Published that Akron member W. M. Powell and Barberton members Murry Ellis and W. H. Bowling donated to the African Redemption Fund (“African Redemption Fund,” *Negro World*, July 1, 1922).

July 6 (Thursday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill spoke at Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church as part of a series of meetings in Akron. Some of his speech was published in the *Akron Beacon Journal*:

W. L. Sherrill, high commissioner of the Universal Negro Improvement association of Ohio, Thursday night at Mt. Zion Pilgrim Baptist church, told members of his race that the association at present does not stand for “back to Africa” so much as it does “the redemption of Africa for negroes.”

After pointing out how Japan had saved itself from the domination of the white race by sending its young men to universities throughout the world to learn the white man’s system, he said:

“The U. N. I. A. is only the embodiment of the spirit of the age.

“We are not organizing to take any land belonging to the white man. We want Africa in order that millions of negroes of the world may have backing from a powerful government.

“It may take 50 years to get Africa, it may take 150, it may take 300. But it won’t come sooner by putting off the beginning. We are going to start now.

“You have had a wonderful chance to do what the [Japanese] did, get a schooling in the ways of the white man.

“We can’t redeem Africa until we have redeemed the negro here. You will need money, intellects, and blood most of you only have blood now.” (“Want Africa for Negroes of World, *Akron Beacon Journal*, 7 July 1922; McClain, *The Contributions of Blacks in Akron*, 198-9)

July 7: [Akron] William L. Sherrill spoke “for the third and last time of the series Friday night at Centenary M. E. church, corner Hill and James sts” (“Want Africa for Negroes of World,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 7, 1922).

July 8: [Cincinnati] Published that Mrs. and Mr. Elder Tripp as well as Sarah Tripp donated to the Convention Fund in 1922. They were residents of Cincinnati at this time. William Davis, listed as the third vice president of the Cincinnati Division, also donated on this day. It has not yet been confirmed if this is the same William Davis that became president of the Barberton Division (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, July 8, 1922).

- July 15: [Akron/Barberton] Published that Barberton member M. Recht and Akron members (Moses T. Wimbush, Harry Archer, Ocle Gilmore, Rosia McElwain, Elijah A. Crawley, Thomas Young, John Daniel, John McElwain, Philmore Carroll, James McWain, William Crawford, William Wade, John Aubrey, William Powell, I. F. Autrey, Henry Graham, Robert Burton, Israel Hale, Lydia E. Neeley, Ida Hill, James Taylor, George Hicks, Annie Simms, J. L. Phagon, Mariah Roberson, Simpson McIlwaine, Alfred Woods, Mary Woods, Mollie Latimore, O. L. McDonald, James S. Douglas, Lilli Taylor, Ella Douglas, Walter Hale, Samuel Brown, Adolphus Brooks, Lillie McWain, Phebia Young, Amanda Bibbins, and T. W. Chryer) donated to the Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, July 15, 1922).
- July 29: [Akron/Barberton] Published that Akron members (Matthew McDay, Guy McVay, James McWain, Alfred Woods, M. L. Wimbush, William Jenkins, Eva Fowler, Charles Grundy, James Welcher, Rinen E. James, Henry Graham, Alex Daves, James Taylor, Rosia Gilmore, F. M. Daniels, and Pearl Young) and Barberton members (John Franks and M. Levin) donated to the Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, July 29, 1922).
- August 5: [Barberton] Published that Barberton members J. W. Simms, W. H. Bowling, and Jessie Scott donated to the 1922 Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, August 5, 1922).
- August 19: [Akron] Published that W. M. Ford of Akron donated to the 1922 Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, August 19, 1922).
- September 16: [Akron] Published that A. J. Lindsay, Hasley Lee, James McWain, Jack Weatherall, John Campbell, Arthur Henderson, T. H. Austin, Jerry Jones, Viola Hendley, Effie Wade, Fred Broom, J. Gladman, Lovell Hendricks, William Wade, and Amos Black each gave 50 cents or a dollar to the 1922 Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, September 16, 1922).
- September 23: [Barberton] Published that “Four red, yellow, white, and pink carnations” were donated by C. Moore from Barberton, Ohio, to the Women’s Industrial Exhibit at the Third International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World (“The Women’s Industrial Exhibit,” *Negro World*, September 23, 1922).
- September 23: [Akron] Published that Louis Johnson, Lizzie Johnson, and Mollie Lattimore of Akron donated to the 1922 Convention Fund (“Convention Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1922,” *Negro World*, September 23, 1922).
- October 11: [Akron] Published that the UNIA was going to march in the city’s Homecoming Day Parade, celebrating the opening of the North Hill Viaduct. The parade was divided into nine divisions. The UNIA was in the fifth division which formed “on E. York st., between Howard and Schiller av.” and included “Division Marshall Leon Gordie and staff, Colored band, the Young Men’s Progressive club, I. B. P. O. Elks of the World,” Colored Knights of Pythias, American Woodmen, Ladies’ band, and Busy Boy’s Radio club of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church (“City Ready for Viaduct Homecoming Day,”

*Akron Beacon Journal*, October 11, 1922). A journalist from the *Akron Beacon Journal* described some of the floats from this division. Their comments reflect the perspective of some white bystanders: "The representation of the Akron colored was perhaps the most impressive. 'We Had 244 Years of This,' read a sign over a gigantic float one half of which showed a group of colored men and women picking cotton in a southern plantation, and the other half a group of drivers administering punishment to a slave. The latter scene might have been taken from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' These scenes of the harsh past were followed by a float representing the brighter future. A gigantic black ship symbolized the negro ship of progress" ("Foreign Groups Add Touch of Color To Long Line of Marchers and Floats," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 13, 1922). This black ship was the UNIA's float that represented the Black Star Line.

October 14: [New York City] Published in a column titled, "Interesting Visitors in Harlem," Rev. Royal Allen Jones visited the Parent Body office in New York:

Rev. R. A. Jones, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Akron, Ohio, and wife, visiting in New York, dropped in at the office of the parent body to become more intimately acquainted with the working of the association, which Rev. Jones said is doing great work in the State of Ohio.

Rev. Jones is Moderator of the Northern History of Ohio, and comes in contact quite often with the representatives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the field, and is himself an ardent worker of the association. ("Interesting Visitors in Harlem," *Negro World*, October 14, 1922)

October 17: [Akron] A great concert was held by the Akron Division featuring the Mingo band of Charleston, South Carolina:

On October 17 a great concert was held by Akron Division No. 215. The meeting was called to order at 8 p. m. by Rev. Walker of South Carolina, who offered thanks to God.

Master Bum, the captain of the Mingo band, saluted the audience, which numbered over 200.

After this a grand program was rendered, which was as follows:

1. A chorus, accompanied by the Mingo band.
2. Band march.
3. A jubilee song, "Little David, Play on Your Harp."
4. Cornet duet by Messrs. Smith and Murffer.
5. Recitation, "I'm the Captain," by Captain Bum.
6. Vocal duet.
7. Band selection.
8. Jubilee song, "What Kind of Shoes Are You Going to Wear?" by the company.
9. Selection by band.
10. Duet by Messrs. Calvery and Smith.
11. Vocal quartet, "Limin' Beans."
12. Poem, "Saving a Poor Girl," Mr. Calvery.
13. Mr. Bum's favorite song.

14. Jubilee by the company.
15. Quartet, led by Messrs. Smith and Siment.
16. A compelling drill by the company. Also a contesting drill, which was interesting. Mr. Murfey won the prize.
17. Some remarks were made by the Rev. Walker, the leader of the great Mingo band of Charleston, S. C. They were highly enjoyed by the audience.
18. Mr. I. F. Altry [Auntry], the First Vice President of the U. N. I. A., delivered a wonderful address, which was very uplifting to the people.
19. Rev. R. A. Jones was present and made a wonderful speech, which was very inspiring.
20. A contest between little Master Bum and Master Samuel Washington, of Charleston, S. C.
21. Rev. Walker made some remarks which were very interesting.
22. Closing selection, led by the band

This was one of the greatest concerts that have ever been held in the city of Akron, Ohio.

Yours, Respectfully.

SECRETARY NOVELLA McDONALD. (Novella McDonald, "Akron, Ohio, U. N. I. A. News," *Negro World*, November 4, 1922)

## 1923

February 23: [Akron] Published an update from Akron about purchasing a lot for Liberty Hall and the future plans for the division:

I desire to comment on the most excellent work now being done by the Akron division of the U. N. I. A. The work of the division has not been given the publicity it should have received. Therefore I take this opportunity to make known what the division has done and what it expects to do. The division is small, but we are proud of the work it has already accomplished in the face of many obstacles. We are all 100 percent U. N. I. A. and have no cowards among us. Every member stands in battle array for the things for which our great leader, Marcus Garvey, contends. We have begun to make the people of the great Rubber City sit up and take notice of the fact that we are here and here to stay.

We are glad to say that we have purchased one of the best-situated lots in the city of Akron, costing \$12,500. It is located on the corner of Hill and Center streets only two minutes' walk from the court house, in the heart of the city. It is wonderful to record that each member gave from \$10 to \$20 to aid the purchase price. We are glad to say that the U. N. I. A. is the only colored organization in the city that meets in its own hall. Under the leadership of such men as the Hon. Marcus Garvey, R. L. Poston and others of the parent body we feel that we can do anything that men of any other race have done.

In the near future we hope to be able to erect a five-story brick building for the Negroes of Akron. All we want our leader to say is we can do it, and if he says we

can do it we say we must do it because Mr. Garvey says we can do it. The deal was made by Thomas E. Greene, the best colored lawyer in the city. We desire to thank Mr. Greene through the columns of the greatest paper the world has ever known for his donation of \$10 to the U. N. I. A. We are hoping to do a great work in 1923. We are going to show our great leader what we can do since he has given us an objective. Mr. Garvey has done more for the Negroes of the world in four and a half years than all of the alleged leaders have done in fifty-eight years. We are thankful to the Almighty for a man like Mr. Garvey, and pray that he may live long and do much in uniting the Negroes of the world and that he will not be called from his labor to his reward until he shall have seen the fruits of his labor, namely, 400,000,000 Negroes of the world standing upon our motherhood under the Red, the Black, and the Green, when he can truly say I have fought a good fight.

With very best wishes, we are yours for the cause of liberty.

MOSES T. WIMBISH, President;

I. F. APTRIE, Vice-President;

I. TAYLOR, Treasurer,

Akron Division No. 315 [215]. (Moses T. Wimbish, I. F. Aptrie [Autry], and I. Taylor, "Echoes from Akron, Ohio, Division 215," *Negro World*, February 17, 1923)

- April 26: [Akron] Announcement published in the *Akron Beacon Journal* that William L. Sherrill just returned from the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, and was going to give three talks in Akron ("Will Speak on Work of Nations' League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923).
- April 28 (Saturday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill spoke at Second Baptist Church at 8 p.m. ("Will Speak on Work of Nations' League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923).
- April 29 (Sunday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill spoke at "Liberty Hall" at 3 p.m. ("Will Speak on Work of Nations' League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923).
- April 30 (Monday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill spoke at Second Baptist Church at 8 p.m. ("Will Speak on Work of Nations' League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 26, 1923).
- September 8: [Akron] Published that Akron Division donated \$20 to the Garvey Defense Fund ("Defense Fund Subscribers Whose Liberality We Greatly Acknowledge," *Negro World*, September 8, 1923).
- September 8: [Akron] Published that meetings were well attended: "Please allow me space in your paper to tell what we of Akron are doing as far as the U. N. I. A. is concerned. It is the best movement ever started for the benefit of the Negro Race. We have a rough and rocky road to travel in this country, but we are determined to hold up our banner, the Red, Black, and Green. Our meetings are well attended. MRS. MARY COOK" (Mrs. Mary Cooke, "Akron, O., Division, 215," *Negro World*, September 8, 1923).



## 1924

February 14 (Thursday): [Akron] Marcus Garvey spoke at Second Baptist Church on “The Establishing of an Empire in Africa for Negroes” (“Places Where Marcus Garvey Will Speak for the Month of February,” *Negro World*, Feb 9, 1924; “Well Known Colored Orators Will Speak,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 14, 1924).

March 24: [Akron] Published that Akron members (Ae Carr, Mrs. L. M. Williams, Mr. Harris, Willie Jenkins, Joe McGall, John Major, Will Jeffles, W. M. Walker, E. M. Walker, J. W. Young, N. Young, H. Smith, H. Hamilton, C. R. Hamilton, G. Reese, J. Moise, E. Wakley, B. K. Tate, Mrs. Withers, Mr. Duncan, and Z. Hulton) donated to the delegation fund (“Subscribers to Delegation Fund,” *Negro World*, March 29, 1924).

April 5: [Akron/Barberton] Published that Akron members (H. McWain, W. J. Tucker, “A friend,” H. Moon, W. H. Massey (A. Casey), A. James, F. Hill, “A friend,” and T. Bicks) and Barberton members (“A friend” and G. Taylor) donated to the delegation fund (“Subscribers to Delegation Fund,” *Negro World*, April 5, 1924).

May 30 (Friday): [Akron] Akron Division, with help of the legions and band from Alliance and Cleveland, participated in the Memorial Day parade, and the division started its drive to raise money for a new building:

Just a few words to let you know that the Akron Division is making rapid progress. On Friday, May 20, we were the only Negro organization to take part in the Memorial Day parade.

The Universal African Legions band and legions, Black Cross Nurses, and Motor Corps from Cleveland and Alliance helped to make this parade a great success. We had a great Medical Corps with an invalid car, under the direction of Major McDonald. After the parade, several joined the legions.

We had a big time all day, and in the afternoon and evening a barbecue and dance was given. We have started our drive for \$30,000 to erect a new hall. Alex Davis is chairman of the drive and Mr. M. T. Wimbush, president (“Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, June 14, 1924).

June 25: [Akron] Published that the Akron Division donated to the “Fund to Send Experts to Africa” (“Fund to Send Experts to Africa,” *Negro World*, April 5, 1924).

July 12: [Barberton] Published that Barberton Division members (Richard McAlray, W. M. Taylor, G. Taylor, and P. Taylor) donated to the Convention Fund (“Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924—Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World,” *Negro World*, July 12, 1924).

July 13 (Sunday): [Youngstown] The Akron Division participated in a big parade and meeting in Youngstown with many divisions from across the state:

The Youngstown division of the U. N. I. A. held its gala day parade and mass meeting on Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1924. The parade was led by Capt. William N. Brown and Sergeant Charles E. Harper. The U. N. I. A. Band rendered music for the occasion. After a grand display of the U. N. I. A. colors the procession

returned to the Booker Washington settlement and found it packed to its utmost capacity.

The meeting was called to order by the Vice-President in the usual manner, after which a grand program was rendered, consisting of short addresses by prominent local people and representatives of neighboring divisions. The divisions represented were as follows: Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Alliance, Akron, Canton, Farrell, New Castle, and Massillon.

President Vaughn worked hard to make the event a success and much praise is due him for the able manner in which he conducted the affair.

We wish to thank all the neighboring divisions and friends who took part in the program and contributed to the success of the affair. MRS. N. R. Barnes, Secy. (Mrs. N. R. Barnes, "Youngstown, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 2, 1924).

July 19: [Akron] Published that Akron Division members (S. R. Jenkins, James Hawthorne, Mrs. Amanda Jones, Mrs. E. Fowler, Mrs. Irene Cruse, and W. M. Powell) donated to the Convention Fund ("Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924--Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World," *Negro World*, July 19, 1924).

July 26: [Akron] Published that Akron Division members (Mrs. Bessie Polp, W. W. Polk, K. Lytle, J. Satterwhite, Arthur Allen, Wm. Robinson, D. D. Bruton, C. L. Lunda, J. R. Mitchell, and J. Hartone) donated to the convention fund ("Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924--Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World," *Negro World*, July 26, 1924).

July 27: [Akron] The Progressive Club held a mass meeting to discuss politics at 8:30 p.m. at UNIA Hall ("To Discuss Politics," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 27, 1925).

August 19: [Akron] The *Akron Beacon Journal* published a story with misinformation about Garveyism. There was no mention of the local divisions of the UNIA ("Negro Moses Again Launches Project of Colored Exodus," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 19, 1924).

August 24: [Akron] Regular meeting held by the Akron Division:

On August 24, 1924, the Akron Division of the U. N. I. A. held its regular meeting, which was called to order by the vice-president, Mr. Autry.

Many members and friends came out, which naturally resulted in a crowded house. They all rejoiced over the purchasing of a new ship for our race, which is to fly the Red, Black, and Green. The program was excellent. Among the speakers favorable mention must be made of Rev. Smilet [Smiley?] of this division. He made an inspiring speech, which he illustrated by means of a chart.

Rev. Wheeler, not yet a member, gave an interesting talk which held the audience spellbound.

Our chaplain, Rev. C. C. Hubbard, also spoke. The children did well in their contribution to the program.

The members of this division were rallying to the call of the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company. They are inspired to help to their utmost to put

over the program of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In spite of obstacles, division is thriving and living by our motto "One God, One Aim, One Destiny!" The meeting was dismissed by our chaplain. D. CONRAD. SELLERS, Recording Secretary. (D. Conrad Sellers, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 24, 1924)

August 30: [Akron] Published that Akron Division members (Sam Thomas, Ola Watts, and Corene Hurst) donated to the convention fund ("Convention and General Fund of Universal Negro Improvement Association for 1924--Big Gathering of Negroes from All Parts of World," *Negro World*, August 30, 1924).

September 1: [Akron] The *Akron Beacon Journal* published a story that stated Marcus Garvey had a grudge against Liberia. It also mentioned that Garvey placed blame on "an American Rubber Co." The story did not mention the local divisions or the local ties to the rubber industry ("More War Aims Reversed," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 1, 1924).

September 8 (Monday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill, second vice president-general of the UNIA, spoke at Second Baptist Church ("Prominent Orator of Negro Race to Speak," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 4, 1924).

September 9 (Tuesday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill, second vice president-general of the UNIA, spoke at Second Baptist Church ("Prominent Orator of Negro Race to Speak," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 4, 1924).

December 26: [Akron] The Legions and Motor Corps of the Akron Division held a Grand Reunion:

On December 26, 1924, last the Legions and Motor Corps of the Akron, Ohio, Division held a grand reunion. The following program was rendered: Lecture, by the president, Mr. Alex Davis; recitation, by Major O. L. McDonald; recitation, by Lieut. A. Gilmore; address, by Capt. Crawford; recitation, by Private Joe Alexander; recitation, by Lieut. W. M. Jenkins; recitation, by Private A. Williams; recitation, by Private W. M. Wade; solo, Sergeant Mose Watson; solo, by Miss Clara Smith; solo, by Mrs. P. B. Watson; Solo, by Mrs. Rosie Gilmore; recitation, by Mrs. Sarah McDonald; solo, by Miss Maggie Ware; solo, by Miss Fannie Mae Martin.

After dinner was served there was a drill dance. The president made a few remarks and an enjoyable evening was brought to a close at a late hour. MAJOR A. L. McDONALD. (Major A. L. McDonald, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 31, 1925)

## 1925

March 1 (Sunday): [Akron] "Sunday, March 1, 1925, held a big mass meeting. The meeting was opened with Mr. Davis presiding. The opening ode, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' by the choir. Scripture reading [5?]th Chapter of Pslams by Second Vice-President Suttles. Prayer by the chaplain, Rev. C. C. Hubbard. Reading of preamble by the president, Mr. Davis. It was announced as 'Garvey's Day,' special prayers were rendered by ex-President M. T. Wimbish, Rev. C. C. Hubbard, Rev. Riely. The program was as

follows: Selection, choir; solo, Mr. Joe Player; recitation, Miss Thelma James; remarks David Sellers, secretary; trio, Mr. and Mrs. Acrem, accompanied by Mrs. W. Powell; recitation, Mr. Hansen Williams; reading, C. L. Porch; remarks, Mrs. Shielby, second vice-president; remarks Mrs. Player, first vice-president; remarks Mrs. Taylor, third vice-president; reading Mrs. Emma Artery [Autry], lady president; Garvey's Day, Mrs. Artery [Autry]. M. T. WIMBUSH, Reporter" (M. T. Wimbush, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 14, 1925).

March 11 (Wednesday): [Akron] William L. Sherrill, now the acting-president of the UNIA, spoke on the "Persecution and Imprisonment of Marcus Garvey" at 8 p.m. at Second Baptist Church. When the advertisement was published, Alex Davis was president, M. T. Wimbush was secretary, and James Taylor was treasurer ("Colored Race Leader Will Speak in Akron," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 21, 1925; "Discusses Marcus Garvey," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 7, 1925).

April 11: [Akron] Eliza Porch was honored personally by Asst. President-General William L. Sherrill during his recent visit and with a picture and an article in the *Negro World*:

The grand old woman of the Akron, Ohio, Division of the U. N. I. A. is Mrs. Eliza Poarch, 68 years of age who was one of the charter members.

Mrs. Poarch, though not an officer of the division, has endeared herself to members and officers alike and her counsel is sought whenever matters of weight involving the division are concerned. Of slender means, her purse is yet ever ready as the Cause demands, and she has never been known to be absent from a meeting of the division.

Sir William Sherrill, Asst. President General of the U. N. I. A. personally extended to Mrs. Poarch, personally extended to Mrs. Poarch, on the occasion of his recent visit, his congratulations upon her steadfastness and loyalty. ("The Grand Old Woman of Akron Division, U.N.I.A.," *Negro World*, April 11, 1925)

April 12: [Akron] "The members of Akron Division were pleased and encouraged to have Rev. Long, a loyal friend of the division and the work, with them at the mass meeting on April 12. After the opening prayer and song service, Rev. Long spoke briefly and urged the members not to become disengaged, but to continue to program until success is achieved. The program was interesting and enjoyable. One of the most brilliant and active young women of the division acted as mistress of ceremonies. The following program was rendered under her direction: Singing of the national anthem by the audience; reading of an original poem by Miss Evelyn Colvin; solo, Miss Vonceil Autry; paper, Master Joel Player; recitation, Mrs. Eliza Porch; solo, Miss Laurie Burson; recitation, Mrs. Carrie Cook; recitation, Elmer Hubbard; solo, Miss Clara Smith. At this point the meeting was turned over to the president, who closed the meeting with brief remarks on the work of the organization. D. CONRAD SELLERS, Reporter" (D. Conrad Sellers, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 2, 1925).

July 18: [Akron] Published that Akron members (Alex Davis, W. T. Wimbush, John McElwain, E. Shakespear, Lilly Taylor, James Taylor, Joe Player, Sam Thomas, Ida Burris, LeRoy Darman, William Powell, M. S. Knott, John Autry, Emma Autry, I. F. Autry, Rosa McElwain, Biner James, Sarah Wimbush, Effie Player, Ellen Lyles, Eliza Porch, Leola

McCarvey, and Fannie M. Martin) donated to the Parent Body Fund (“Contributors to Parent Body Fund,” *Negro World*, July 18, 1925; “Contributors to Parent Body Fund,” *Negro World*, July 25, 1925; “Contributors to Parent Body Fund,” *Negro World*, August 1, 1925).

July 21: [Akron] The *Akron Beacon Journal* published the history of the Akron Division: “Organized in the basement of a home on Newton st., January 31, 1921, the Universal Negro Improvement Association developed from an organization of seven members to one of 1200 members with six auxiliaries, some of which are: Black Cross Nurses, Legions, Motor Corps, and Daughters of Ethiopia. Rev. W. J. Tucker, the first president, resigned in November 1921, with an increased enrollment of 250 members. M. T. Wimbish succeeded Rev. Tucker and the organization moved to Hill and James sts. During his presidency 800 more members were secured and property was purchased. Alexander Davis is now president and is leading the movement for a new building. The present membership is 1200” (“Society Working for the Benefit of Negroes,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 21, 1925).

July 26 (Sunday): [Akron] The Akron Division held a mass meeting with guests from neighboring divisions in attendance:

On Sunday, July 26, Akron Division held one of the most successful meetings of the year. Before the mass meeting began, Rev. Barber, Jr. of Chicago, preached the sermon ‘The Birth of A Nation’ before an audience of visitors, friends and members from Massillon, Canton, Alliance, Toledo, and Youngstown. Dinner was served to the friends and members of other divisions after the meeting.

At 3 p. m. the regular mass meeting began. Mr. McChlatchie, president of the Massillon Division, was in charge of the meeting. Captain Jackson of Cleveland was in charge of the Legions and Juveniles. The program of today was an excellent one. It was as follows: Singing of the Ethiopian Anthem by the whole audience; address by Master Austen Autry of Massillon; solo by Miss Lucille Perkins; a few remarks by Reverend Strout; address by Mr. William Davis, president of the Toledo Division. He held the audience absolutely spellbound for an hour.

Akron Division is doing fine in every way and each day it is growing stronger through the efforts of the officers. Each member is a missionary for the cause of Africa’s redemption. The members have pledged themselves in every way to support the Parent Body and to fight on with courage of the Red to defend the Black as long as they stand on the Green. D. CONRAD SELLERS, Reporter. (D. Conrad Sellers, “Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 15, 1925)

July 26 (Sunday) [Akron] The Massillon Division joined the Akron Division for a large meeting: “The Massillon Division visited the Akron Division on Sunday, July 25[26]. A large crowd attended. An interesting program was rendered. Mr. William Davis was the principal speaker. The meeting was held in the Zion Methodist Church of which Reverend Woods is pastor. Reverend Woods showed his friendship for the organization by opening wide his doors and doing all in his power to make the meeting a success. Mr. Davis emphasized the necessity of the Negro securing a place to establish a government of his own where he may have an opportunity to develop in his own way unhampered by

prejudice. MRS. AMANDA STROUD, Reporter” (Mrs. Amanda Stroud, “Massillon, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 15, 1925).

July 26 (Sunday): [Barberton] Barberton Division held a successful mass meeting: “A successful mass meeting was held under the supervision of the ladies of the Barberton Division on Sunday, July 26. The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Player who acted as Mistress of Ceremonies. The choir furnished excellent music for the occasion. The principal address was delivered by Mr. Davis of Toledo. Mrs. Autry, head nurse of the Akron Division, also gave an inspiring talk. MORRIS SIMMS, Reporter” (Morris Simms, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 15, 1925).

August 3: [Akron] Councilman Kyle Ross spoke to the Young Men’s Progressive Club at UNIA Hall and also at Second Baptist Church (“Intensive Drive for Votes Starts During this Week,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1925).

August 14: [Barberton] William M. Davis visited from Toledo and spoke at a series of meetings where many new members joined: “Mr. W. M. Davis was the principal speaker at a mass meeting of the Barberton Division on Tuesday, August 14. Mr. Davis spoke eloquently on ‘The Survival of the Fittest.’ Eighteen new members were added to the roll as a result of Mr. Davis’ strong appeal. Mr. Davis also gave a short address on Sunday, August 16. Twenty new members were added to the roll on this occasion when Mr. Davis spoke on ‘One God, One Aim, One Destiny.’ On Wednesday, August 19, just before his departure for his home, Toledo, Ohio, Mr. Davis spoke at a special meeting at which fourteen new members were added to the roll, making a total of 52 new converts to the work of the organization during Mr. Davis’ visit. We are proud of this visitor and hope that he will return to us soon again. MORRIS SIMMS, Reporter” (Morris Simms, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925).

August 16 (Sunday): [Barberton] William Davis spoke on “One God, One Aim, One Destiny,” and twenty new members joined (Morris Simms, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925).

August 19 (Wednesday): [Barberton] William Davis spoke again before returning to Toledo, and fourteen new members joined (Morris Simms, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, September 5, 1925).

August 22: [Cincinnati] Elder Tripp, second vice president of the Cincinnati Division and future-president of the Akron Division, was in attendance at the Cincinnati Division’s local convention that included a large parade and an inspiring address by Amy Jacques Garvey:

Cincinnati Division staged a large parade at the opening of the second local convention and in honor of Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, wife of Hon. Marcus Garvey. Long before the parade started throngs assembled in the streets to witness the opening ceremonies of the convention. The parade moved at 1 p. m. First came the band, followed by Sir Wm. Ware, K. C. D. S. O. E., president of the division, followed by the Universal African Legions, Motor Corps and Black Cross Nurses, in command of Mrs. Renfro Fielding, the juveniles of the division in command of Lieut. Col. E. R. E. Gilkes, First N. Y. A. L. and executive secretary of the Cincinnati Division; the choir, led by Lieut. Rufus Herron; the

divisional officers, Rev. McQueen and his staff of preachers; the members of the division with such slogans as “The Negro Won the Last World’s War,” “What Is the Negro’s Attitude Toward the Moroccan Situation,” “God Save Africa,” “Long Live America,” “The World Respects Organized Force,” “All Men Were Created Equal,” “A Government in Africa for Negroes.”

The parade disbanded at Emory Auditorium.

Promptly at 3 p. m. the program for the afternoon began. President William Ware of the Cincinnati Division presided. Many presidents of nearby divisions and chapters were present, all anxious to hear the message of the Hon. Marcus Garvey by Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey. Among those seated on the rostrum were Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey. Among those seated on the rostrum were Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Sir Wm. Ware, president; Mr. Elder Trip, second vice-president; Mr. Ben Montgomery, first vice-president; Mrs. Maggie Scott, lady president; Mrs. Zella Michaux, second vice-president; Mrs. Maggie Spencer, third vice-president; Rev. Razor of Florence Division; Prof. E. W. Curry, Mrs. Bertha Calhoun, Rev. J. F. Walker and many other out-of-town presidents and visitors.

Mr. Ware outlined the purpose of the convention in an eloquent opening address which received much applause. The program was as follows: Song by choir, “O, Africa Awake”; original poem, by Mrs. Bettie Hutchins; song by choir, “Booker T. Washington.” After the original poem by Mrs. Bettie Hutchins, Prof. E. W. Curry made a motion that a telegram be sent to President Calvin Coolidge and Attorney General Warren asking for clemency for Hon. Marcus Garvey. Rev. J. F. Walker seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously. The telegram was immediately sent to the President and attorney general.

Mrs. Amy J. Garvey was then introduced. After reading the message coming from Mr. Garvey, Mrs. Garvey talked for one hour. Her address was inspiring. She spoke on “The Moroccan Question.”

Among many interesting things she referred to were: Negroes taking the organization as a joke; ministers preaching the wrong doctrine; Abdel-Krim [Abd el-Krim] blazing the way for African redemption; Americans going to assist France to fight the Riffians, and what contribution are Negroes making to African redemption? Prof. Curry also spoke, his address was very inspiring. The National Anthem was sung and the meeting adjourned until 8 p. m. E. R. GILKES, Reporter. (E. R. Gilkes, “Cincinnati, Ohio,” *Negro World*, August 22, 1925)

August 23 (Sunday): [Akron] Henrietta Vinton Davis spoke at a public mass meeting at Second Baptist Church at 3 p.m. and at a women’s meeting at UNIA Hall at 8 p.m. (“Leader of Colored Race is to Speak,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 14, 1925).

August 24 (Monday): [Akron] Henrietta Vinton Davis spoke at a public mass meeting at UNIA Hall at 8 p.m. (“Leader of Colored Race is to Speak,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 14, 1925).

September 5: [Akron] Published that Akron member Henry Frison donated 10 dollars to the Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund. A donation of this amount qualified him as a

“Negro Patriot,” and he received a medal (“Contributors to Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund,” *Negro World*, September 12, 1925).

September 12: [Barberton] Published that Barberton members (E. M. Merritt, C. B. Bruce, Paul Taylor, H. W. Ward. and Bessie L. Merritt) donated one dollar each to the Black Cross Reserve and Operating Funds (“Contributors to Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund,” *Negro World*, September 12, 1925).

September 26: [Akron] Published that Akron members (William Powell, M. T. Wimbish, S. J. Wimbish, John Autry, John McElwain, I. F. Autry, Cop Jackson, Emma Autry, Mrs. D. Williams, Joe Player, Effie Player, Will Wade, Ada Burris, James Taylor, Lilly Taylor, George, Burris, M. L. Dorson, Rosa McElwain, Sarah Brown, Walker Stewart, and Mrs. E. Porch) donated to the Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund. William Powell earned a medal and the title “Negro Patriot” after donating 10 dollars (“Contributors to Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund,” *Negro World*, September 26, 1925).

October 3: [Akron] Published that Akron members donated to the Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund. N. S. Knot and Eliza Porch earned medals and the title “Negro Patriot” after donating 10 dollars each (“Contributors to Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund,” *Negro World*, October 3, 1925).

October 13 (Tuesday): [New York City] Akron President Alex Davis attended a week-long conference in New York City with delegates from around the United States as well as leaders such as Acting President-General William L. Sherrill, Fourth Assistant President-General Henrietta V. Davis, and Amy Jacques Garvey. They were welcomed by 5,000 supporters and sent a telegram to Marcus Garvey and were guests of honor at a luncheon on the SS *Booker T. Washington*:

In response to an invitation by the Executive Council of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, officers of several U. N. I. A. Divisions in the United States assembled at New York headquarters to discuss several matters of importance in connection with the future work of the association.

The conference met on Tuesday, October 13, and held day and night sessions lasting a week. Those in attendance were:

Hon. William L. Sherill, acting president general; Lady Henrietta V. Davis, fourth assistant president-general; Hon. G. E. Carter, secretary-general; Hon. C. S. Bourne, chancellor; Hon. F. L. Lord, auditor-general; Hon. P. L. Burrows, assistant secretary-general; Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, wife of the president-general; Mr. N. G. G. Thomas, acting managing editor of *The Negro World*; Hon. Fred E. Johnson, Detroit, Mich.; Hon. George M. Brown, Miami, Fla.; Hon. W. A. Wallace, Chicago, Ill.; Hon. Alex Davis, Akron, Ohio; Hon. S. R. Wheat, W. Chicago, Ill.; Hon. T. Brooks, Gary, Ind.; Hon. T. M. Kakasa, Buffalo, N. Y.; Hon. L. J. Van Pelt, Cleveland, Ohio; Hon. W. L. Kees, Newark, N. J.; Hon. William Ware, Cincinnati, Ohio; Hon. George A. Weston, New York, N. Y.; Hon. S. A. Haynes, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Hon. Fred A. Toote, Philadelphia, Pa.; Hon. W. A. Prendergast, Boston, Mass.; Hon. J. B. Geter, Jersey City, N. J.; Hon. C. L. Kelly, Asbury Park, N. J.; Hon. N. H. Gumbs, Perth Amboy, N. J.; Hon. Bishop Barker, Hon. J. J. Peters, New Orleans, La.; Hon. P. W. Frisby, Washington, D. C.; Hon.



Isaac Kellum, Columbus, Ohio; Hon. Uriah Gittens, New York, N. Y. and Hon. Wesley Holder, New York, N. Y.

### **Greetings and Thanks Sent to Mr. Garvey**

At the Opening of the conference, it was decided by a unanimous vote that the following telegram be sent to Hon. Marcus Garvey:

“Presidents and officers assembled at call of Executive Council send greetings and thanks for the splendid work you have done for the organization and desire to reaffirm their unswerving loyalty to you.

“We further rededicate ourselves to the carrying forward of the program of the organization and pray the Almighty may ever guide and inspire you in the direction of the great work which is so dear to the hearts of us all.”

Hon. Marcus Garvey replied by telegram as follows:

“Telegram received. Thanks for greeting. You may depend upon me to continue to do my very best for association and race. All I ask from all concerned is faithfulness to the cause. Convey regards to people.”

The discussion at the conference embraced every aspect of the work of the organization and was characterized by a splendid spirit of co-operation on part of the conferees.

### **Luncheon on Booker T. Washington**

On Saturday Oct. 17 an excellent luncheon was served on board the S. S. Booker T. Washington at pier 75, New York City, at which the visiting officials were the guests of honor. Felicitous speeches were delivered.

### **Ship Officers Thanked**

The splendid services rendered by Purser H. Balfour Williams and Third Officer E. Foulkes were brought to the attention of the visitors who on behalf of their respective divisions, extended a vote of thanks to these faithful officers. (“Representatives of U. N. I. A. Divisions Hold Conference,” *Negro World*, October 24, 1925; for more about this event, see “Five Thousand U. N. I. A. Followers Welcome Division Presidents to Liberty Hall,” *Negro World*, October 24, 1925)

October 18 (Sunday): [Barberton] “Barberton Division held successful mass meeting on Sunday, October 18, at 3 p.m. The president, Mr. W. M. Davis, presided. The meeting opened with the usual service. After the opening ceremonies, the meeting was turned over to the lady president, Mrs. Brouse, who presided while an excellent program was rendered. The program was as follows: Opening address by Mr. Carson, first vice president of the Toledo Division; address, Reverend G. A. Ward; musical and literary numbers by several members of the division. The meeting closed with the singing of the national anthem. MRS. EVA SHEETS, Reporter” (Mrs. Eva Sheets, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, November 7, 1925).

October 18 (Sunday): [Massillon] Barberton President and ex-Toledo President William Davis spoke with current Toledo President Rev. G. A. Ward at a meeting in Massillon. Several members joined (Mrs. Pearl Autry, "Massillon, Ohio," *Negro World*, November 7, 1925).

December 6 (Sunday): [Akron] Mass meeting held on Garvey Day:

The Akron Division held a mass meeting on Sunday, December 6. The vice-president, Mr. Louis Sutters, presided. Since it was Garvey Day, the minds of all of the loyal members of the division were turned toward Atlanta and out leader imprisoned there.

The program was as follows: Selection by the choir; paper, Mr. J. E. Player; solo, Mrs. William Crawford; recitation, Miss Ruth Jeanette; duet Mrs. Effie Player and Mrs. Victoria Ankum; short talk, Mrs. Emma Autry, lady president; duet Mrs. Joe Shelly and Mrs. Effie Player; remarks, Mr. M. T. Wimbish, ex-president; selection by choir. The meeting closed with a few remarks by the president. MRS. WM. CRAWFORD, Reporter. (Mrs. Wm. Crawford, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 26, 1925)

December 13 (Sunday): [Barberton] "The Barberton Division held its regular mass meeting on Sunday, December 13. The president, Mr. William Davis, presided. Several members and friends from neighboring divisions were present. BESSIE RAGLAND, Reporter" (Bessie Ragland, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 16, 1926).

December 26: [Barberton] Published that Barberton members (Charlie Jones, Elnora Davis, Elbert Thomas, Rich Milligan, and Julius Martin) donated to the Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund ("Contributors to Black Cross Reserve and Operating Fund," *Negro World*, December 26, 1925).

## 1926

January 16: [Akron] "Reverend S. C. Clarke and Mrs. Laura King, both active members of the division, were united in marriage on Saturday, January 16, at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ricketts. Reverend J. Green performed the ceremony which was witnessed by a few intimate friends. I. F. AUTRY, Reporter" (I. F. Autry, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 6, 1926).

February 14: [Akron] "Mr. W. M. Davis was the principal speaker at the weekly mass meeting of the Akron Division on Sunday, February 14. The vice-president, Mr. M. McElwain, presided. Mr. Davis' address was much enjoyed. He is the president of the Barberton, Ohio, Division" (I. F. Autry, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 6, 1926).

February 21 (Sunday): [Akron] "The Akron Division held its regular mass meeting on Sunday, February 21. The president, Mr. Alexander Davis presided. The meeting opened with the regular religious service. The principal speak was Bishop J. D. Baber. An interesting literary and musical program was rendered. The hall was crowded to capacity. There were many visitors from churches of the city and nearby divisions. The gathering was enthusiastic and the meeting was a great success. MRS. WILLIAM CRAWFORD, Reporter" (Mrs. William Crawford, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 13, 1926).

March 4 and 5 (Thursday and Friday): [Akron] S. R. Wheat spoke at public meeting at UNIA Hall at 8 p.m. ("Widely Known Orator Will Speak in Akron," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 3, 1926).

March 14: [Detroit] Published that the Akron and Barberton Divisions were represented at the Detroit Convention, called to re-elect leadership in the present administration and of the auxiliaries due to internal conflict. Acting President-General since Garvey's incarceration, William L. Sherill, was accused of mismanagement of the organization and disloyalty to Marcus Garvey. The convention was held from March 14-31 in Detroit ("Divisions Represented At Detroit Convention," *Negro World*, April 3, 1926; "Hear! Hear! Hear!" *Negro World*, March 3, 1926).

March 23 and 24: [Toledo] Barberton President William Davis spoke twice in Toledo after returning from the Convention in Detroit from March 14-31:

Toledo Division, No. 848, held two successful mass meetings on the evenings of March 23 and 24. We were favored in having with us Mr. W. M. Davis who has just arrived from the 5<sup>th</sup> International Convention and who was one of the former Presidents of this division.

He cautioned us to stand pat behind the Hon. Marcus Garvey and the new administration and give to them our financial and moral support. The fight is on for African Redemption.

The division pledged its hearty support to the present administration, morally and financially. The newly elected president, Hon. C. M. Carson, is steadfast and sure in the cause. RUTH JOY, Reporter. (Ruth Joy, "Toledo, Ohio," *Negro World*, April 3, 1926)

April 25 (Sunday): [Akron] "Akron Division held its regular mass meeting on Sunday, April 25. Meeting opened with ritualistic services followed by an opening address by the president, Mr. Alexander Davis. A solo was rendered by Mr. Clifton Hale. The principal address was delivered by Mr. M. T. Wimbish. Music was furnished by the choir. I. F. AUTRY, Reporter" (I. F. Autry, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 8, 1926).

May 8: [Akron/Barberton] Published that W. M. Davis of Barberton contributed 23 dollars and Akron members (Alex Davis, M. T. Wimbish, John McElwain, Mrs. E. Porch, I. F. Autry, Emma Autry, Mrs. William Crawford, Mrs. D. Williams, Mrs. Rosa McElwain, Mrs. Julia Wimbish, Mrs. Annie Jones, Floyd Washington, Israel Hale, D. Williams, Lee Harris, Richard Jones, William Powell, Joes Player, Mr. Fowler, Guy Patrick, Mrs. Harris, Ada Burris, W. E. Colvin, Geo. Patterson, Fannie Martin, and Walter Sheets) made donations to the Parent Body during the Rally Day appeal for funds. The Black Cross Nurses, "Willing Workers," and Daughters of Ethiopia from Akron also donated ("Rally Day Donations," *Negro World*, May 8, 1926).

May 9 (Sunday): [Barberton] "Barberton Division opened its membership drive on Sunday May 9, with a mass meeting, at which the Hon. Dr. J. G. St. Clair Drake, international organizer, was the chief speaker. Dr. Drake brought us much interesting information concerning the work of the organization and the plans of the new administration in pushing forward the program of Negro uplift and African redemption. During his stay in our city, Dr. Drake honored this division by appointing our president State Organizer of

Ohio. We are sorry to lose a very fine leader, but we are pleased at his promotion to a position where he can do even greater work for the organization. W. H. BOWLING, Reporter" (W. H. Bowling, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926).

May 12 (Wednesday): [Massillon] "The Hon. Mr. Davis, state organizer and member of the Barberton Division, held an official meeting on Wednesday, May 12," in Massillon (Mrs. Amanda Stroud, "Massillon, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 22, 1926).

May 12 (Wednesday): [Alliance] "Mr. W. M. Davis, State organizer, visited this division on Wednesday, May 12, and conducted the annual election. Officers were elected, as follows: Mr. J. P. Watson, president; Mr. V. G. Goode, general secretary; Mrs. Tommie Pressley, financial secretary; Mr. Henry Rickett, treasurer; Mrs. Ellen Groce, lady president; Messrs. Joseph Davis, A. Mayer and H. G. Baker, trustees. MRS. M. A. SHAW, Reporter" (Mrs. M. A. Shaw, "Alliance, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926).

May 18 (Tuesday): [Youngstown] State organizer William Davis visited the Youngstown Division ("Youngstown, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926).

May 23 (Sunday): [Cleveland] State Organizer W. M. Davis visited Cleveland (A. M. Jackson, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 5, 1926).

May 23 (Sunday): [Akron] "Mr. W. M. Davis, state organizer was a visitor at the Akron Division on Sunday, May 23. He was the principal speaker at the regular weekly mass meeting. His eloquent appeal for continued support for the Parent Body received an enthusiastic response. I. F. AUTRY, Reporter" (I. F. Autry, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 19, 1926).

May 29: [Barberton] Published that Barberton members (Mr. C. W. Bell, Mr. Bolden, Mrs. Leslie Bolden, Mr. Albert Thomas, Mr. George Browner, Mr. J. B. Shoaf, Mrs. Susie White, Mr. Robert Davies, Mr. Garfield Taylor, Mr. Jesse Scott, Mr. Ernest Jackson, Mr. Ernest Merritt, Mr. James Taylor, Mrs. Essie Jackson, Mrs. Mary Lee Rice, Mr. B. J. Jackson, Mrs. Sallie B. Jackson, Mrs. Ida Scott, Mrs. Ethel Parma [Palmer], Mrs. Nancy Newsom, Mrs. Bessie Mushott, Mrs. Sallie Mushott, Mr. W. M. Davies [Davis], Mrs. Millie Martin, Mr. Please Davies, Mr. A. L. Thomas, Mr. Huston Parma [Palmer], Mrs. Elnora Davies, Mr. Bob Browner, Mr. William Harris, Mr. Grant Cotton, Mrs. Jossie Cheatom [Cheatham], Rev. T. Miles, Mrs. Sarah Wright, Miss Beatrice Jones, and Mr. Rich Milligan) donated to the Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund ("Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund," *Negro World*, May 29, 1926).

May 30 (Sunday): [Akron] Akron Division's uniformed auxiliaries marched in the City of Akron's Decoration Day parade:

On Decoration Day, May 30, this division took an active part in the procession and exercises held by the City of Akron in memory of their honored soldier dead. The division was well represented by the uniform ranks of Black Cross Nurses, Legions, Motor Corp, and Juveniles, occupying about two city blocks. The brass band from the Cleveland Division was also present.

Toward the conclusion of the exercises, while the multitude stood with uncovered heads and before "Tap" sounded. It was this same Universal Negro Band which was privileged to play "The Star-Spangled Banner," a privilege unique in ceremonies of such a spiritual nature.

The division is thriving under the guidance and leadership of its able president, Mr. Alex Davis, assisted by his corps of capable officers. MRS. LOUISE DAVIS, Reporter. (Mrs. Louise Davis, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, July 3, 1926)

June 6 (Sunday): [Barberton] Barberton Division hosted a meeting with representatives from other Ohio divisions present:

Barberton division No. 408 met Sunday, June 6 at 2 o'clock. Opening hymn, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' was followed by prayer. President Hon. William Davis made the opening address, the subject being, "God Wants Men That Are Not Afraid to Die." He made a wonderful address. The program was in charge of the Lady President, Ethel Palmer. A wonderful paper was read by the head nurse Mrs. Catherine Baily and recitation by the secretary Mrs. Neily Bruce.

Several were present and responded to our collection as follows: Waynesburg \$5, Warren \$2.13, and Youngstown \$2. MARY B. HOPSON, Reporter." (Mary B. Hopson, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, July 3, 1926)

June 6: [Akron] Akron Division held a mass meeting with Dr. W. R. Ashburn as their guest: "Dr. W. R. Ashburn was the honored guest of the Akron Division on Sunday, June 6. A special program was arranged in honor of the visitor. The meeting opened with the usual religious service which was followed by the remarks from several members on the life and work of Hon. Marcus Garvey. Dr. Ashburn was introduced by the president who presided. The address of the afternoon was informative and inspiring. The division was greatly helped by Dr. Ashburn's visit" (Akron, Ohio, *Negro World*, June 26, 1926).

June 12: [Barberton] Published that donations to the Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund were received from Barberton, Ohio, by Mrs. W. J. Crawford, Annie B. Young, W. H. Bowling, G. Taylor, Paul Taylor, Pub. Col., L. Stanfield, Beatrice Jones, Josie Cheatham, Mrs. Emma Autry, M. Hanserd, Isaac Hanserd, and Mattie Jones ("Great Drive Gains Momentum as Time Passes," *Negro World*, June 12, 1926).

June 13 (Sunday): [Massillon] The Akron and Barberton Divisions attended a mass meeting in Massillon: "Massillon Division is planning a great mass meeting on Sunday, June 13. On this day, many neighboring divisions including Canton, Waynesburg, Alliance, Barberton, Akron, Youngstown, and Warren will be the guests of Massillon Division and help to make this mass meeting a success. The arrangement of the program is under the direction of the Women's Department" (Miss Pearl Autry, "Massillon, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 12, 1926).

July 15: [Akron] The Young Men's Progressive Club met at UNIA Hall at 8 p.m. to prepare for the primary elections. President Leon Gordie presided ("Want 5,000 Colored Voters at Primary," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 16, 1926).

July 19: [Akron] Published that Akron members (Walter Hale, Willie Harris, John Autry, W. M. Davis, Emma Autry, Sarah Wimbish, Nellie Donald, Lee Harris, Rosa McElwain, W. M. Harris, Mrs. L. Williams, Ada Burris, D. Williams, Joe Player, and Mrs. Fuller) donated to the Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund ("Support the Million Dollar Fund and Put the Enemy to Rout," *Negro World*, June 19, 1926).

- July 22: [Akron] Candidate Coburn Musser spoke to the Barberton Republican's Club and the Akron Colored Progressive Club at UNIA Hall ("Candidates Show More Activities as Primary Nears," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 23, 1926).
- July 29: [Akron] The Young Men's Progressive Club hosted four mass meetings to plan for the upcoming primary elections. One was hosted at UNIA Hall at 8 p.m. ("Akron Colored Voters Stage Many Meetings," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 12, 1926).
- August 15 (Sunday) [Barberton]: "Barberton Division held a successful mass meeting on Sunday, August 15, which marked the opening of the local convention. Mr. William Davis, president of the division, presided. Reverend K. S. Freeman, pastor of Thankful Baptist Church, was the honored guest of the division on this occasion. He brought with him to the meeting many members of his congregation who are interested in the Universal Negro Improvement Association. A very delightful special program was rendered. MARY B. HOPSON, Reporter" (Mary B. Hopson, "Barberton Ohio," *Negro World*, September 25, 1926).
- August 26 (Thursday): [Akron] Fred A. Toote of New York City spoke in the evening at UNIA Hall, 157 E. Center ("Colored Leader will Make Akron Address," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 25, 1926).
- September 13: [Akron] Young Men's Progressive Club met at UNIA Hall ("To Discuss Politics," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 13, 1926).
- September 30: [Akron] Akron residents formed the Akron Negro Business League, affiliated with the National Negro Business League. Its officers were: "Charles R. Lewis, surgeon, President; John W. Dunbar, dentist, Vice-President; Charles C. Jackson, realtor, Secretary; G. G. Morgan, Pastor, Treasurer." Many of Akron's Black business owners were associated with this organization, but only a few are known UNIA supporters: Leon Gordie, I. F. Autry, Alex Davis, and William Massey. ("The Akron Negro Business League," in *Negro Yearbook of Akron, Ohio*, 1927, ed. Opie Evans, 31).
- October 30: [Barberton] Elnora Davis, Barberton member, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Negro World* in response to a contest titled, "Why I Am a Garveyite?" She wrote:

Dear Editor:

I am a Garveyite because I am a black woman. I stand for black supremacy as the white stands for white supremacy. I see no other way for me to have a place in the sun, along with other races, unless I am a Garveyite. My eyes have become open to the fact that we must fight for liberty, or it will be death for black men and women. That is why I am a Garveyite.

Being a Garveyite, I mean to be a true follower and fight to put the program over, to free the land of our forefathers. I want to see the flag of the Red, Black, and Green wave on the hilltops of Africa.

I know that Garvey is a true leader, and I mean to be a true follower. If I see others who say they are Garveyites turn traitors, I will put them out of business, and report to God the reason why.

My eyes are on one GOD, one AIM and one DESTINY, and I will not turn back.

ELNORA DAVIS, Barberton, Ohio.” (Elnora Davis, “Liberty,” *Negro World*, October 30, 1926)

October: [Barberton] Between October of 1926 and September of 1928, Barberton Division 408 regularly communicated with the Parent Body while William M. Davis was president and Bessie Rogland was secretary. Their mailing address was 234 Wolfe Street Box 1 in Barberton, Ohio (Division Card File, Universal Negro Improvement Association, Records of the Central Division (New York), 1918-59, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library).

## 1927

[Akron] Mrs. W. E. Mayo published in her article, “Successful Business Women,” that the UNIA was one of Akron’s organizations that celebrated and supported women’s goals. She wrote, “There are numerous other organizations, associations and clubs among our women having as their aim a purpose similar to those of the Colored Business Women of Akron. These organizations are great arousers and awakeners of feminine ambitions. Among them are The Negro Improvement Association, The Ethical Culture Club, The Woman’s Auxiliary of the N. A. A. C. P., The Nonpareil Club, The Busy Bee Social Club, the women’s Christian Temperance Union, The Young Ladies’ Progressive Club, The Citizens’ Civic League, The Narcissus Club, Musilit Club, Silver Leaf Club, and The Rosary Club” (Mrs. W. E. Mayo, “Successful Business Women,” in *Negro Yearbook of Akron, Ohio*, 1927, ed. Opie Evans, 22).

January 23: [Cleveland] Women’s Day was observed in Cleveland: “The front page of the *Negro World* was read.” Program also included as “short talk [by] Mr. Narciss of the Barberton Division” and an address by “Mr. Davis, president of the Barberton Division” called “Are You a Man” (Gertrude Lucas Moore, “Cleveland, Ohio,” *Negro World*, February 12, 1927).

January 28: [Akron] Dr. St. Clair Drake, International Organizer of the UNIA, spoke at 157 E. Center Street (“Organizer to Speak,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 27, 1927).

April 16: [Akron] Published that S. A. Haynes, Parent Body representative, visited the Akron Division and other Ohio divisions to promote the Parent Body Special:

The Parent Body Special is being hailed with jubilation and unusual enthusiasm everywhere. A few days ago this writer explained the campaign to the Akron, Ohio, division. He had hardly taken his seat when Mr. T. M. Wimbush [M. T. Wimbish], Secretary, took the floor and said dramatically: “Members, this is a great idea, let’s raise \$100,000 this year through the Parent Body Special and so give a year’s vacation to each division that it may grow and flourish as it should. We can do it; let Akron play its part tonight.” The response was spontaneous. What the Parent Body desires to do is told simply in these few words of Mr. Wimbush. Ever since the enforced absence of the lion, Marcus Garvey, the burden of supporting the administration was voluntarily assumed by such divisions as the New York Local, Detroit, Cincinnati, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, with the valiant co-operation of Chicago, Cleveland, New Orleans,

Miami, Oakland, and a few others. These branches gave unstintedly of their resources, notwithstanding that their local obligations had to be met at the same time. Because of many financial responsibilities to be met they gladly sacrificed their local program for the bigger program sponsored by the Parent Body. This administration gratefully appreciates, hence, through the success of the Parent Body Special it seeks to give, as Mr. Wimbush puts it, “a year’s vacation to each division that it may grow and flourish as it should.” But until we make the campaign a success this vacation will be indefinitely delayed, and those troublesome “yellow envelopes” that occasion so much comment when they arrive in the midst of a local drive, will continue to pay us their customary visits. (S. A. Haynes, “Some Things Garveyites Should Know,” *Negro World*, April 16, 1927)

April 22 (Friday): [Akron] Akron Division held a large mass meeting with Levi Lord as its guest:

There was a large mass meeting held at the Akron Division No. 215 Friday evening, April 22. Honorable Levi Lord was principal speaker of the evening. He was introduced by President McElwain of Akron Division.

Mr. Lord’s lecture was on the history and development of the U. N. I. A.

Mr. Lord said that the UNIA is a movement of God and shall live on in the minds of the children. Mr. Lord said that he is not discouraged in the U. N. I. A. because others suffered for the cause of their country. So God has selected us to suffer for the cause of the Negro. Many say they have lost nothing in Africa, but God has said in His word that the day is coming when every nation shall return to its own home and live under its own vine and fig tree.

Mr. Lord made an appeal for the Parent Body, which received an excellent response. (“Akron, Ohio,” *Negro World*, May 7, 1927)

April 24 (Sunday): [Alliance] Vice President of the Akron Division, Mr. Hill, spoke at a mass meeting in Alliance. They sang “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains” and hosted speakers from Massillon, Medina, and Niles, Ohio (J. P. Watson, “Alliance, Ohio,” *Negro World*, May 28, 1927).

May 23 (Monday): [Akron] Event at “Liberty Hall, 159 E. Center St.” titled, “The Black Man’s Part In The Bible.” The flyer read, “Shown in Pictures and Book Form. Shows that God used colored men and women in making Biblical history. Come, see and hear your part out of the Bible. Books on the matter, 25c. Marcus Garvey will be seen. Rev. James M. Webb of Chicago” (“The Black Man’s Part In The Bible,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 20, 1927).

July 18: [Akron] Published that Akron members (Mrs. Rosa McElwain [McElwain], M. T. Wimbish, William Powell, Joe Player, Mrs. William Crawford, C. C. Hubbard, N. S. Knott, I. Jones, Annie Jones, John McElwain [McElwain], Eliza Porch, Benner James, Mrs. Williams, John Autry, Lewis Hill, Rosa McElwain [McElwain], William Powell, N. S. Knott, John McElwain [McElwain], Joe Player, C. C. Hubbard, J. B. Shoaf, Mrs. E. Porch, Annie Jones, Willie Harris, Binner James, R. Jones, Mrs. A. D. Epps, I. Fautry [I. F. Autry], Rosa McElwain [McElwain], John McElwain [Elwain], William Powell, Joe Player, C. C. Hubbard, M. T. Wimbish, John Autry, I. F. Autry, Binner James, E.



Porch, Richard Jones, Annie Jones, O. McDonald, Ruth Brown, and Lewis Hill) donated to the Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund. Some names are repeated; they may have made multiple donations or been accidentally repeated in the paper ("Rehabilitation and Expansion Fund," *Negro World*, July 18, 1927).

July 26: [Akron] The *Akron Beacon Journal* reprinted an article from Cincinnati, "Negroes Post Reward For Members Of Race." The UNIA offered a reward for information on "the negro trio guilty of robbing and outraging the family of Joseph Byrnes, contractor, early Saturday morning" ("Negroes Post Reward For Members Of Race," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 26, 1927).

August 20: [Cleveland] Published information about Cleveland, Kent, Akron, and Barberton's upcoming excursion to Chicago. They planned to leave from Wheeling Lake Erie Station on Huron Road at 8 p.m. heading towards Kent: "From Kent, the excursion will proceed to Chicago by way of Akron and Barberton. It will return on Monday morning before work hours." There was a refreshment car, and the price was \$9.50 roundtrip for adults and half that for children ("Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 20, 1927).

August 27 (Saturday): [Chicago] Cleveland, Akron, and Barberton members and friends headed to Chicago on the train ("Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, August 20, 1927).

August 28 (Sunday): [Chicago] Akron and Barberton Divisions attended a reunion of Midwestern divisions:

Sunday, August 28, will ever be remembered as a red letter day in the annals of the Chicago division, when that city became the mecca for all the mid-western divisions within a radius of 450 miles. Long before many sleepers had arisen from their slumber the visitors started pouring into the city and by 9 o'clock the First Regiment Armory was crowded. They came by train, motor bus, interurban cars and automobiles.

The first group to arrive was the Cincinnati division, led by its president, Hon. William Ware, on board a chartered train of seven passenger and one refreshment car over the Big Four Route. The train made a special stop at the Woodlawn station to take aboard H. Balfour Williams and Sergeant Jesse Evant, who welcomed and accompanied the visitors from the Queen City to the Union Station.

The next to arrive was the Detroit Division, which was well represented. The Motor City contingent came over on the Wabash Railroad with a special train of 12 cars in charge of Hon. J. A. Craigen, and was met at the station by Hon. G. B. Pickens, president of the West Side Division.

Hon. E. R. Robertson led the Cleveland group, which was augmented by the Youngstown and smaller divisions from Northern Ohio. The Polk Street Union Station was a mass of black humanity, when the special of 16 cars pulled into the station over the Erie road just a few minutes after a train arrived on another track not two hundred feet away.

The Gary Division, headed by Hon. G. E. Stewart, arrived shortly after in motor buses. The Chicago Heights, Robbins and Indiana Harbor Divisions came over by interurban electric.

St. Louis division journey to the meeting in chartered buses and the Milwaukee group came in over the North Shore Road. Many members came in their own machines, some coming from as far as Cleveland. The members of the other surrounding divisions came in private cars and by trolley.

After being rested from their overnight journey the members left the Armory and journeyed to the Forestville school playground, where the parade assembled. At the appointed time the procession moved off. It was headed by the Hon. E. B. Knox, president of Chicago division, and also personal representative of the Hon. Marcus Garvey. The parade was over four blocks long and was followed by dozens of automobiles. It was a colorful sight to see the various auxiliaries from the different divisions. The members of the Chicago Choir were conspicuous in their new black robes, this being their first appearances in that regalia. Their dress heretofore has been white.

Among the prominent officials who took part in the parade were: Hon. William Ware, Hon. J. A. Craigen, Hon. S. R. Wheat, Hon. H. Balfour Williams, Hon. James Hazelwood, Hon. Eugene Steward, Hon. Benjamin Sumlin, Hon. H. Johnson of St. Louis, Hon. E. R. Robertson of Cleveland and Hon. G. C. Nolan, president of Chicago Heights, who acted as grand marshal.

The mass meeting was opened at 3:30 o'clock by the Hon. Robert Ephraim, first vice president, who, after a few remarks, introduced the Hon. E. B. Knox, the chairman of the meeting. Mr. Knox made an eloquent address. Hon. J. A. Craigen in his usual way brought forth rounds of applause. Hon. William Ware started the contest to raise funds for the Universal Liberty University at Claremont, Virginia. Cincinnati took the pennant, with Detroit and Chicago following in the order named.

Hon. R. R. Jackson, alderman for the Third Ward, one of the invited guests, spoke. Dr. Blaychetti of Abyssinia also spoke. The Motor Corps for Cincinnati sang "That Man Garvey." The choir of Chicago Division, under the leadership of Mr. Scales and Madam Robinson, rendered fine music. The visiting chorus of 30 voices from the West Side, under the direction of Mrs. Washington, brought thunderous applause. Gary's Band of 38 pieces also rendered its full share. An enjoyable day was spent and it was with reluctance that the members and friends bade each other farewell before departing for their respective homes.

The first train to leave was one bearing the Cleveland and Youngstown group on account of having to make many stops. The Cincinnati special left Illinois Central Station at 9 o'clock. The Detroit Flyer was the last to leave. Hon. E. B. Knox went to the Dearborn station and saw Hon. J. A. Craigen and his group depart.

Miss Holland, one of the faithful members of the Chicago Division, gave a lunch at the Bon Ton Grill in honor of the visiting officers. Among those present were Hon. E. B. Knox, Hon. William Ware and Mrs. Ware, Miss Toliver and Miss Roberts of Cincinnati, H. Balfour Williams, Hon. G. B. Pickens and many others. S. R. JACKSON, Reporter. ("Midwestern Divisions Hold Chicago Reunion," *Negro World*, September 17, 1927)

September 18 (Sunday): [Cleveland] Mass meeting held in Cleveland at 2 p.m. They sang "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." Later President Davis of the Barberton Division spoke (Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 8, 1927).

October 9 (Sunday): [Akron] The Presidents' Council met at 1:30 in the afternoon at UNIA Hall in Akron. The meeting was announced the day before. Among the council, was Cleveland's President S. V. Robertson ("Meeting is Called," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 8, 1927).

October 9 (Sunday): [Cleveland] Mass meeting in Cleveland featured a short address by Cleveland Division President, S. V. Robertson, who "just returned from a trip to Akron" (Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 29, 1927).

October 23 (Sunday): [Barberton] Meeting held by the Barberton Division:

On October 23 we opened our meeting under the leadership of the vice-president Mr. W. H. Bolden, by singing the opening song, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountain.' Prayer was offered alternately, then the program for the day was opened. The opening address was made by Madam Davis, on the subject, "Keeping the Spirit of Garveyism." She talked for about forty minutes.

The talk by Madame Davis was very interesting and enjoyed by all. After this opening address the meeting for the day was turned over to the vice-president, Mr. Bolden. He made the principal address. When the speech was completed, everyone seemed to take on new courage, hoping to do more in the future than what has been done in the past. WILLIE LUE JOHNSON, Reporter. (Willie Lue Johnson, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, November 5, 1927)

October 27: [Akron] Two hundred fifty people attended UNIA Hall for a political meeting hosted by the Young Men's Progressive Club and its 19 auxiliary organizations (*Akron Beacon Journal*, October 27, 1927).

November 6 (Sunday): [Barberton] Regular mass meeting held by the Barberton Division at 3 in the afternoon:

On Sunday, November 6, Barberton Division held its regular mass meeting at 3:00 p. m. The meeting was opened by singing the opening song, 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains.' Prayer was offered alternately, after which the program for the day was entered upon.

First on the program was the reading of the first page of the *Negro World*, by Mr. Homer Alexander, under the subject, "Scrapping the Intellectuals," the leading point was to show how disloyal and selfish the average Negro "intellectual," of the passing generation to his race; the second point was to show how our Negroes, after getting an education, which was his privilege for the last twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, has turned the Negro race, and instead of preserving his race he intermingles with his white people and not with his own, this is the greatest fault of our Negroes today.

The next on program was a stirring address given by our Mr. Davis. He held the audience for forty minutes. His subject was "Stick Until You Can't Stick,

Then Stick Anyway. WILLIE LUE JOHNSON, Reporter. (Willie Lue Johnson, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, November 19, 1927)

November 6 (Sunday): [Akron/Barberton] "Presidents' Council" organized by President William Davis of Barberton and President Alex Davis of Akron:

The Honorable Mr. Wm. Davis of Barberton Division and the Honorable Mr. Elex Davis, of Akron Division, has organized a "President's Council," in Northern Ohio. This council consists of ten divisions, including Barberton Division, and Akron, Waynesburg, Canton, Cleveland, Alliance, Youngstown and Warren. The object of this council is to create a better working spirit with the members and presidents, and to co-operate between divisions, and to work for the uplift of each division.

Hon. Mr. Davis, of Barberton advanced the idea of this council, and the council is to meet once a month.

Officers of the council are: Mr. G. A. Ward, of Alliance Division, chairman of the council; Mr. Elex Davis, of Akron Division, secretary; Mr. Taylor, of Akron Division, treasurer; Mr. Wm. Davis, of Barberton Division, chairman of the political union. WILLIE LUE JOHNSON, Reporter. (Willie Lue Johnson, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, November 19, 1927)

November 16: [Akron] Progressive Club auxiliaries, led by Leon Gordie, met at UNIA Hall at 8:15 in the evening to discuss emancipation celebration plans ("Progressive Club Auxiliaries Meet," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 15, 1927; "Plans for Emancipation Celebration," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 16, 1927).

November 20: [Cleveland] Cleveland Division held a mass meeting where Hon. S. V. Robertson shared greetings from the Akron, Barberton, and other Ohio divisions after returning from his tour of the state (Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 3, 1927).

December 1: [Akron] The Young Men's Progressive Club met at UNIA Hall at 7:30 p.m. ("City News Briefs," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 30, 1927).

## 1928

January 14: [Akron/Barberton] Published that J. W. Simms of Barberton and H. Graham of East Akron were *Negro World* agents for their respective cities ("About Negro World Agents," *Negro World*, January 14, 1928).

January 15 (Sunday): [Toledo] William Davis appeared at a regular mass meeting held by the Toledo Division. In her report of the meeting, Rosa Lu Johnson commented, "We were highly honored by having with us the Hon. William Davis of Barberton, O. We are always glad to have Mr. Davis with us. Sunday night he held the audience spellbound for an hour" (Rosa Lu Johnson, "Toledo, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 28, 1928).

January 22 (Sunday): [Akron] Rev. G. H. Ward, Alliance; Rev. W. M. Green, Toledo; and G. W. Spears of Massillon spoke at a mass meeting of the UNIA in the afternoon at 157 E. Center Street (*Akron Beacon Journal*, January 21, 1928).

April 24: [Barberton] Meeting was held by the Barberton Division, Henry Lewis became president again, and new members joined:

The Barberton Division has pledged among themselves to play their part in putting over the great cause of Africa's Redemption. Many of the old members have returned since the president, Mr. Henry Lewis, is again leader of our division. The members say "forward march" until the great cause has been accomplished.

A meeting was held at Liberty Hall, [315?] Wolfe Street, April 24. It was opened by the Chaplain, Rev. A. L. Lewis, scripture reading followed by a song by the audience, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and prayer in concert. The president introduced the speaker of the evening, the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Rev. W. S. McGahee. The subject on which he talked was "The Oppression of the American Negro." Rev. McGahee was a live wire, and the audience was uplifted. He also said that he would always be a member of the association and help as long as he lives for the cause.

He said many good things that will linger with the peoples of Barberton. He was loudly applauded. A duet was sung by Horace Ward and Charlie Bruce. The president introduced our chaplain, who made a brief talk. He said many words of good cheer. The president called for new members and four joined. After the collection, the audience was dismissed by the chaplain. NEALIE BRUCE, Reporter. (Nealie Bruce, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 19, 1928)

May 5: [Barberton] Published that Barberton members (Mary Lewis, Sam Bartee, Ernest Merritt, Tom Housdon, Henry E. Lewis, and Horace Ward) donated to a Legal Defense fund for Miami members, Claude Green and J. B. Nemo ("Wanted Immediately \$1,000 From 1,000 Members," *Negro World*, May 10, 1928).

June 3 (Sunday): [Akron] "An excursion left Cleveland at 11 a. m. Sunday morning, June 3, over the Pennsylvania Railroad, with twelve coaches crowded, for Akron, Ohio." The parade started in front of Liberty Hall, 157 E. Center. The "big demonstration with parade was held together with Cleveland, Akron, Alliance, Massillon, Warren, Youngstown, Barberton, Canton and Lorain, also Miles Heights Village. A monster mass meeting was held at Bowen School, one of the largest auditoriums in Akron. Hon. S. V. Robertson, president of the Cleveland Division, was master of ceremonies and delivered the opening address, after which the Rev. A. G. Ellenburg, chaplain of the Cleveland Division, made a most excellent address and introduced to the overcrowded audience the speaker of the evening, Madame A. I. Robertson, of Cleveland. Madame Robertson arose amidst loud applause and took as her topic of discourse, 'Government.' The meeting was snappy and everyone enjoyed being present. The Universal Band rendered very inspiring music along with the Universal Choir, both from the Cleveland Division. The meeting was closed with the playing of the Ethiopian National Anthem by the Band." (Louise Edwards, "Cleveland, Ohio," *Negro World*, June 16, 1928). The *Akron Beacon Journal* also noted that Mrs. A. I. Robinson was Nicaraguan and that "the association plans to take an active part in local and national politics and will sponsor a movement for the institution of a national government in Africa" ("Nicaraguan to talk at mass meeting," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 29, 1928).

- June 10: [Akron] The Akron Division of the UNIA participated in the dedication of the first unit of the Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church at Locust and Chestnut Streets. Rev. G. G. Morgan led the congregation at that time. Other organizations that participated include the AME Zion choir, Delta Lodge, No. 149, IBPOEW, Daughter of Elks, and Knights of Pythias, Odessa Lodge No. 9 (“Methodists to Dedicate Unit of New Building,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 9, 1928).
- June 10: [Barberton] “Barberton Division, No. 408, held its regular mass meeting at 315 Wolfe street on June 10. The opening service was conducted by the Chaplain. The First Vice-President announced the front page of the *Negro World* would be read by Charlie Bruce. Every one was enthused to hear the message of Hon. Marcus Garvey. A duet was sung by C. B. Bruce and H. W. Ward. The speaker of the evening was Rev. T. M. Mills. He said many things that made us all feel uplifted. Remarks by Rev. W. S. McGahee and by the Vice-President, Rev. J. Martin followed, after which the meeting was closed with the singing of the Ethiopian Anthem. NELLIE BRUCE, Reporter” (Nellie Bruce, “Barberton, Ohio,” *Negro World*, July 14, 1928).
- June 12: [Akron] Hon. J. A. Craigen, High Commissioner for the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, was scheduled to visit Akron on June 12 to “deliver to them the message of the President-General, in the interest of Liberty University” (E. B. Knox, “Hon. J. A. Craigen to Make Extended Tour of Divisions,” *Negro World*, June 9, 1928).
- August 31-September 1: [Cleveland] A President’s Conference was held at Liberty Hall in Cleveland (see fig. 4 in chapter 2 for a photograph taken at this event):

Group of presidents and delegates from the various Divisions of Ohio of the Universal Negro Improvement Association who attended the President’s Conference which convened in the City of Cleveland, Liberty Hall, 2200 E. 40th street, August 31 and September 1, 1924. The conference was called by the High Commissioner, Sir William Ware, for the Presidents of the State of Ohio only. There were eighteen divisions and chapters represented. The commissioner will call a similar conference in the near future of the Presidents of the States of Indiana and Kentucky.

Those represented in the group are: Bottom row (left to right): Miss Lara Jarrett, Executive Secretary of Cincinnati Division and Secretary of Conference; Sir William Ware, High Commissioner and President of the Cincinnati Division; Hon. S. V. Robertson, President of Cleveland Division; Mrs. Leona Caldwell, Secretary of Toledo, and Mr. Elder Tripp, President of Akron.

Second row (right to left): Mr. J. P. Watson, Secretary of Alliance; Mr. Benjamin Montgomery, President of Dayton; Mr. Milton McGee, President of Zanesville; Mrs. E. McGee, field worker in Ohio; Hon. Fred E. Johnson, President of Columbus; Mr. G. W. Heard, President of Lorain; and Rev. A. C. Ellenburg, President of Warren. Top row (left to right): Mr. George Scott, President of College Hill Chapter, Cincinnati; Rev. Calvin Young, President of Springfield; Rev. J. Westbrook, President of Canton; Mr. Thomas Autry, President of Massillon; Mr. G. R. Coleman, President of Youngstown; Mr. Sam Tentman, delegate from Waynesburg Division, and Mr. J. B. Boykins, first vice president of Hamilton division.

The following subjects were discussed thoroughly by the conference, and great results were derived therefrom:

What is the President's duty to his division?

What is the President's duty to the parent body?

What is the president's duty to the membership?

What is the attitude of the U. N. I. A. to the Church?

What is the relationship of the U. N. I. A. to Universal Liberty University?

The conference was a phenomenal success in every respect, and all due to the able and masterful way in which High Commissioner Ware conducted the proceedings. Every President pledged his financial support in the future of Universal Liberty University.

Much credit is to be given the High Commissioner for making this most needed and helpful occasion possible, and also to Hon. S. V. Robertson and members of the Cleveland Division, who made the visit of the Presidents and Delegates so pleasant, and who at the close of the conference gave a reception in their honor. ("Officers of Ohio Divisions in Cleveland Conference," *Negro World*, September 28, 1928)

September 9-15: [Barberton] "Barberton Division held a membership drive meeting in the week of September 9 to 15. Mr. Emma McGee personal representative of the U. N. I. A., was with us. She aroused and stirred the people of Barberton. It was also a treat to have with us on September 12 Rev. M. McGee, the President of Zanesville, Ohio, Division, her husband, whose presence made the meeting the much more interesting. We enrolled fourteen new members beside the old members, who returned to help us move on for the great cause of African Redemption. Mrs. McGee and her husband left us on Saturday, September 15, and everyone was sorry to see them go. She was a great help to our division and made us all feel uplifted. We are hoping to have her with us again in the near future. NEALIE BRUCE, Reporter" (Nealie Bruce, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, October 20, 1928).

December 2: [Barberton] "Barberton Division held its regular weekly mass meeting on Sunday, December 2. The president presided. After the preliminary services the front page of The Negro World was read by Lieutenant Bruce. The principal address of the afternoon was delivered by the president, Mr. H. E. Lewis. The first lady president, Mrs. Simms, also gave an interesting talk. S. J. McNEIL, Reporter" (S. J. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 22, 1928).

December 11: [Akron] Special Representative of the Parent Body G. B. Pickens visited the Akron Division:

The Akron Division was honored with the presence of the Honorable G. B. Pickens, Special Representative of the Parent Body, on December 11. The meeting was opened at 8 p. m. with singing of 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains' by the audience, led by the choir. Prayer in concert was led by the Chaplain, Rev. C. C. Hubbard, followed by the singing of "God Bless Our President." The president made the opening remarks and introduced the speaker of the evening in

the person of the Hon. G. B. Pickens, who rose from his seat in the midst of applause and delivered an aide address on the subject, "The Origin of Man."

Mr. Pickens' visit to our division was a complete success. His itinerary took him next to Youngstown and he left Akron with every one looking forward to his early return to us to lend his able help to a membership drive which has been launched by the Akron Division. ELDER TRIPP, Reporter. (Elder Tripp, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, December 22, 1928)

December 23: [Barberton] "The Barberton Division held a special mass meeting on Sunday, December 23. The President, Mr. H. E. Lewis, presided. The meeting opened with the usual religious service conducted by the Chaplain, Mr. Williams. The front page of The Negro World was read by Mr. Bruce. An interesting program of speeches and recitations followed. The principal speaker was Reverend James J. Price, pastor of Allen A. M. E. Church. The meeting closed in the usual form, with the benediction pronounced by the chaplain, Reverend Williams. SAMUEL J. M'NEIL, Reporter" (Samuel J. M'Neil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 5, 1929).

## 1929

January 6: [Barberton] "The Barberton Division held its regular mass meeting on Sunday, January 6, with the president, Mr. H. E. Lewis, in the chair. The meeting opened with the regular religious services, conducted by Chaplain Williams. The front page of The Negro World was read by Lieutenant Bruce of the Legions. The opening address was delivered by Mr. F. England. It was followed by a prayer for the safe keeping of the Honorable Marcus Garvey. After a short musical program the closing address was delivered by Reverend James J. Price. SAMUEL J. McNEIL, Reporter" (Samuel J. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 12, 1929).

January 13: [Barberton] "Mrs. Octavia Thomas was the honored guest of the Barberton Division on Sunday, January 13. A special program was rendered. The meeting opened with religious program conducted by Mr. H. E. Lewis, assisted by Reverend Williams. The program was arranged by Mrs. Cheatham, second lady vice-president. The principal address was delivered by Mrs. Thomas. It was much enjoyed by all. J. W. McNEIL, Reporter" (J. W. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, January 26, 1929).

May 9: [Akron] Mass meeting was held by the Akron Division in honor of visiting Hon. E. B. Knox, personal representative of Marcus Garvey:

The Akron Division had the good fortune of having with it, on May 9<sup>th</sup> the Hon. E. B. Knox, personal representative of the Hon. Marcus Garvey, for whom a huge mass meeting was staged at the second Baptist church. We are proud to report that the meeting was a success both morally and financially.

After a short address by the chaplain, Rev. C. C. Hubbard who laid much stress on the necessity of dreamers such as the Hon. Marcus Garvey, followed by a solo by Mrs. Clara Smith Cook, the associate secretary, the president introduced the Hon. E. B. Knox who rose and delivered a soul-stirring address, interrupted occasionally by the applauding audience.



One of the heartreaching points among the many made by the Hon. E. B. Knox, in his address was that "If the Chinese could describe God in the likeness of a Chinaman, if the Japanese could describe God in the likeness of a Japanese, if the white man, the four hundred million negroes of the world shall describe God in their own likeness regardless of what the world or anybody else may think about it." This brought the heartiest applause from everyone in the building.

The Hon. E. B. Knox aroused more interest in the city than has been since the presence of the Hon. Marcus Garvey. Mr. Knox left everybody who heard him proud of his visit to our city. ELDER TRIPP, Reporter. (Elder Tripp, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, May 25, 1929)

June 6: [Akron] Mass meeting held by the Akron Division; S. R. Wheat of Chicago was visiting:

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the Akron Division staged a big mass meeting in Liberty Hall, 157 East Center street to entertain the Hon. S. R. Wheat of Chicago, Ill., field worker, and special representative of the parent body.

Mr. Wheat was on the job as usual. The meeting began at 8 P. M. by repeating the 23 Psalms, led by Acting Chaplain, Rev. John McElwain, "From Greenland's Icy Mountain," were sung by the audience led by the choir, followed by prayer. "God Bless Our President" were sung by the choir.

Mr. Wheat was introduced and spoke from the subject, "The Eagle Sterred the Nest."

One of the many points made by the speaker was that as the eagle stirreth her nest so as to make it uncomfortable for the young eagles when at a certain age, the powers that be, have sterred the nest of the Negro the world over so much as that the Negro cannot find first anywhere he goes in foreign lands: therefore, he is constantly on the go from south to north, and from east to west, and yet unable to find that rest for which he has long prayed in agony and pains. God, through Marcus Garvey, has found but the one place in all the world, and that place is his Mother-land, Africa.

This brought applause from all assembled. Mr. Wheat left the city with everyone looking forward to his early return. ELDER TRIPP, Reporter. (Elder Tripp, "Akron, Ohio," *Negro World*, July 13, 1929)

## 1930

May 3: [Akron] Secretary-General Henrietta Vinton Davis published a list of new and renewed charters which included Akron Division No. 178. Other Ohio divisions were listed for Youngstown, Alliance, Cleveland, Highland Heights, Canton, College Hill, Garvey Club in Cincinnati, Toledo, Warren, Columbus, Springfield, and Massillon. She noted that this was not a comprehensive list (Henrietta Vinton Davis, "Universal Negro Improvement Association, African Communities League (August 1929) of World," *Negro World*, May 3, 1930).

July 26: [Akron] Published that the old Akron Division No. 215 was replaced by the New Business League Division No. 178 of the UNIA-ACL of the World, 1929, and the division had a new hall under construction:

We wish to notify all concerned that the old Akron Division No. 215 is no more. Same had been replaced by the New Business League Division No. 178 of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League of the World, 1929.

Our new hall is now under construction, and we are looking forward to the completion of same at which time we shall unveil our new charter in a monster mass meeting.

The Garvey spirit is rising higher and higher each day, and "Africa Must Be Redeemed" is our watchword.

Please let me add, if possible in unmistakable terms, that I started out to follow Garvey and his teachings in February, 1921, and, if you please, my mind has not changed the least bit since that date, neither am I disturbed by what others may say or do.

So I'll not take any more of your precious time because we too are busy trying to do our little bit in helping to hold up the arms of the Hon. Marcus Garvey and his programme.

We are very respectfully yours and co-workers for the cause of Africa and Marcus Garvey forever. ELDER TRIPP, Reporter. (Elder Tripp, "Akron Says, 'Africa Must Be Redeemed,'" *Negro World*, July 26, 1930)

## 1931

February 4: [Barberton] Paul Taylor, chairman of welfare work, for the Barberton Division of the UNIA, visited the police station inquiring about C. Louis Alexander. Police Chief Werntz told him that Alexander was in the jail on a vagrancy charge and would be released the following day ("Barberton Police Chief [Subpoenaed]," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1931). C. Louis Alexander was allegedly beaten and disappeared on February 2 ("Foul Play Hinted in Disappearance," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 16, 1931).

March 15: [Barberton] Barberton Division held its usual mass meeting:

Barberton Division No. 337 met for its usual mass meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was opened by the Chaplain, Rev. Lewis.

The literary part of the program was as follows: Reading of the President-General's message by N. J. McNeil, followed with responses by Rev. Lewis, Rev. Martin and 1<sup>st</sup> vice-president, F. Engle. Paper by Miss Taylor, brief remarks by Mr. Anderson, remarks by R. Young; address by Rev. Yancey.

The unveiling of the charter was done by Bro. J. W. Simms. He spoke Together."

The meeting was then brought to a close with the singing of the Ethiopian National Anthem. S. J. McNEIL, Reporter. (S. J. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, March 28, 1931)

- April 4: [Barberton] Published that "Barberton Division No. 337, U. N. [I]. A., 1929 met with President S. Bartee. Presiding over the meeting was done in due form by our Chaplain, Rev. Lewis. The message from the Hon. Marcus Garvey was read by Mr. H. Lewis and Mr. David Small, the only race tailor in our city. He was a heart searcher and eye-opener. He was followed by Mr. R. F. Fisher. He brought many good things to the audience and it packed the house. There was a debate by Rev. F. M. Yancey and Rev. A. H. Thomas—both of our city—subject, 'Nature of Man.' First came Rev. Yancey, who gave some deep thoughts on Nature, and every one enjoyed the discussion; then came Rev. Thomas—he never left a stone unturned, for man is ruler of the world. We had a joyful meeting. Everyone was made to feel glad. S. Burtee, President. J. W. McNeil, Reporter" (S. Bartee and J. W. McNeil, "Barberton, Ohio," *Negro World*, April 4, 1931).
- June 8: [Barberton] In regards to an investigation of the Barberton Police department's handling of the C. Louis Alexander case, Paul Taylor testified in front of a grand jury: "Paul Taylor, chairman of welfare work for the Universal Improvement Association, testified under oath at the Robertson hearing that he had visited the police station February 4 and was told by Werntz that Alexander was then in jail on a vagrancy charge but would be released the next day" ("Barberton Police Chief [Subpoenaed]," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1931).
- July 21: [Akron] Mayoral Candidate Ross Walker spoke at UNIA Hall "to a session of his colored voters' club" ("Sparks Assails Partisan Spirit," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 20, 1931).
- July 31: [Barberton] C. Louis Alexander was questioned for hours by the grand jury. He told his story of being beaten and driven out of town by the Barberton Police. Afterwards, Mrs. Ella Mae Ingol, Garfield Taylor, and Paul Taylor were witnesses in front of the grand jury investigating the Barberton Police Department for misconduct in the case. They were subpoenaed by the Akron NAACP ("Jurors Continue Alexander Quiz," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 31, 1931). It was suggested that C. Louis Alexander was targeted for "his activities in connection with the Barberton Council of the Unemployed" ("Man Disappears, Probe is Opened," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 12, 1931).
- August 3: [Barberton] UNIA member Rev. A. L. Lewis testified in front of the grand jury investigating the Barberton Police Department for misconduct in the C. Louis Alexander case. Rev. A. L. Lewis "was studying for the ministry" with Alexander ("Barberton Police Chief [Subpoenaed]," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 1931).
- September 12: [Barberton] Small note published: "Samuel J. W. McNeil, Barberton, Ohio, writes: 'I am enclosing my signed ballot for the return of Marcus Garvey to the United States of America'" ("They All Want Garvey Back," *Negro World*, September 12, 1931).
- September 26: [Barberton] Published that Walter Sheets of Barberton, Ohio, had entered a popularity contest hosted by the *Negro World*. This was a promotion by the *Negro World* to increase their readership. Those who wanted to participate had to write in and then encourage readers of the *Negro World* to write in and vote for them. The prize was a free

ticket to Liberia. If they reached 250, 400, or 600 votes, they received third-, second-, or first-class passage to Liberia (“Popularity Contest Is Forging Ahead; Great Interest Is Shown,” *Negro World*, September 26, 1931).

## 1932

February 27: [Barberton] Published that “the International Organizer, Madame M. L. T. DeMena, spoke at our local Division. Her subject was: ‘Negro, Where Are You Going?’ which was enjoyed by all. A Junior U. N. I. A. and a Junior U. N. I. A. Legion were organized under the Division, consisting of about fifteen members. Socials were also given to the great delight of all present. GRANVILLE GARTIER” (Granville Gartier, “Barberton, Ohio, Div. No. 326,” *Negro World*, February 27, 1932).

## 1936

November 28: [Akron] In the *Akron Beacon Journal*, Rev. John Riley urged all members to be present at an important meeting called for Sunday, November 29, at 3 p.m. at 325 N. Howard St. The meeting included a report back from the international convention held in Toronto in June (“Akron News Briefly Told,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 28, 1936).

## 1941

[Akron] Thomas W. Harvey became State Commissioner of Ohio in 1941. He had a directory of “Commissioner Important Membership: List of the State of Ohio” that listed two divisions in Akron. Division 179 at the address 325 N. Howard Street and Division 178 at 234 Campbell Street. David Caldwell was the president and John Riley was the secretary of Division 179. There is likely an error here because 234 Campbell Street was Caldwell’s home address (“List of Divisions” in *Commissioner Important Membership: List of the State of Ohio*, Box 17, Folder 31, Universal Negro Improvement Association records, 1916, 1921-1989, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University).

## 1964

January 25: [Akron] When Rev. David Caldwell, last known president of the Akron Division of the UNIA, retired from Good Hope Baptist Church, the announcement mentioned “the outgoing pastor has been active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Improvement Club of Akron,” possibly referring to his involvement in the UNIA (“Good Hope Baptist Pastor Retiring,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 25, 1964).

## 1979

September 5: [Akron] James E. Poole (42), his wife Audrey, and their son Reggie planned a trip to East Africa. James Poole planned to take a position there with the YMCA. He wrote, “My interest in Africa was first kindled when members of my family and supporters of

the Marcus Garvey Universal Negro Improvement Association talked about the idea of going to Africa” (“Akron Family is Packing for five-year East Africa Stay,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 5, 1979).

## APPENDIX B

### UNIA PRESENCE IN OHIO

This is a list of Ohio cities that had a UNIA presence. It is divided into three parts: (1) divisions; (2) chapters and Garvey Clubs; and (3) supporters that were not affiliated with a specific division. This group included cities with supporters who donated money, submitted poems, wrote editorials, and served as *Negro World* agents or subscribers but did not have a division. When division or chapter numbers were known, they were included in parentheses. This list was compiled from the division membership cards at the Schomburg whose division names have been reprinted in Tony Martin's *Race First*, the *Negro World*, and Robert Hill's *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vol. VII:993. A map of this information can be found in figure 1.

#### Divisions

Cleveland (59); Hamilton (68); Youngstown (123); Columbus (142); Cincinnati (146); Springfield (205); Dayton (214); Akron (215); Medina (233); Santoy (258); Sandusky (265); New Plymouth (308); Struthers (309); Toledo (348); Middletown (384); Barberton (408); Swartsville [Stewartsville?] (451); Steubenville (498); Lorain (622); Xenia (632); Alliance (712); Duncanwood (736); Canton (737); Massillon (738); Barton (774); Lorain (810); Warren (819); Waynesburg (832); Franklin (855); Hamilton (863); Chillicothe; Danville; Miles Heights Village; Pomeroy; Zanesville

#### Chapters and Garvey Clubs

South Side (Columbus) Chapter (8A); Cleveland Chapter (9); College Hill (Cincinnati) Chapter (37); American Addition (Columbus) Chapter (46); Walnut Hill (Cincinnati) Chapter (55); St. Clair (Cleveland) Chapter (68); Highland Heights (Bedford) Chapter (76); Hamilton Chapter (98); Columbus Garvey Club; Home View (Dayton); Ethiopian Club (374); Hill Top Division (Columbus); Hamilton Avenue (Cleveland) Chapter; Union Hills

#### Supporters

Bellaire; Campbell; East Liverpool; Elyria; Geneva; Kent; Lockland; Niles; Newark; New London; Newton Falls; Oberlin; Ravenna

## APPENDIX C

### OHIO'S UNIA CITIES BY POPULATION, 1920

Table 2. Ohio's UNIA cities by population, 1920

Cleveland	796,841
Cincinnati	401,247
Toledo	243,164
Columbus	237,031
Akron	208,435
Dayton	152,559
Youngstown	132,358
Canton	87,091
Springfield	60,840
Hamilton	39,675
Lorain	37,205
Zanesville	29,569
Steubenville	28,508
Warren	27,050
Newark	26,718
Middletown	23,584
Sandusky	22,897
Alliance	21,603
East Liverpool	21,411
Elyria	20,474
Barberton	18,811
Massillon	17,428
Chillicothe	15,831
Bellaire	15,061

Niles	13,080
Campbell	11,237
Xenia	9,110
Ravenna	7,219
Kent	7,070
Struthers	5,847
Bedford	4,582
Pomeroy	4,294
Oberlin	4,286
Lockland	4,007
Medina	3,430
Geneva	3,081
Franklin	3,071
Miles Heights Village	~1,500
New London	1,470
Newton Falls	1,100
Waynesburg	978
Santoy	976
Danville	383
Duncanwood	unincorporated
New Plymouth	unincorporated
[Stewartsville]	unincorporated
Barton	unincorporated

## APPENDIX D

### LEADERSHIP OF THE AKRON AND BARBERTON DIVISIONS

This appendix lists Garveyites who held leadership positions in the Akron and Barberton Divisions. This information was derived from the timeline in appendix A. Because available sources do not discuss every election, these lists are incomplete. Estimated dates or date ranges of service are included, but these should be considered incomplete as well.

#### Akron Division

##### Presidents

Rev. Walter J. Tucker	1921
Moses T. Wimbish	1921-24
Illerfearris Autry	1924
Alexander Davis	1924-27
John McElwain	1927
Elder Tripp	1930-35
David Caldwell	1939-41

##### Vice Presidents

Peter Coker	1922
Illerfearris Autry	1922-24
Louis Suttles	1925
Mr. Hill	1927

##### Secretaries

Novella McDonald	1922
Ocie Gilmore	1922
Matthew McDay, Asst. Secretary	1922
D. Conrad Sellers	1924
Moses T. Wimbish	1925-27
John Riley	1936-41

##### Treasurers

Herman S. Miller	1922
James Taylor	1923-25

##### Chaplains

Rev. Thomas Young	1922
Rev. Charles C. Hubbard	1924-29
Rev. John McElwain	1929

##### Ladies' Division



Carrie Turner, President	1922
Mary Woods, Secretary	1922
Emma Autry, President, Head Nurse	1925
Effie Player, First Vice President	1925
Mrs. Shielby, Second Vice President	1925
Lillian Taylor, Third Vice President	1925

### **Universal African Legions**

William Crawford, President	1922
Oliver L. McDonald, Major	1924-25
William Crawford, Captain	1924-25
Alvin Gilmore, Lieutenant	1924-25
William M. Jenkins, Lieutenant	1924-25
Moses Watts, Sergeant	1924-25
Joe Alexander, Private	1924-25
A. Williams, Private	1924-25
William M. Wade, Private	1924-25

### **Juvenile Division**

Helen Turner, President	1922
Mamie Carroll, Vice President	1922
Bertha Gilmore, Secretary	1922
Nettie McWain, Asst. Secretary	1922
Clara Smith, Treasurer	1922
Lucile Humphrey, Chaplain	1922
Rosia Gilmore, Guardian	1922

### **Advisory Board**

Charles Grundy	1922
J. S. Walker	1922
John Daniel	1922
Philmore Carroll	1922
John McElwain	1922
James S. Douglas	1922
Alex Davis	1922

### **Board of Trustees**

Fred Gilmore, Chairman	1922
James Taylor	1922
James S. Wilcher	1922
A. A. Mayo	1922

### **Reporters**

Louis N. Toney	1921-22
Gazzie Crawford	1925-26
Illerfearris Autry	1926

Louise Davis	1926
Willie Lu Johnson	1927
Elder Tripp	1928-30

### **Barberton Division**

#### **Presidents**

William M. Davis	1925-28
Henry Lewis	1928-29
Samuel Bartee	1931

#### **Vice Presidents**

W. H. Bolden	1927
Frank Ingol	1931
Rev. J. Martin	1928

#### **Secretaries**

Nealie Bruce	1926
Bessie Rogland	1926

#### **Chaplains**

Rev. A. L. Lewis	1928-31
Rev. Williams	1928-29

#### **Ladies' Division**

Mrs. Brouse, President	1925
Louvenia Simms, President	1928
Ethel Palmer, President	1926
Catherine Bailey, Head Nurse	1926
Josephine Cheatham, Second Lady Vice President	1929

#### **Reporters**

Morris Simms	1925
Eva Sheets	1925
William H. Bowling	1922-26
Nealie Bruce	1926-28
Samuel J. W. McNeil	1928-31

#### **Chairman of Welfare Work**

Paul Taylor	1931
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### **Akron and Barberton Members on the Ohio President's Council (formed Nov. 1927)**

Alexander Davis, Secretary (Akron)  
 James Taylor, Treasurer (Akron)  
 William M. Davis, Chairman (Barberton/Toledo)

## APPENDIX E

### MEMBERSHIP (UNEDITED)

This list is compiled of names gathered primarily from articles in the *Negro World*. Twenty-seven names came from page 37 of Leon Gordie's *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity*. A few came from articles in the *Akron Beacon Journal* and interviews with descendants of Garveyites, and Charles R. and Edna Lewis were added to the list after reading McClain, "The Contributions of Blacks in Akron, 1825-1975." The names may contain spelling errors but are listed here as they were written in the sources. Duplicates have been removed. Appendix F contains a shorter list that has been cross-referenced. The Akron list contains 245 names and the Barberton list includes 109 names. Considering that these are only members whose names were published, this is only a sample of Garvey's supporters in Akron and Barberton.

#### Akron

Acrem, Mr. and Mrs.	Campbell, John	Douglas, James S.
Alexander, Joe	Carr, Ae	Duncan, Mr.
Allen, Arthur	Carroll, Mamie	Epps, Mrs. A. D.
Ankum, Mrs. Victoria	Carroll, Philmore	Ford, W. M.
Archer, Harry	Casey, A.	Fowler, Eva
Aubrey, John	Chryer, T. W.	Frison, Henry
Austin, T. H.	Clarke, Rev. B. C.	Fuller, Mrs.
Autry, John	Clarke, Reverend S. C.	Gilmore, Bertha
Autry, Miss Vonceil	Coker, Peter	Gilmore, Fred
Autry, Mrs. Emma	Colvin, Evelyn	Gilmore, Lieutenant A.
Autry/Autrey, I. F.	Colvin, W. E.	Gilmore, Mrs. Rosia
Baber, Bishop J. D.	Cook, Cary/Carey	Gilmore, Ocle
Baily, Mrs. Catherine	Cook, Mrs. Carrie	Gladman, J.
Bibbins, Amanda	Cooke, Mrs. Mary	Gordie, Leon
Bicks, T.	Crawford, Captain	Graham, Henry
Black, Amos	Crawford, Mrs. William	Green, Rev. J.
Brooks, Adolphus	Crawford, William	Greene, Thomas E.
Broon, Fred	Crawley, Elijah A.	Grundy, Charles
Brown, Ruth	Cruse, Mrs. Irene	Hale, Israel
Brown, Samuel	Daniel, John	Hale, Mr. Clifton
Brown, Sarah	Daniels, F. M.	Hale, Walter
Bruton, D. D.	Darman, LeRoy	Hamilton, C. R.
Burris, Ada/Ida	Davis, Alex/Alexander	Hamilton, H.
Burris, George	Davis, Mrs. Louise	Harr, Lee
Burson, Miss Laurie	Davis, William	Harris, Floyd
Burton, Robert	Donald, Nellie	Harris, Mr.
Caldwell, David	Dorson, M. L.	Harris, W. M.
Calvery, Mr.	Douglas, Ella	Harris, Willie

Hartone, J.	Martin, Miss Fannie Mae	Ricketts, Mrs. Henry
Hawthorne, James	Massey, W. H.	Riley, Rev. John
Henderson, Arthur	Mayfield, Rev. Dr.	Roberson, Mariah
Hendley, Viola	Mayo, A. A.	Robinson, Wm.
Hendricks, Lovell	McCarvey, Leola	Rogland, Bessie
Hicks, George	McDay, Matthew	Satterwhite, J.
Hicks, Viola	McDonald, Major A. L.	Sellers, D. Conrad
Hill, F.	McDonald, Mrs. Sara	Shakespear, E.
Hill, Ida	McDonald, Novella	Shelly, Mrs. Joe
Hill, Lewis	McDonald, O. L.	Shielby, Mrs.
Hill, Mr.	McElwain, Mr. M.	Shoaf, J. B.
Hubbard, Elmer	McElwain, Mr. M. T.	Siment, Mr.
Hubbard, Rev. C. C.	McElwain, Rosia	Simms, Annie
Hulton, Z.	McElwain/McElwaine, John	Smiley, Rev.
Humphrey, Lucile	McGall, Joe	Smiley, Rev. James H.
Hurst, Corene	McIlwaine, Simpson	Smith Cook, Mrs. Clara
Jackson, Cop	McVay, Guy	Smith, H.
James, A.	McWain, H.	Smith, Miss Clara
James, Binner	McWain, James	Smith, Mr.
James, Rinen E.	McWain, Lillie	Stanley, Rev.
Jeanette, Miss Ruth	McWain, Nettie	Stewart, Walker
Jeffles, Will	McWain, Peter	Strout, Reverend
Jenkins, Lieutenant W. M.	Miller, H. S.	Sutters, Mr. Louis
Jenkins, S. R.	Mitchell, J. R.	Tate, B. K.
Jenkins, William/Willie	Moise, J.	Taylor, I.
Johnson, Lizzie	Moon, H.	Taylor, James
Johnson, Louis	Murfey, Mr.	Taylor, Lilli
Jones, Annie	Murffer, Mr.	Thomas, Sam
Jones, I.	Neeley, Lydia E.	Toney/ Tony, L. N./ L. L.
Jones, Jerry	Patrick, Guy	Tripp, Elder
Jones, Mrs. Amanda	Patterson, Geo.	Tucker, Rev. Walter J.
Jones, Rev. Dr. R. Allen	Perkins, Miss Lucille	Turner, Helen
Jones, Richard	Phagon, J. L.	Turner, Mrs. Carrie
King, Mrs. Laura	Player, J. E.	Wade, Effie
Knott, M. S.	Player, Joe	Wade, Private W. M.
Knott, N. S.	Player, Joel	Wade, William
Latimore/Lattimore, Mollie	Player, Mrs. Effie	Wakely, E.
Lee, Hasley	Polk, W. W.	Walker, E. M.
Lewis, Charles	Polp, Mrs. Bessie	Walker, J. S.
Lewis, Ednah	Porch, C. L.	Walker, W. M.
Lindsay, A. J.	Porch, Eliza	Ware, Miss Maggie
Long, Rev.	Powell, W. M.	Washburn, Dr. W. R.
Lunda, C. L.	Powell, William	Washington, Floyd
Lyles, Ellen	Preston, Mrs. Ethel	Watson, Mrs. P. B.
Lytle, K.	Reese, G.	Watson, Sergeant Mose
Major, John	Ricketts, Mr. Henry	Watts, Ola

Weatherall, Jack  
Wilcher, J. S.  
Williams, D.  
Williams, Mr. Hansen  
Williams, Mrs.  
Williams, Mrs. D. Williams  
Williams, Mrs. L.  
Williams, Mrs. L. M.

Williams, Private A.  
Wimbish, Mrs. Julia  
Wimbish, Sarah  
Wimbish/Wimbush, Moses T.  
Wimbush, M. L.  
Withers, Mrs.  
Woods, Alfred  
Woods, Bessie

Woods, Mrs. Mary  
Woods, Rev.  
Young, J. W.  
Young, N.  
Young, Pearl  
Young, Phebia  
Young, Rev. Thomas

## Barberton

Alexander, Homer  
Anderson, Mr.  
Autry, Mrs.  
Baily, Mrs. Catherine  
Bartee, S.  
Bell, Mr. C. W.  
Browner, Mr. Bob  
Bolden, Mr.  
Bolden, Mrs. Leslie  
Bolden, W. H.  
Bowling, W. H.  
Brouse, Mrs.  
Browner, Mr. George  
Bruce, C. B.  
Bruce, Charlie  
Bruce, Nealie  
Cheatham, Josie  
Cheatham, Mrs.  
Cotton, Mr. Grant  
Crawford, Mrs. W. J.  
David, Mr.  
Davies, Mr. Please  
Davies, Mr. Robert  
Davies, Mrs. Elnora  
Davis, Elnora  
Davis, Madame  
Davis, William  
Ellis, Murry  
England, Mr. F.  
Engle, F.  
Fisher, Mr. R. F.  
Franks, John  
Freeman, Rev. K. S.  
Gartier, Granville

Hanserd, Isaac  
Hanserd, M.  
Harris, Mr. William  
Hopson, Mary B.  
Housdon, Tom  
Jackson, Mr. B. J.  
Jackson, Mr. Ernest  
Jackson, Mrs. Sallie B.  
Jasckson, Mrs. Essie  
Johnson, Willie Lu  
Jones, Beatrice  
Jones, Charlie  
Jones, Mattie  
Jones, Thelma  
Levin, M.  
Lewis, Mary  
Lewis, Mr. Henry/ H. E  
Lewis, Rev. A. L.  
Martin, Julius  
Martin, Mrs. Millie  
Martin, Rev. J.  
McAlray, Richard  
McElroy, James  
McFadden, J. W.  
McGahee, Rev. W. S.  
McGee, Mrs. Emma  
McNeil, N. J.  
McNeil, Samuel J. W.  
Merrit, Bessie L.  
Merrit, E. M.  
Merritt, Mr. Ernest  
Miles, Rev. T.  
Milligan, Mr. Rich  
Moore, C.

Mushott, Mrs. Bessie  
Mushott, Mrs. Sallie  
Narciss, Mr.  
Newsom, Mrs. Nancy  
Palmer, Ethel  
Parma, Mr. Huston  
Player, Mrs.  
Price, Rev. James J.  
Recht, M.  
Rice, Mrs. Mary Lee  
Rogland/Ragland, Bessie  
Scott, Jessie  
Scott, Mr. Jesse  
Scott, Mrs. Ida  
Sheets, Mrs. Eva  
Sheets, Walter  
Shoaf, Mr. J. B.  
Simms, Bro. J. W.  
Simms, Morris  
Simms, Mrs.  
Small, David  
Stanfield, L.  
Taylor, Miss  
Taylor, Mr. Garfield  
Taylor, Mr. James  
Taylor, P.  
Taylor, W. M.  
Thomas, Elbert  
Thomas, Mr. A. L.  
Thomas, Mr. Albert  
Thomas, Mrs.  
Thomas, Octavia  
Thomas, Rev. A. H.  
Ward, Horace

White, Mrs. Susie  
Williams, Rev.  
Wright, Mrs. Sarah

Yancey, Rev. F. M.  
Young, Annie B.  
Young, R.

Young, Rev.

## APPENDIX F

### MEMBERSHIP (CROSS-REFERENCED)

With membership numbers exceeding one thousand, this is only a sample of Garvey's supporters in Akron and Barberton. This list includes only members and supporters whose names have been cross-referenced in census data or city directories. It contains 123 people from Akron and 54 from Barberton. My conclusions in chapter 3 are based on this group. Maiden names, when known, are written in parentheses. Variations in spellings are divided by a slash. Nicknames are written in quotes.

#### Akron

Autry, Emma (Walker)	Gilmore, Alvin
Autry, Illerfearris	Gilmore, Ocie
Autry, John Ambos	Gilmore, Rosia
Bailey, Catherine	Gladman, John Henry
Black, Amos	Gordie, Leon
Brooks, Adolphus "Dock"	Graham, Henry
Burris, Ada	Greene, Jr., Thomas Edward
Burton, Robert	Grundy, Charles
Caldwell, David	Hale, Clifton
Campbell, John Henry	Hale, Israel
Carroll, Filmore/Philmore	Hale, Walter
Carroll, Mamie	Harris, Willie Lee
Casey, Anderson	Hawthorne, James
Chandler, Vonciel (Autry)	Henderson, Arthur
Chryer, Thomas Wilson	Hendley, Viola
Coker, Peter	Hendricks, Lovell
Cook, Carrie (Champlin)	Hicks, Viola
Cook, Cary	Hill, Lewis
Crawford, Gazzie	Hill, Virginia
Crawford, William	Hubbard, Elmer R.
Crawley, Jr., Elijah Alexander	Hubbard, Rev. Charles C.
Daniels, Foster Matthew	Humphrey, Lucile
Davis, Alexander	Hurst, Corene
Davis, Louise	James, Binner E.
Dorman, Leroy	Jenkins, William M.
Douglas, Ella	Johnson, Lewis/Louis
Douglas, James Stephen	Johnson, Elizabeth "Lizzie"
Epps, Elizabeth Addie	Jones, Amanda
Fowler, Eva	Jones, Annie
Frison, Henry	Jones, Jerry
Gilmore, Fred	Jones, Rev. Royal Allen

Jones, Richard  
Knott, Nelson S.  
Lewis, Charles  
Lewis, Ednah  
Martin, Fannie Mae  
Massey, William Henry  
McCorvey, Leola  
McDay, Matthew  
McDonald, Oliver L.  
McDonald, Novella  
McDonald, Sarah  
McElwain, John Early  
McElwain, Rosia  
McWain, Hopic (Rountree)  
McWain, Horace  
McWain, James  
McWain, Jeanette "Nettie"  
McWain, Lillie Belle (Rountree)  
McWain, Peter  
McWain, Simpson  
Miller, Herman Stephen  
Neely, Lydia E.  
Patrick, Guy  
Player, Effie  
Player, Joseph E.  
Polk, Bessie  
Polk, Walter W.  
Porch, Clifford Coley LeRoy  
Porch, Eliza (Gray)  
Powell, William  
Riley, John

Roberson, Mariah  
Sellers, David Conrad  
Shakespear, Elija  
Shelly, Nellie  
Smiley, Rev. James Henry  
Stewart, Walker  
Suttles, Bertha (Gilmore)  
Suttles, Louis Earnest  
Taylor, James  
Taylor, Lillie  
Thomas, Samuel  
Toney, Louis  
Tucker, Rev. Walter J.  
Turner, Carrie  
Turner, Helen  
Wade, Effie  
Wade, William M.  
Washington, Floyd  
Watts, Moses  
Watts, Ola (Barker/Banks)  
Watts, Pearl Benjamin (Johnson)  
Wilcher, James Samuel  
Wilcher, Viola  
Wimbish, Moses Thomas  
Wimbish, Sarah J. (Fields)  
Woods, Alfred  
Woods, Bessie  
Woods, Mary Belle  
Young, Phoebe  
Young, Thomas

### **Barberton**

Alexander, Omar  
Bartee, Samuel  
Bowling, William H.  
Bruce, Charles  
Bruce, Nealie  
Carter, Granville J.  
Cheatham, Josephine  
Cotton, Grant  
Davis, Alice  
Davis, Elnora  
Davis, Pleasant

Davis, William M.  
Ellis, James Murray  
Hopson, Mary (Barnett)  
Ingol, Frank  
Jackson, Benjamin  
Jackson, Ernest  
Jackson, Essie (White)  
Jackson, Sallie Belle (White)  
Johnson, Willie Lou  
Jones, Beatrice  
Lewis, Henry



Lewis, Mary  
Lewis, Rev. Alonzo L.  
Martin, Julius  
Martin, Millie  
McElroy, James  
McElroy, Richard  
McNeil, Samuel J. W.  
Merritt, Bessie  
Merritt, Ernest  
Milligan, Richard  
Newsome, Nancy  
Palmer, Houston  
Palmer, Will Ethel Lee (Bowens)  
Price, James J.  
Scott, Ida (Ellington)  
Scott, Jessie

Sheets, Eva  
Sheets, Walter  
Simms, Joseph W.  
Simms, Louvenia  
Simms, Morris  
Small, David  
Taylor, Garfield  
Taylor, Paul  
Taylor, Willam M.  
Thomas, Elbert  
Thomas, Rev. Abraham H.  
Ward, Horace  
White, Susie  
Yancey, Rev. I. M.  
Young, Anna  
Young, Rev. Eugene

APPENDIX G

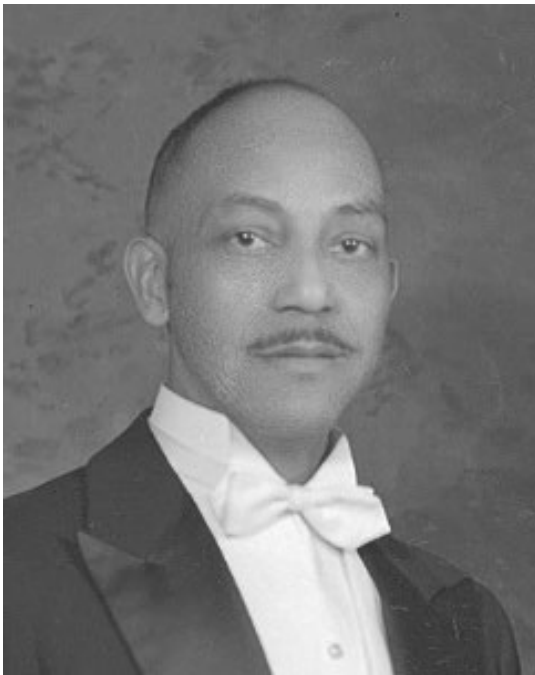
PHOTOGRAPHS OF AKRON AND BARBERTON'S GARVEYITES



William H. Bowling



Granville Carter



Anderson Casey, 1942



Vonciel (Autry) Chandler, 1943



Josephine Cheatham



Rev. Thomas Chryer



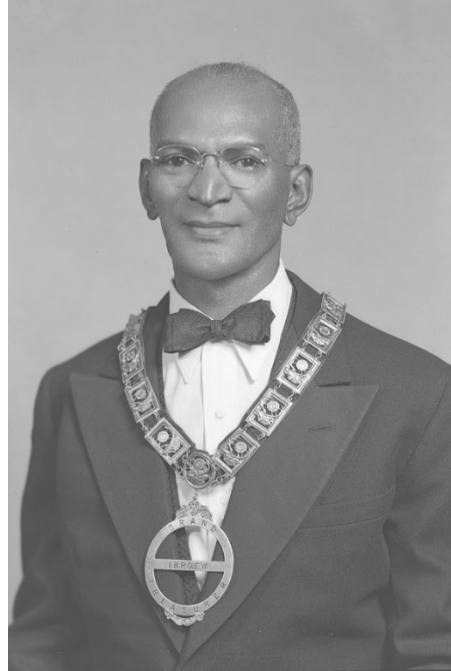
Lucille (Humphrey) Davis



John Gladman



Leon Gordie, 1944



Thomas "Ted" E. Greene, Jr., 1948



Lovell Hendricks



Frank Ingol, 1944



Elizabeth Johnson



Rev. Royal Allen Jones



Ednah Lewis, 1940

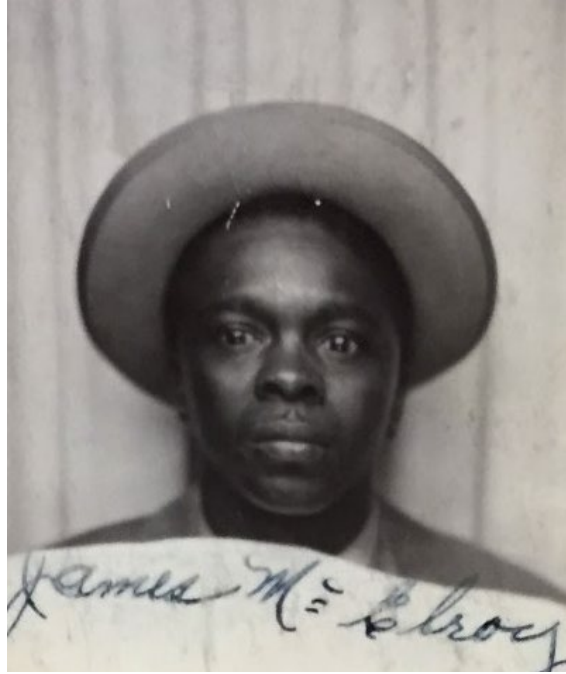


William Henry Massey





Matthew McDay, 1944



James McElroy



Houston Palmer



Eliza Porch, 1925



David Conrad Sellers



Paul Taylor



Rev. Abraham Thomas, 1945



Louis N. Toney



Elder Tripp, 1928



Moses Watts



Rev. I. M. Yancey

*Sources:* William H. Bowling: "William H. Bowling," *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 26, 1952; Granville Carter: Granville Carter, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Anderson Casey: Mr. and



Mrs. A. Casey, 1942, 734A, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Vonciel (Autry) Chandler: Vonciel Chandler, 1943, 850B, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Rev. Thomas Chryer: "New Pastor," *Sandusky Register*, November 16, 1945; Josephine Cheatham: Courtesy of Mabel Cheatham; Lucille (Humphrey) Davis: "Mrs. Lucille H. Davis," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 24, 1987; John Gladman: "Rev. John Gladman," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 8, 1962; Leon Gordie: Leon Gordie, 1944, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Thomas E. Greene, Jr.: Ted Greene, 1948, 94G, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Lovell Hendricks: "Lovell Hendricks," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 14, 1993; Frank Ingol: "Mr. F. J. Ingol," 1944, 596D, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Elizabeth Johnson: "Elizabeth Johnson," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 15, 1960; Royal Allen Jones: "Honored," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 5, 1940; Ednah Lewis: Mrs. Edna Lewis, 1940, 132A, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; William H. Massey: Courtesy of James D. Massey; Matthew McDay: Mr. and Mrs. McDay, 1944, 940C, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; James McElroy: Courtesy of James McElroy, Jr.; Houston Palmer: "Houston Palmer Rites Saturday," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 17, 1972; Eliza Porch: "The Grand Old Woman of Akron Division, U.N.I.A.," *Negro World*, April 11, 1925; David Conrad Sellers: "David C. Sellers," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 20, 1990; Paul Taylor: "45-Yr. Men Heads Firestone Retirees," September 9, 1962; Rev. Abraham Thomas: Rev. A. Thomas, 1945, 410E, Evelyn and Horace Stewart Photograph Collection, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron; Louis N. Toney: Leon Gordie, *Negro Yearbook of Akron and Vicinity* (Akron: Eureka Publishing Co., 1922), 38; Elder Tripp: "Officers of Ohio Divisions in Cleveland Conference," *Negro World*, September 28, 1928; Moses Watts: Moses Watts, *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 31, 1976; Rev. I. M. Yancey: Photograph added by "KennethYancey," "Rev. Israel M. Yancey," December 29, 2016, *FamilySearch.org*.

## APPENDIX H

### SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES: UNIA IN THE E. CENTER STREET NEIGHBORHOOD OF AKRON, 1921-1930

This appendix includes supplementary images related to the E. Center Street neighborhood map included in figure 11 in chapter 4.

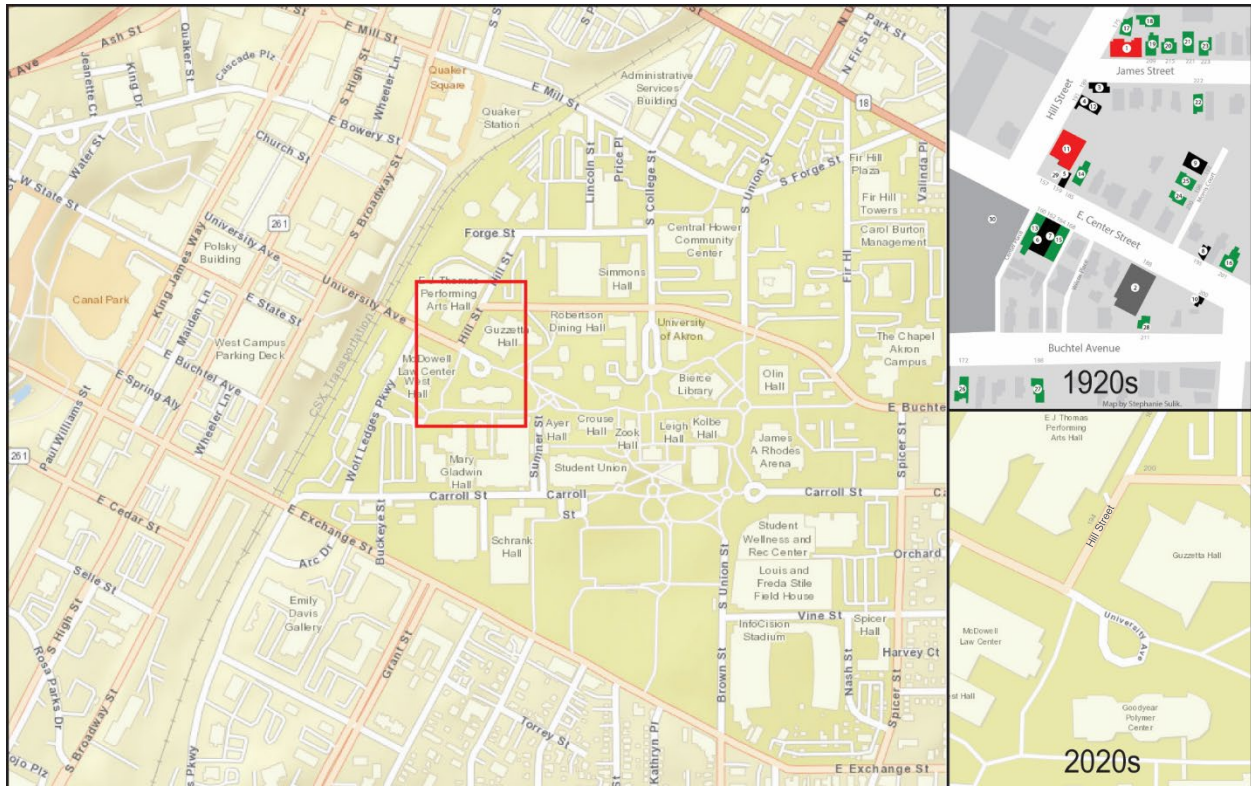


Figure 17. Locating Akron's E. Center Street Neighborhood. Street names have changed and streets have been redirected, making the E. Center Street neighborhood, home of the Akron Division's Liberty Hall, difficult to locate on a present-day map. This supplementary map identifies the historical location of the E. Center Street neighborhood in the present-day by comparing the map from chapter 4 (top-right) to a present-day map of the same area (bottom-right). The University of Akron's Guzzetta Hall now stands at the intersection where UNIA Liberty Hall was located, and E. Center Street is now University Avenue.



Figure 18. Unobstructed aerial view of the E. Center Street Neighborhood. Akron Aerials, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company Records, Archival Services, University Libraries, The University of Akron.

## APPENDIX I

### FREQUENCY OF THE NAME MARCUS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

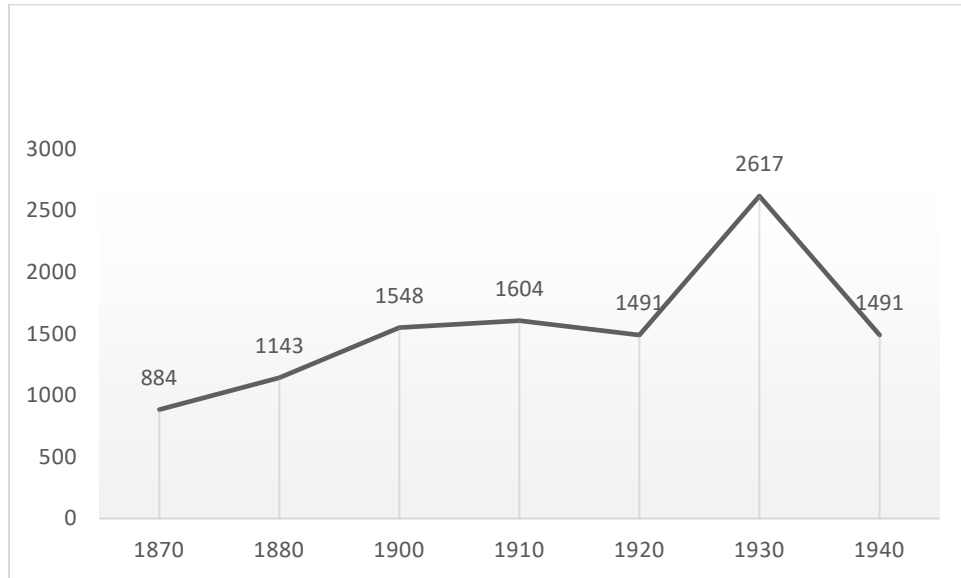


Figure 19. Frequency of the name Marcus among African Americans in the US Census

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