

# DOWNTOWN AKRON SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR



## FEBRUARY 2021 TOUR: Black History Month

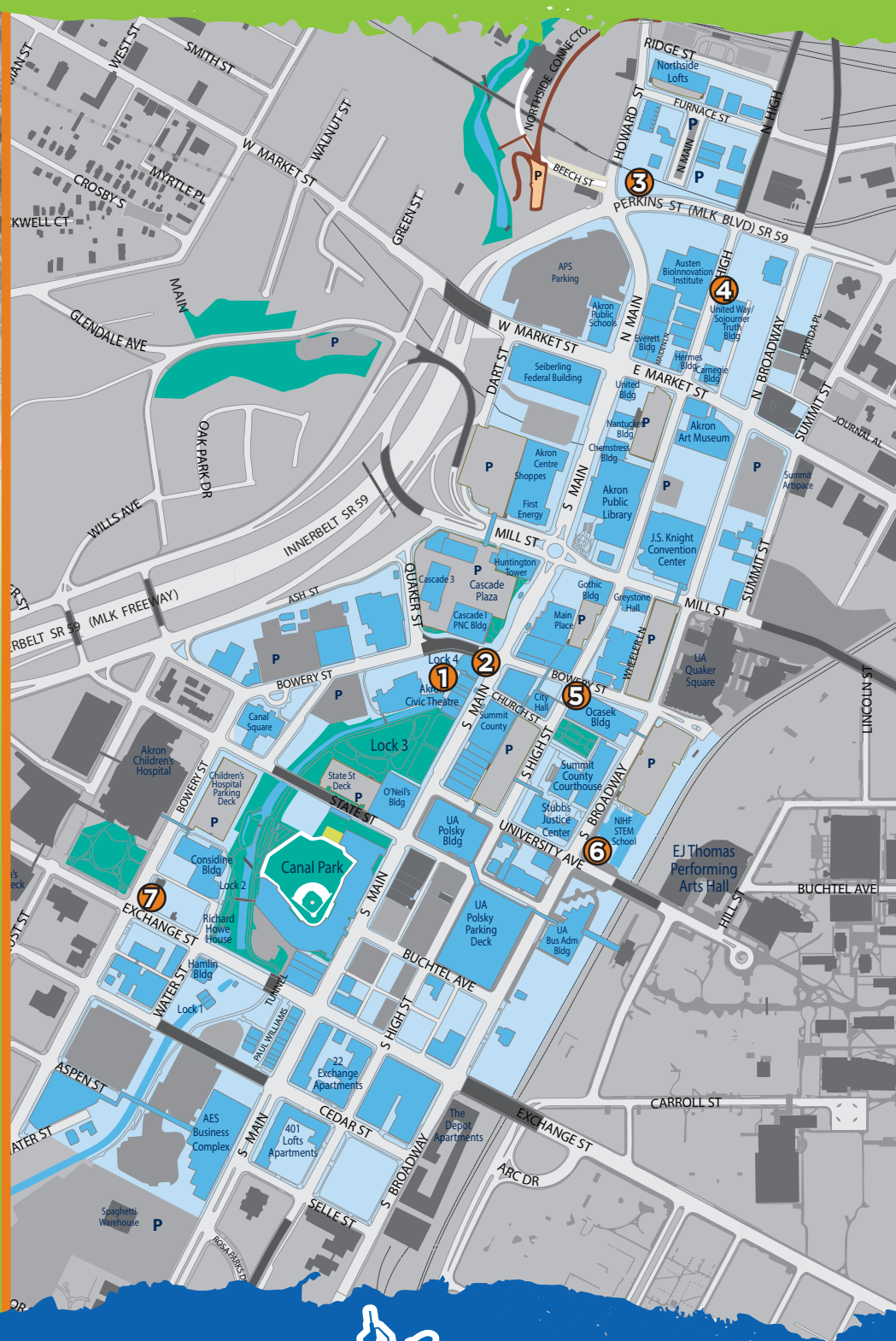
Celebrate Black History Month with a walk through downtown to learn about prominent Black figures, past and present, who have helped shape Akron's history.

For information on where to park and ways to extend your experience in downtown through dining, shopping and events, visit [DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM](http://DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM).

### MAP KEY

 **TOUR STOPS**

 **PARKING**



THE  
SUMMIT COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF AKRON, OHIO



## 1 Lock Bottom Blues & Jazz + Public Art

**Location:** Lock 4 is located just north of Lock 3 along the Ohio and Erie Canal and sits between The Bowery and the Akron Civic Theatre.

Since 2010, the City of Akron has hosted the Lock Bottom Blues & Jazz Club each summer. This weekly concert series celebrates Akron's rich Jazz and Blues history. Akron has been home to musical greats, past and present, including James Ingram, Theron Brown and Dan Wilson. Lock 4 also includes two great pieces of public art. The Jazz Mural, which serves as a backdrop for the concerts, was created by local artist, Michael Ayers. The large mural on the side of the Akron Civic Theatre was completed in late 2020 by LA based artists El Mac and Aise Born.

## 2 Akron Riot of 1900

**Location:** Corner of Bowery St. and South Main St.

On August 20, 1900, a six-year-old girl alleged that a 40 year-old African American man sexually assaulted her. Louis Peck, who had recently moved to Akron from Paterson, NJ, was arrested the next day and supposedly "confessed" to the crime. One newspaper printed the story in red ink. Sheriff Frank Kelly secretly took Peck to Cleveland in fear that the townspeople would lynch him. A crowd gathered at dusk at the jail. Stones were thrown, people tried to break in with a door ram or by taking ladders to upper floor windows, and two children were killed by stray bullets shot in the chaos. After an official search of the building revealed Peck was not there, crowds gathered again right before midnight after breaking into the nearby hardware store selling guns and ammunition. Some brought in dynamite and soon they blew up the walls of City Hall and then set fire to Columbia Hall next door. On May 6, 1913, Louis Peck was pardoned unconditionally by Gov. James Cox.

## 3 Matthews Hotel Monument + Ohio Historical Marker

**Location:** Corner of Howard St. & Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd  
The Matthews Hotel was one of the few locations where African American artists could sleep while performing in Akron. Individuals such as Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and Louie Armstrong stayed there. George Mathews (note his name had only one "t" but the hotel sign had two) started his establishment as a barbershop and then grew his business. He started a scholarship fund at The University of Akron during the mid-1960s. Mr. Mathews died at the age of 95 in 1982. A new monument commemorates the life of George Mathews, the Matthews Hotel and the legends of Howard Street providing a reminder of the African American entertainment and business district along Howard Street. The idea was 16 years in the making as local resident Miller Horns designed the artwork and dreamed of its completion. In 2011, the City of Akron in collaboration with the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority and Millworks Gallery started work on the monument. Through the assistance of numerous companies, it was finished prior to Mr. Horns' death in October 2012.



**Dr. Haynes Robinson** was recognized by the Summit County Historical Society with a Summit Award in 2013.

## 4 Sojourner Truth Ohio Historical Marker

**Location:** Outside the United Way of Summit and Medina offices on N. High St.

On this site May 29, 1851, Sojourner Truth, a former slave, gave her world famous speech known to many as "And Ain't I a Woman?" even though those words were not spoken then or written down until 12 years after the fact. Her speech recalled the hardships she had endured. Active in both the abolitionist and women's rights movements, she electrified an audience of women and men who had come to the Universalist Stone Church for a two-day women's rights convention.

To read the actual speech from 1851, visit [downtownakron.com/walkingtours](http://downtownakron.com/walkingtours).

## 5 Dolores Parker Morgan

**Location:** Corner of S. High St. and Bowery St. This site is now the Ocasek Building, but was formerly the Akron Armory.

Dolores Parker Morgan (1919 - 1918) won an amateur singing contest in 1939 at the Chicago Regal Theatre and went on to tour with Fletcher Henderson and "The Rhythm Debs" until 1945 when she then worked for the Earl Hines Orchestra and moved to Los Angeles. She then went on to audition for the Duke Ellington Orchestra and after winning that singing job, she performed with them at the Akron Armory on February 11, 1948. Parker sang with numerous jazz legends and appeared in films and toured the U.S. and Europe before marrying her second husband, Dr. Gates Morgan. The couple moved to Akron where he became the first African American medical director at Firestone Tire & Rubber Company. In the early 2000s, Mrs. Morgan performed for Cascade Locks Park Association's fundraiser at the Interbelt, then called Hot Jazz, and was recognized by the Society with a Summit Award in 2011.

## 6 Garrett Morgan

**Location:** NIHF STEM Middle School at the corner of Broadway and University Ave.

Garrett Morgan (1887 - 1963) was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2005 when the museum was still open here in Akron. Today, the site is used as a middle school for Akron Public Schools focusing on STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Morgan was recognized for his invention of the gas mask and the three-way street signal. In 1916, a tunnel collapsed under Lake Erie and rescue workers were unable to reach the survivors due to the smoke and debris. Morgan used his hooded mask, the precursor to the gas mask, and shared it with other volunteers to help save those trapped. As for his traffic signal patents, he sold them to General Electric for \$40,000 and the company developed the electric signal familiar today.

## 7 Dr. Haynes Robinson

**Location:** Corner of Bowery and W Exchange St.

Dr. Haynes B. Robinson, Jr. (1932 - 2017) was born in Louisiana, but spent his childhood in Tucson, Arizona. As the rubber industry expanded in Akron, his family moved to the rubber capital seeking greater opportunities. At a young age he became interested in medicine when he was hired to work as a stock boy by Joseph Sholiton, a pharmacist and owner of Sholiton's Pharmacy. Dr. Robinson attended The Ohio State University and graduated with a B.S. degree in biochemistry and later an M.D. Dr. Haynes retired in 2017 as co-director of the Fetal Treatment Center of Northeastern Ohio at Akron Children's Hospital.

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