CIVIL RIGHTS
Self-guided Walking Tour
### OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>201 East North Street</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>243 North Market Street</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>246 North Market Street</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>212 East Liberty Street</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>123 East Liberty Street</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>131 South Market Street</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Historic Downtown Wooster</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Wooster Public Square Historic District</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>116 East Liberty Street</td>
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**Estimated Distance:**

**Estimated Time:**
Wooster, Ohio has witnessed and been an active participant in the journey of civil rights since its founding in 1808. Although there have been mistakes, Wooster’s full story with the fight for civil rights for African Americans, Women, and the Jewish community can be seen in our historic downtown. In the brick of every building there are stories of individuals who made a name for themselves, pushed Wooster’s boundaries, and stretched its perspective to one of inclusivity that created its welcoming and historic community today. There are things to be proud of and things not to be proud of. There are things in history that should not be forgotten but should be a part of the lens that shapes what the City of Wooster represents in the world today.

The people who reside here live the stories of those who came before. It is a privilege to see the great legacies alive today in our vibrant streets, and as you embark on this tour, we invite you to appreciate and reflect on the cherished stories that remain with us today. These stories will continue to be a part of our city throughout its past, present, and future.
Following the Civil War, many African Americans migrated North. The start of the journey for Black families moving to Wooster began at the Greyhound bus station at the southeast corner of Buckeye and North Street. This was the location where buses from Southern states brought Black individuals looking for new lives and opportunities that Wooster could offer them. The Black community in the city started small, but the first Black families in Wooster brought creativity and new perspectives that were used as seeds that would continue to transform the city.

The United Methodist Church stands where the Methodist Episcopal Church of Wooster once stood. This church was the meeting place for the Wayne County Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1836. It was one of the 120 well-connected and communicative branches of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society. Their main mission and purpose was abolishing slavery and fighting for freedom for all. This fight included playing a vital role in the Underground Railroad in Wooster. Eugene Pardee, a man heavily involved in the society, even housed runaway slaves on their journey North. His house is still standing today on 124 Massaro Avenue (off of Pittsburgh Avenue).
Second Baptist Church on Vine Street
Courtesy of the Wayne County Public Library

Once shared with First Baptist Church’s building during the era of segregation was Second Baptist Church, the first Black congregation in Wooster following the Civil War. It was the home and anchor of the African American community in town and continues to be a pillar even now. After originally congregating in the fire station on Spink Street, the community was invited to share a space at Bethany Baptist Church (First Baptist) at a different time than the White community in 1892. Eventually, the African American community leaders, Richard L. Morrison, Henry Follis, Samuel Johnson, and Sally Craig, decided to raise money and build their own space on Vine Street.

Current Second Baptist Church, 245 S Grant St
Google Map

The Daily Record building was once the site of Richard Morrison Sr.’s barbershop. Richard Morrison was born into slavery, but after emancipation and through time, he found his way to Wooster where he and his family are believed to be the first documented Black family of the city. At his location on East Liberty Street, he cut the hair of people in town and worked with his sons, Charles Harry and Richard “Dick” Jr., and another young man by the name of Ewart Pringle. More and more African American families progressively moved to Wooster, and unfortunately, if they would have liked to get their hair cut, they had to wait until after hours. The daytime was reserved and prioritized for the white citizens. This is one of the examples of segregation seen in Wooster.
Located on the southwest corner of the square, two doors west of the Wooster Provision Co was once the home of the Carver Club. The club was named after George Washington Carver and founded by a group of Black men in 1942. Its grand opening in the public square was in 1944 with refreshments and a soda bar provided for everyone. The Wooster Daily Record wrote on January 13th, 1944 that the purpose of this club was “for the betterment of the social, recreational, and civic life of the colored people of Wayne County”.

The Clark Building is today the home of Broken Rocks Café & Bakery. However, it has a rich past that is still seen in the legacy of the building today. The Clark Building was previously the site of “Arcadome Hall”, a performance hall built in 1857 by Jos. H. Baumgardner. While the hall was used for many different purposes, it was also a site where Frederick Douglass gave two lectures during the campaign tour for the re-election of Ulysses S. Grant in 1872. Famous author Samuel L. Clemens or Mark Twain also visited and spoke at Arcadome Hall in January of 1872. Unfortunately, in 1874 the original building burned down in a fire. It was replaced by the Clark Building in 1875, built with the same footprint and style as the original building.
In June of 2020, the Wooster/Orrville National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held a peaceful march for justice on Juneteenth in part as a response to the murder of George Floyd by a Minnesota police officer. The Orrville and Wooster community banded together and marched from Cornerstone Elementary and Second Baptist Church to the public square with signs, posters, and voices fighting for justice. It was an incredible moment that showed unity and support from the community.

Since that time (over 1,000 consecutive days), demonstrations for racial justice have continued in the Wooster Public Square, never allowing the push and need for justice to die out.
Women's Suffrage Rights

Over 100 years ago, the square was also used as a center for civil rights: specifically, women's rights. While the fight for women's rights started long ago and has been ongoing since, the Women's Suffrage Movement started in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 and grew and expanded across the whole country. Women everywhere were connected by a common goal and a common fight. In the city of Wooster, there were many suffragists who held meetings, formed associations, and created petitions. At the College of Wooster a Senior Suffragist Club formed with members from the graduating classes of 1913, 1914, and 1915. Another community club, the Equal Suffrage Club was made up of Wooster women who prepared each other for voting rights and who discussed papers and writings on Women's Rights and Suffrage. They were important in promoting Women's Rights to the community. For example, at one point the members of this club dressed in white, decorated a car in flowers, and held banners reading “votes for women” during a parade.
The Jewish community has a long history within Wooster. Its journey began in 1841 with Abraham Greenbaum, the first documented Jewish merchant in town with a shop on Liberty Street. The population growth of the Jewish community started slow with mixed feelings of reception. At times they were viewed as outsiders and not wanted in the business realm. The newspapers of the time (Wayne County Republican & Democratic papers) were also quick to write and capture their growing presence in the city, describing it as “good, bad, playful, and helpful”. However, the Jewish community welcomed and supported each other, and slowly the community began to integrate into the city. When the Cleveland & Southwestern Rail Company placed a line from Cleveland to Wooster, it allowed many advantages and opportunities for the Jews in the Wooster area. The Jewish community in Wooster had grown to 92 listed families in the 1940s.

Brenner Brother’s

One prominent Jewish family in Wooster were the Brenner Brothers. Abraham, Samuel, and Simon Brenner opened a clothing store in 1920. Their shop was located at 116 E. Liberty St, now the site of Blue Spruce. There are “Bs” along the top of this Art Deco building as well as tile art in the entrance which are marks of the memory and legacy of these brothers.

Freedlander’s

Another prominent Jewish families and businesses in Wooster were the Freedlanders, originally spelled “Friedlander”. The name was changed to “Americanize” it and assimilate into Wooster’s culture. In 1884, David Louis Freedlander, a Jewish immigrant from East Prussia opened the “Buffalo One Price Clothing House” on South Market Street. As the store was passed down from son to son and from generation to generation, it began to expand and grow into “Freedlander’s”, a department store on Liberty Street. Although the shop closed in 2009, the family’s legacy is seen all around the city.
Thank you so much for walking through the streets of downtown Wooster and history. It is important to remember and keep alive the stories of those who came before us and who paved the way for equality, civil rights, and inclusivity. There was a lot of hard work put into this tour by Main Street Wooster. We are a nonprofit organization with a mission to enhance the community of Wooster by improving the quality of its downtown business and living environment through Planning, Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Development.

This Civil Rights tour shows the lives, mistakes, and progress our city has made in the fight for rights. This would not have been possible without the help and resources of the Wayne County Public Library, Wayne County Historical Society, the Daily Record, Jeffrey Musselman, the College of Wooster Digital History Project team, Lydia Thompson, and our team here at Main Street Wooster. Special thanks to the Noble Foundation for making this project possible.

Best Wishes,
The Main Street Wooster Self-guided Tour Team
Shannon Waller, Kerri Manley, and Kiera Smith
For more information and resources take a look at the sources used in this project!

**Wayne County Public Library:** https://wiki.wcpl.info/w/Main_Page

**Wooster Digital Histories Project:** https://woosterhistory.org

**Wayne County Historical Society:** https://www.youtube.com/@waynecountyohiohistory8600

**The Daily Record:** https://www.the-daily-record.com

**Retrieving the Wheatfield: Look Where He Brought Me From** by Lydia Gilyard Thompson

**College of Wooster:** https://web.archive.org/web/20110826055604/http://www.wooster.edu/About-Wooster/History-Traditions
https://inside.wooster.edu/msa/allen-scholars-community/

**Akron Beacon Journal:**

**Wikipedia:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Eckert