

## Sites important to African American History Along the Route of the Juneteenth Walk for Racial Justice

**The *Signal of Liberty* anti-slavery newspaper was published on Broadway**



**Location:** The *Signal of Liberty* newspaper was published on Broadway, in a building (torn down long ago) that was directly across the street, and a mirror image of, the St. Vincent De Paul Thrift Store. (Photo from the Bentley Historical Library)

Theodore Foster and Rev. Guy Beckley launched the *Signal of Liberty* in April 1841. The printing office was located on the second floor of Josiah Beckley's mercantile shop on Broadway Avenue in Ann Arbor. Guy Beckley helped in his brother's store and worked tirelessly to promote the newspaper. Theodore Foster was co-editor and publisher of the *Signal of Liberty* until 1848. Foster and Beckley were strong abolitionists who interviewed self-emancipated men and women, and reporting anti-slavery activism, hoping to arouse support for abolitionism. The *Signal of Liberty* achieved its goal of bringing the issue of slavery into the hearts and minds of the people. Digital copies of this newspaper are online at the Ann Arbor District Library. <https://aadl.org/signalofliberty>

## SIGNAL OF LIBERTY.

The inviolability of individual Rights is the only security of Public Liberty.

May 12, 1841: *"A few days since we had the rare pleasure, in connection with many of our friends in this place, of bestowing our hospitalities upon six of our brethren, who tarried with us some sixteen hours to refresh themselves, on their journey to a land of freedom."*

BECKLEY WAS PURPOSEFULLY VAGUE ABOUT THE LOCATIONS OF THESE "HOSPITALITIES."

Quotation from *Signal of Liberty*, May 12, 1841 – Ann Arbor District Library  
**Underground Railroad Street Exhibit at the Broadway Bridge**

### PORCELAIN EXHIBIT PANEL:

Broadway at Swift: east side at north end of bridge

This exhibit panel talks about Guy Beckley whose house is significant as an anti-slavery center and station on the Underground Railroad from 1842, when Beckley move onto the property, until his death in 1847. UGRR Conductor Lyman Goodnow's account mentions stopping at Beckley's along the Wisconsin to Canada journey with self-emancipated teenager, Caroline Quarlls. She was the first enslaved person to travel through Wisconsin using the Underground Railroad. She reached Canada and freedom in 1842. Multiple abolitionists helped *Caroline* on her journey to Canada even as pursuers followed continuously **Location:** 1425 Pontiac Trail, Ann Arbor [The Underground Railroad](#)



**The “Union Church” is the first known African American Church in Ann Arbor, sometimes seen from the Broadway Bridge**

**504 High Street** This small brick structure appears on the 1854 map of Ann Arbor labeled simply as "Union Church." The first Minister was John Wesley Brooks, formerly enslaved, who won his freedom in the courts of New York before arriving in Washtenaw County about 1830. Shortly after the church was organized, the congregation split into what would become Bethel AME Church and Second Baptist Church. Rev Brooks would become pastor at Bethel AME Church, eventually building its first permanent building on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Second Baptist would build its first building a few blocks away at 5<sup>th</sup> Ave and Beakes St. Both continue in operation today and trace their roots to this building on what was then known as Fuller Street.

*This home is currently a private residence*



### **1898 UM Medical School graduate – Practiced on Fuller**

**Katherine Crawford** (1859-1943) was born and educated in Ann Arbor graduating from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1898. Dr. Crawford hung out her shingle in her home at **1116 Fuller**, Ann Arbor. (*Source: Freedmans Manual of Progress, 1915*) The following is a quote from a survey she completed after graduating for UM “Most striking, decidedly unexpected, yet never to be forgotten was the genuine friendship manifested by so many of my own class as well as by other college women.” Sadly, not all Katharine Crawford’s experiences were at this level of acceptance. She expressed her realistic philosophy concerning those aspects which were painful. “Some experiences were exceedingly bitter. Immeasurably so, even as I view them after more than a quarter of a century. But they taught me my capacity for endurance.” (*Source: “Women's Voices: Early Years at the UM, Bentley Historical Library*)



### **Albert and Emma Wheeler - Community and Civil Rights Leaders**

He was professor of microbiology and dermatology at the University of Michigan and the University's first Black tenured professor. Wheeler was the first and only black Mayor of Ann Arbor, (1975-78), and one of the draftees of the civil rights clause of the Michigan Constitution. Al and his wife Emma revitalized the local chapter of the NAACP where he served as president 1956-57 and Emma served as president for the next 16 years. On the third Saturday of each June the Ann Arbor NAACP Branch celebrates Juneteenth at **Wheeler Park**.

In 1977, Wheeler ran for reelection, facing Republican challenger Louis D. Belcher. Wheeler won the election by a margin of a single vote, prevailing by a count of just 10,660 to 10,659. The election results, however, were challenged in court because twenty people who lived just outside city limits had voted without knowing that they were ineligible to cast ballots in Ann Arbor. A judge ordered that the voters reveal the name of the candidate for whom they had voted, in order to determine who would have won the election without the twenty ineligible votes, but University of Michigan student Susan R. Van Hattum refused the order on privacy grounds. (*Source: A Bold Vote for Privacy," Time, Oct. 24, 1977*)

*Photo: Albert and Emma Wheeler Portrait, September 1965  
Ann Arbor District Library*

## **Juneteenth Commemorates the day the last African Americans were notified of their freedom in 1865**

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declared all enslaved people in the Confederate States legally free. Enslaved African Americans in Union-held states were not covered under Lincoln's proclamation and were not officially freed until the establishment of the Thirteenth Amendment, which formally abolished slavery nationwide on Dec. 5, 1865.

Union soldiers, many of whom were black, marched onto plantations and across cities in the south reading small copies of the Emancipation Proclamation spreading the news of freedom. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result, in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas, black people were enslaved for two more years. The news finally came on June 19, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth," by people in Texas.

Juneteenth marks America's second Independence Day. Unlike the Fourth of July it is not recognized as a federal holiday. But Juneteenth is recognized as a state holiday in all but 4 states: Hawaii, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana.

For more information contact:

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