

## 7. South Liberty/Urban Renewal

Beginning in the late 1950s, the city of Spartanburg aggressively pursued Federal funding for Urban Renewal projects in a misguided effort to enhance the city's impoverished areas. The hope was that newer, more substantial buildings would build up the communities affected. Instead, with only a few buildings left intact, the heart of one of Spartanburg's African-American neighborhoods was gutted and the tangible connection to its remarkable past was severed.

## 8. Episcopal Epiphany Church

One of the few sites left preserved during Urban Renewal was the Episcopal Epiphany Mission, which was built here in 1914. It began as a mission church of the Episcopal Church of the Advent and remains on its original site. The road through this section follows the original route of South Liberty Street.

## 9. Majority Baptist Church

In 1902, with the Southside community growing, a group of families withdrew from Mt. Moriah Baptist Church to form a new congregation, soon after known as Majority Baptist Church. By the 1920s, they had built a large brick church on Liberty Street, which was replaced in the 1990s by the current structure.

## 10. J.C. Bull Apartments

This apartment complex honors Dr. J. C. Bull, who served as a physician in Spartanburg from 1939 to 1987. Beyond his professional life, Dr. Bull acted as one of the preeminent leaders of Spartanburg's black community during desegregation. His personable attitude and calm demeanor kept tensions at bay during moments of crisis and he was remembered fondly by a wide circle of friends and colleagues.

## 11. Mary H. Wright Elementary/Carver Middle School



Although the first public schools for Spartanburg's black students opened in the 1890s, many on the Southside found the distance to North Dean Street too far to comfortably walk. Mary H. Wright, who had served as a teacher in church-sponsored schools, opened her home to students and soon after began receiving funds from the public school system. This became the Carrier Street School and later Mary H. Wright Elementary. In 1938 this site was joined by Carver High School, the Southside's first black high school.

## 12. Mount Moriah Baptist Church

In the years following the Civil War, African-Americans across the South began establishing independent churches to meet their spiritual needs. In Spartanburg, Mt. Moriah was the first black Baptist congregation and soon began meeting on lands owned by Joseph Young, one of the black patriarchs of the Southside community. A pillar of Spartanburg's black heritage, Mt. Moriah also hosted an early visit from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose uncle was the pastor of Mt. Moriah for many years.



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# HIGHLIGHTS OF SPARTANBURG'S BLACK HISTORY WALKING TOUR



# MLK UNITY WALK MARKERS

## 1. Spartanburg County Public Library

With a long heritage placing value on knowledge and the exchange of ideas, the public library is proud to serve as a repository for local culture and history and as a gathering space for Spartanburg and its many diverse communities.

## 2. Short Wofford Street

The core of Spartanburg's African-American business district stood along Short Wofford Street, which stretched between Church and Magnolia Streets until 1977. Home to restaurants, hotels, a doctor's office, barber shops, and billiard halls, it was the largest concentration of black-owned businesses in the downtown area. An unsuccessful redevelopment project razed it and the northern side of Morgan Square in the mid-1970s.

## 3. Woolworths and Kress Sit-Ins

Pressure in opposition to segregation was mounting by 1960, when a nationwide movement to peacefully occupy whites-only lunch counters began. In Spartanburg, sit-ins occurred at the Woolworths and Kress lunch counters in July 1960, prompting arrests and confrontations all over downtown.

City Council issued a statement that mass arrests would occur the following day if crowds gathered. Aside from one other sit-in during August, no other sit-ins are recorded through 1963, when most white-owned restaurants in the city voluntarily began serving all races.



NEGROES SEATED AT WOOLWORTH'S LUNCH COUNTER  
Refused Service; Leave After Counter Is Closed



## 4. Finch Hotel, site of Harlem Hell Fighter Scuffle

During World War I, Spartanburg hosted thousands of Northern soldiers at a training camp west of town. Among those soldiers were an African-American regiment nicknamed the Harlem Hell Fighters. Their time in Spartanburg was brief and marked by discord. One incident occurred in the lobby of the Finch Hotel, when the hotel proprietor seized and threw out a black soldier who had entered to purchase a newspaper, claiming that the soldier had disrespected him by not removing his hat.



## 5. Hudson Barksdale Boulevard

An educator, president of the Spartanburg branch of the NAACP, active in the Greater Trinity AME Church, and serving on many local and statewide committees, Hudson L. Barksdale was elected to represent House District 31 in the South Carolina General Assembly in 1974, the first African-American to represent Spartanburg County in the state legislature.

## 6. Mary H. Wright Greenway

When Urban Renewal cleared out the homes and buildings of Spartanburg's Southside, its empty promises of a renewed community left a void in the physical and emotional landscape of the Southside. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was some recognition of the loss to that community's identity and the city of Spartanburg made an effort to reconnect to that identity by naming new features after prominent Southside residents. One such effort was the Mary H. Wright Greenway.

