Detroit Historic District Commission

RESOLUTION 24-03

BY COMMISSIONER	
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WHEREAS, the Detroit Historic District Commission ("HDC"), per Section 21-2-6 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, has the responsibility to render advice and guidance regarding grants and programs pertaining to historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, Vaughn's Book Store is a historic building located at 12115–12123 Dexter Avenue in Detroit; and

WHEREAS, Vaughn's Book Store is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its role "at the forefront of a new genre of Black-owned bookstores that focused on themes of Black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and related topics" and as "a valuable resource within the community not just for providing books found no place else in Detroit or the region, but as a cultural meeting place that helped to define a new sense of Black consciousness as it emerged in Detroit and nationwide" during its period of significance of 1965–1972, and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Development Department ("PDD") seeks to apply for grant funding from the National Park Service African American Civil Rights Grant Program in support of a forthcoming rehabilitation of the Vaughn's Book Store building so that its character-defining features may be preserved and so that it may once again serve as an incubator for local and Black-owned businesses, as it did during the period of significance; and

WHEREAS, PDD has asked that the HDC consider lending its support to this grant application;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Detroit Historic District Commission supports PDD's grant application, and directs its staff to prepare a letter of support stating such.

Vaughn's Bookstore

Location: 12115 Dexter Ave, Detroit, MI

Background

Vaughn's Bookstore, located at 12115 Dexter Ave, is a historic cultural landmark in Detroit, MI.
 Established by Ed Vaughn, the bookstore has long served as a center for African American literature, community gatherings, and cultural education.

• Its significance to the local community and the broader narrative of African American civil rights history is profound, making its preservation and revitalization a priority for both the city and various cultural heritage organizations.

Current Physical State

• The building, though rich in history, has fallen into disrepair over the years. It currently stands in a state that requires significant rehabilitation to restore it to a safe and functional condition.

Project Abstract

Through the NPS African American Civil Rights Grant Program (P24AS00541), The City of Detroit proposes a dedicated effort to breathe new life into the historic Vaughn's Bookstore, which was not only one of the most prominent black-owned bookstores in Detroit, but also a thriving civil rights cultural center that brought together local creatives, poets, activists, authors and artists.

Vaughn's bookstore is a beacon of resilience in the heart of Detroit, on Dexter Avenue, a once bustling commercial corridor. It played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement, enduring vandalism and a firebombing during the 1967 uprisings. While its structure has endured, it has continued to deteriorate. Vaughn's Bookstore was listed on the National Parks Service National Register of Historic Places in 2023, a recognition that demands urgent investment to preserve the site and prepare it for its next chapter.

This project leverages existing funds in order to stabilize the structure, replace the roof, and complete grey-box renovation of the site. The selected developer will complete renovation and build-out, and will work with a program partner well-positioned to own and maintain the site in perpetuity. This partner swill commit to transforming the site in such a way that continues the site's legacy of serving the community.

This project will allow the City to shed light on the significant role Vaughn's Bookstore played in the fight for civil rights and honor the legacy of successful black-owned businesses in the neighborhood. It is a critical step towards revitalizing Dexter Avenue and promoting the development of future businesses and cultural spaces that meet community needs. This transformation is part of a broader vision for neighborhood economic growth that benefits Detroit residents, including City investments in parks and open spaces, economic and community development and neighborhood and housing development.



United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property		
Historic name: Vaughn's Book Store		
Other names/site number:		
Name of related multiple property listing:		
The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit		
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)		
2. Location		
Street & number: 12115–12123 Dexter Avenue		
City or town: <u>Detroit</u> State: <u>Michigan</u> County: <u>Wayne</u>		
Not For Publication: Vicinity:		
3. State/Federal Agency Certification		
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,		
I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets		
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic		
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.		
In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I		
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following		
level(s) of significance:		
national statewideX_ local		
Applicable National Register Criteria:		
Apphount National Register Citiestan		
X A X B C D		
$X A \qquad X B \qquad C \qquad D$		
Deputy SHPO June 14, 2023		
Michigan State Historic Preservation Office		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

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e of Property	County and State
In my opinion, the property meets does Criteria.	not meet the National Register
Signature of commenting official/Title	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Gov	vernment
4. National Park Service Certification	
I hereby certify that this property is:	
X entered in the National Register	
determined eligible for the National Register	
determined not eligible for the National Register	
removed from the National Register	
other (explain):	
Oaman Ankhort	7/31/2023
<u> </u>	Date of Action
5. Classification	
Ownership of Property	
(Check as many boxes as apply.)	
Private	
Public – Local X	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

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Category of Property		
(Check only one box.)		
Building(s) X		
District		
Site		
Structure		
Object		
	_	
Number of Resources with		
(Do not include previously li Contributing	sted resources in the count) Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0_____

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6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions	
(Enter categories from instructions.)	
COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store	
Current Functions	
(Enter categories from instructions.)	
VACANT/NOT IN USE	

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7. Description	
Architectural Classification	
(Enter categories from instructions.)	
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival	
Modern Movement	
Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)	
Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Meta	al: aluminum, Metal: steel,
Wood: plywood	

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Vaughn's Book Store is located at 12123 Dexter Avenue, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. The former book store constitutes the northern bay of a four-bay commercial strip building situated mid-block between Duane Street to the south and Monterey Street to the north. Collectively, this building is addressed as 12115 through 12123 Dexter Avenue. During the period of significance, the larger strip contained Vaughn's Book Store and other related businesses (for simplicity of description, the entire building is referred to hereinafter in this section as Vaughn's Book Store). The entire building comprises a single, contributing resource. Vaughn's Book Store occupies just under half of its rectangular parcel, with a shallow front setback and a larger open area in the rear that formerly contained a single-story garage and a smaller structure of unknown purpose (both no longer standing). Typical of a pedestrian-oriented commercial strip of its era, the building's side (north and south) walls directly abutted adjacent commercial buildings; the building to the north has since been demolished, but the southern adjacent building remains. Vaughn's Book Store is a rectangular, one-story, flat roof, brick and structural clay tile commercial storefront building built circa 1924. The building faces east toward Dexter Avenue. When constructed, the exterior of the building exhibited Georgian Colonial Revival details in precast concrete include a denticulated cornice and fluted pilasters. Most of the original architectural details were obscured by aluminum facade elements added in

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1964 and plywood panels added sometime later in the twentieth century. Interior space is divided by concrete masonry unit partitions into four retail units of equal area. According to available photo-documentation, the interior of the book store was simply finished and free-standing shelves and fixtures predominated. Vaughn's Book Store is part of an urban commercial corridor that was densely developed with buildings of comparable or larger scale in a variety of architectural styles, most dating to the 1920s. Presently, Dexter Avenue contains more empty lots than buildings; some operating businesses and occupied apartments remain alongside vacant buildings.

Narrative Description

Environment and Setting

The area where Vaughn's Book Store is located was once a beech-sugar maple forest¹ inhabited by Ottawa, Ojibwe, Wyandot, and Potawatomi nations, who ceded the area to the United States with the Treaty of Detroit in 1807. It is presently part of Detroit in Wayne County, Michigan. The area was incorporated within Springwells Township in 1818 and then became part of the newly created Greenfield Township in 1832. A little over five miles northwest of the Detroit River and downtown Detroit, the location remained mostly rural for some time. The area was annexed by the growing city in 1916 and developed rapidly in the early to mid-1920s. Dexter Avenue itself had been constructed in the 1910s, oriented in keeping with Detroit's downtown street grid, perpendicular to the Detroit River and parallel to the city's central Woodward Avenue, 27 degrees north by northwest. (Cardinal directions will be used for the remainder of this document for simplicity of description.)

Vaughn's Book Store sits on the eastern boundary of a neighborhood commonly known as Nardin Park; Dexter Avenue forms the dividing line between that community and the Dexter-Linwood area to the east.² Dexter Avenue and the surrounding residential neighborhoods are arranged with streets in an urban grid pattern, with rectangular blocks that are longer east-west than north-south. Residential lots are oriented toward the east-west side streets, with a commercial corridor oriented perpendicularly along Dexter Avenue, an eighty-foot-wide asphalt thoroughfare. Buildings in the vicinity display a variety of 1920s architectural styles, indicative of the area's growth in that decade. Commercial buildings on Dexter Avenue are one or two

^{1 &}quot;Vegetation Circa 1800," Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Michigan State University, https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/resources.

² City of Detroit Planning and Development Department, "Russell Woods and Nardin Park Neighborhood Framework," 2019; "Neighborhoods," Detroit's Open Data Portal, https://data.detroitmi.gov/datasets/neighborhoods. Use of the Nardin Park name thusly is a recent convention, given in the aforementioned planning document but not likely used during the period of significance; it is derived from an eponymous city park, subdivision, and street in the vicinity of Livernois Avenue. Petoskey-Otsego and Winterhalter are other names used for the area. "Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan," University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 11, 27.

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stories; houses on side streets are single-family or two-family buildings with an occasional fourunit apartment building, such as the one at 12172 Dexter Avenue, one block to the north.

The building that would later become Vaughn's Book Store was the first to the built on the Dexter Avenue block face. By the 1950s additional buildings stretched north to Monterey Street: Congregation Ezras Achim, constructed c. 1947,³ and two more commercial buildings to its north. In the 1970s one final commercial building, built to the south of Vaughn's Book Store, completed the block face.

On the Vaughn's Book Store block, as with others in the vicinity, the row of commercial buildings fronting on Dexter Avenue is separated by an alley from the remaining, residential portion of the block. Here, the built environment clearly shows the impact of the population loss that Detroit experienced, beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day. On the block bounded by Dexter Avenue, Monterey Street, Holmur Street, and Duane Street, only one house remains, the rest of the residential buildings having been demolished; adjacent lots also contain more empty lots than houses. This situation is the exception, however. More typically, blocks in the surrounding area retain most or all of their houses, even if some of these houses are vacant. Birney School, an elementary school which served this community during the period of significance, was built one block further to the west from Vaughn's Book Store in 1963 and was demolished in 2009.

Over half of the commercial buildings and apartment buildings that once characterized Dexter Avenue are missing as well, with vacant lots or, sometimes, parking lots in their place. On the block face with Vaughn's Book Store, the Congregation Ezras Achim (by the 1960s, Greater Centennial Baptist Church) was demolished in the mid-2010s. The northernmost building was demolished in 2022.

Municipal improvements to the streetscape include poured concrete sidewalks and alleys, concrete curbs, and single-arm streetlights on steel poles. Street trees are uncommon; none exist on the Vaughn's Book Store frontage.

Exterior Description

Vaughn's Book Store occupies a parcel 60 feet wide by 120 feet deep, facing east onto Dexter Avenue. The building extends the entire width of its parcel and is set approximately 30 feet back from the street. Both public sidewalk and the open space associated with Vaughn's Book Store are paved with poured concrete, with no clear demarcation between the two. The building is 50 feet deep, leaving the remaining 50 feet of its parcel as open space to the rear. The rear area does not appear to contain any deliberate landscaping but is thick with vegetation typically found in vacant lots in Detroit, such as wild grapevine and tree saplings of different species. A substantial

^{3 &}quot;Turover Aid Soc. Ready to Erect Synagogue, Center," [Detroit] Jewish News, September 19, 1947, 11.

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amount of construction debris, such as scraps of dimensional lumber, is also found in the rear of the building.⁴

The building itself is a single-story, structural clay tile, orange-brown face brick commercial building, with a rectangular footprint and massing. Its foundation is not visible. The facade is divided into four storefronts of equal area, each consisting of a single door with the rest of its space devoted to a large storefront window or a pair of windows. Each of the four units also has a back door and a single window on the west (rear) elevation. The north elevation presents a blank wall of common-bond brick (formerly shared with since-demolished 12129 Dexter Avenue); the south elevation is not visible due to an adjacent building (12111 Dexter Avenue).

An asphalt roof is concealed behind a parapet front, and walls on the north and south sides of the building are topped with a stepped, stone coping. On the west (rear), the roof drains to a steel gutter which runs the length of the building. Brick wall chimneys with terra cotta caps exist at the northwest and southwest corners; a third is centered on the west elevation.

Construction History

A building permit for 12115-12123 Dexter Avenue was issued on August 14, 1924, suggesting an approximate construction date. The building first appeared in the 1925-1926 Polk City Directory, indicating that it was completed by that time. It was the first permanent building on the block face between Duane Street and Monterey Street. Without historical photographs or other evidence, the exact appearance of the building at the time of its construction is not known. However, much of its original character can be inferred from later photographs and from its present-day condition.

When the building was first completed and opened to the public, it presented a mostly symmetrical facade, ornate with Georgian Colonial Revival detail in precast concrete. Fluted pilasters, sitting atop simplified rectangular pedestals, divided the facade into four storefronts of equal area. An elaborate cornice extended the across the top of the facade, bearing dentils, volutes, and pineapple-shaped finials—the latter arranged with larger elements at the corners of the building and separating each bay, and a series of smaller finals evenly spaced atop each bay.

The original configuration and appearance of the storefronts is not clear. Exposed framing visible on the building interior, however, suggests that each storefront opening was at one time surmounted by a broad transom window – a common feature of early twentieth century commercial buildings. These transoms would have included decorative or prismatic glass panes, typically, and may have been operable to provide ventilation to the interior.⁵

⁴ This does not appear to be the remains of the two outbuildings that once existed on the property, as aerial photographs from the 1980s and 1990s show that the rear yard had been cleared by that time. DTE Aerial Photo Collection, https://digital.library.wayne.edu/dte_aerial/index.html, 1981 and 1997.

⁵ H. Ward Jandi, "Preservation Brief 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts" (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1982).

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Vaughn's Book Store During Its Period of Significance

Much more is known about the appearance of Vaughn's Book Store from the mid-1960s to the present due to the availability of photographs and oral histories reflecting these eras.⁶ A building permit dated May 22, 1964, to "alter store front" at a cost of five hundred dollars⁷ corresponds with a significant change in the appearance of the building.

In perhaps the most noticeable alteration, vertical metal panels were installed to conceal much of the facade. Aluminum – light colored in photographs and described as "white" in one source⁸ – in two rows covered the upper portion of the facade and the original upper transoms. Narrow stainless steel panels separated each storefront.

The storefronts themselves reached their present configuration at this time, being articulated in two different arrangements. 12115 and 12121 Dexter Avenue each consist of a single door opening at the south end, with the remainder of the space devoted to a large display window opening, while 12117 and 12123 Dexter Avenue consist of a centered door opening flanked by two display window openings. Glazed steel doors for each storefront also differed subtly: Exit hardware on doors of the former two consisted of paired horizontal rods; on the latter, they were diagonal. Completing each storefront, seven courses of running-bond brick rise from grade to culminate in a stone sill. Each of the four door openings was topped with a small transom window, though the brick and stone, transoms, and rough framing remain; doors and larger windows are missing at present. At some point, a folding accordion-style security gate (still present today) was added spanning the 12115 and 12117 Dexter Avenue storefronts. A 1976 photograph shows that at least one steel panel was removed by that time to reveal the original, fluted pilaster behind.

Additional storefront details pertained to specific businesses; presumably, they came and went as occupancy changed and the building evolved. The upper transom location was, at times, used for business signs. Individual, three-dimensional, sans-serif letters reading "VAUGHN'S BOOK STORE" were affixed above the 12123 Dexter Avenue storefront; below the letters a handpainted sign added "SPECIALIZING IN AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY." Later, another sign, at 12117 Dexter Avenue, identified the Uhuru Sasa Institute in the 1970s. Pretty Dolls Beauty

⁶ G7: W Side Dexter Duane to Monterey SW [Vaughn's Book Store 'Specializing in Afro-American History'], (Ann Arbor: Detroit Police Department Photograph Collection, Bentley Historical Library, 1967); 1976 photograph provided by Malik Yakini in "Russell Woods-Nardin Park: A Tactical Preservation Plan," University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 11, 142; Edward Vaughn Interview by Sam Pollard, Eyes on the Prize Interviews, Washington University Digital Gateway Texts, 1989; Photographs from 2007 to 2022 are available at Google Street View, http://maps.google.com.

⁷ According to the City of Detroit building permit card index, housed at the Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department at 2 Woodward Avenue

⁸ Aretha Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed: Witnesses Blame Police," Michigan Chronicle, August 5, 1967, 4.

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Salon and Chuck's Barber Shop were announced with hand-painted lettering in the storefront windows of 12115 and 12121 Dexter Avenue, respectively, along with their phone numbers; these businesses also had neon signs suspended from chains inside their windows. The barber shop also featured a barber pole mounted to an adjacent pilaster. Electrical conduit suggests this pole was illuminated or rotating.

Vaughn's Book Store was visibly damaged inside and out during the 1967 Rebellion (see Narrative Statement of Significance). The exterior was painted with graffiti; the storefront openings were also briefly boarded with pine plywood panels during this time. After these events, the exterior was promptly returned to its prior condition.

After Vaughn's Book Store

After Vaughn's Book Store moved from the property and its owner, Edward Vaughn, sold the building, additional facade alterations accommodated new occupants. These changes generally consisted of applied elements and paint colors, "layers" that would have been "possible to peel back [to] present the original facade." The only major irreversible change was the removal of finials from the top of the facade.

By 2007 an expanse of grooved T1-11 plywood siding, cut with a wide scallop pattern at the bottom edge, was added to the upper half of the facade, and painted yellow. Painted green letters reading "O.M. SCHOOL RESALE & BOUTIQUE" and advertising "LITTLE BIT OF THIS – LITTLE BIT OF THAT" were centered above the 12123 Dexter Avenue storefront. An internally illuminated, projecting blade sign between 12115 and 12117 Dexter Avenue identified another business. Two tripodal metal brackets above the roofline, still in place today, mark the former location of this and another sign, though neither sign remains.

The bottom half of the building was painted, first yellow, and then a bright green. Visible openings showed the doors and windows from the 1964 remodeling still present, though many openings had, by then, been covered by oriented strand board (OSB) panels, also painted green. The same yellow-and-green color scheme extended to the adjacent building at 12111 Dexter Avenue, suggesting common ownership.

Current Conditions

As late as 2018 both the original and 1964 facade elements remained in place beneath the plywood covering, though they were "cracking and not fully attached by the wall," according to one analysis. ¹⁰ However, noteworthy deterioration has occurred in the past few years.

Damage to the facade is most extensive on the northernmost two bays. Most of the metal panels are now missing; behind, the precast concrete panels have become detached and now lie on the

⁹ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 152. 10 Jake Torlekson and Ran Wei, University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 150.

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ground. Structural clay tile and brick are now clearly visible on the upper portion of the facade. A transom window, hand-painted with the numbers "12123," is visible, but broken, only the final two digits remaining.

The south half of facade, protected behind the security gate as well as a tree of heaven (*ailanthus altissima*) that has grown up against the building in recent years, has been spared much of the damage that characterizes the north half. The plywood siding and OSB panels added earlier remain in place, suggesting that metal and precast concrete panels concealed beneath remain as well.

On the rear, doors and windows are missing, leaving the building open. Vaughn's Book Store is surrounded by a temporary chain link fence, many sections of which are missing.

Interior Description

A number of interior photographs depict the interior of the bookstore space, 12123 Dexter Avenue, during the period of significance. Expanses of perforated hardboard along the walls held steel pegs that displayed a wealth of books, typically with front covers facing outwards. Above, a row of framed pictures, mostly photographs of influential Black leaders such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr, and Stokely Carmichael, ran horizontally. Areas not covered by books showed vertical wall paneling that often displayed posters advertising cultural events. Walls were painted white. Freestanding shelves occupied the center of the retail space. A hand-painted transom directly above the door (still present in 2022, though broken) displayed the address number, 12123. By this time the upper transom appears to have been closed in with drywall or plaster. A large, hand-painted sign in this location bore the bookstore's slogan, "KNOWLEDGE IS THE KEY TO A BETTER TOMORROW!"

During the 1967 Rebellion, the interior was damaged by water during a break-in, and subsequently repaired. No visible evidence of this damage or the repairs that followed remains today, however, as interior finishes from the period of significance have been lost due to deterioration that occurred in recent years.

At present, other than the overall floor plan of the four units, very little remains to demonstrate former retail use of the space. A high degree of deterioration appears to have been caused by water entering from roof leaks. Structurally, six steel columns, arranged in a grid pattern, break up an otherwise open space and support steel beams running east-west above. Concrete masonry

¹¹ The House of Diggs, Inc. Funeral Directors Calendar of 1968, Edward Vaughn Papers, 1963-2015, Detroit, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, box 1, folder 1; Bob Hallcomb, "Black Business Spotlight," The Ghetto Speaks, April 25, 1969, 3 (Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 1); Irah M. Charles, "Books for Every Mood: Vaughn's—That's Where the Black Literature Action Is," Michigan Chronicle, June 14, 1969, 5; and Vaughn's Book Store Catalog, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 2, folder 18, 1. 12 Aretha Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed: Witnesses Blame Police," Michigan Chronicle, August 5, 1967, 4.

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unit partitions, formerly separating each retail unit, lie crumbled on the floor in many areas, their mortar having been eroded. The concrete masonry units comprise the front and back thirds of each partition; presumably, stud and plaster or drywall partitions would have occupied the central third. Smaller partition walls create restrooms at the back of each unit; makeshift partitions of perforated hardboard also delineate smaller retail spaces at 12115 Dexter Avenue.

The floor consists of dark red, nine-inch, square asphalt tile, matching in each unit. Water infiltration has dissolved the plaster ceiling, with only wood lath remaining. Storefront windows are missing with only their rough framing still in place. The interior space is mostly empty; only a few wood shelves and boxes of unsold merchandise remain.

Additional Features

A single-story, rectangular, four-bay, brick stable or garage building was built in the 1920s and ran the entire width of the parcel, occupying the back quarter of the property. Later, once adjacent buildings had been completed, the effect was to create an enclosed courtyard. This interior space was paved and also contained a smaller, square, wood building of unknown function. The smaller building was removed prior to the period of significance. The garage was demolished prior to the period of significance. ¹³

Integrity

Although the condition of Vaughn's Book Store is challenged, not by deliberate, incompatible alterations or additions, but by the consequences of disinvestment and vacancy, the property possess historic integrity and can convey the important aspects of its past that give it significance in the themes of Ethnic Heritage, Social History, and Commerce. Photographs show that most of the defining features from the period of significance remained into the 2010s, even if some were concealed behind newer paint or wood. In the past decade, however, much of this detail has disappeared. Missing doors and window openings, interior fixtures, sections of chain link fence, and bent and torn steel cladding are apparent signs of the theft of scrap metal and building materials as the building has sat vacant.

The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), under which Vaughn's Book Store is nominated, guides that changes such as deterioration that stem from factors like disinvestment, vandalism, and neglect may not necessarily constitute a loss of integrity:

Special consideration should be given to understanding the ongoing impacts of segregation and discrimination when evaluating the integrity of buildings. Alterations

¹³ DTE Aerial Photo Collection, various years 1949, 1952, 1956, 1961, 1981, 1997; Baist Real Estate Atlas 1929; Sanborn Map Company 1926, 1941, 1950, 1952; Edward Vaughn, interview by authors, January 2, 2023.

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that happened both during and after the period of significance reflect strategies necessary for survival under these circumstances.¹⁴

Vaughn's Book Store, despite its deteriorated condition, nonetheless possesses integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Features emphasized by the MPDF, including overall massing and setback, the relationship of the building to the surrounding street grid, and details pertaining to architectural style, remain. The building facade retains architectural elements from both its original date of construction, c. 1924, and alterations reflecting the period of significance, made in 1964. Precast concrete details detached from the building remain onsite with the potential to be restored to their original locations. Transom windows with hand-painted numerals on three of the four storefronts have remarkably survived. And on the interior, the overall spatial arrangement of the four retail units remains. More importantly, however, are the aspects of feeling and association. The building remains identifiable as Vaughn's Book Store and the building remains as an important place associated with the African American experience in Detroit in the middle and later years of the twentieth century.

All of these factors, taken together, demonstrate that Vaughn's Book Store, despite significant deterioration, retains integrity. As the MPDF notes, "as the property pool [of locations exemplifying the Civil Rights Movement in Detroit] is diminished, the cultural legacy and story that the remaining buildings, structures, sites, and objects portray rises in importance." ¹⁶

Archaeological Potential

According to the State Archaeological Site File, there are no previously reported archaeological sites on or adjacent to the property. But the property and nearby properties have not been archaeologically surveyed. While the archaeological potential for pre-contact archaeological resources is low due to development in last century, there is the potential for material culture dating to the early to mid-twentieth century and related to the property's period of significance in the front and back lot of 12123 Dexter Avenue, the location of Vaughn's Book Store. The adjoining commercial building at 12129 Dexter Avenue was demolished, which may have impacted the localized potential for archaeological deposits; however, in many cases urban demolition leaves material traces and archaeological deposits related to the structure that once occupied that location. The possibility for archaeological resources related to Vaughn's Book Store should not be dismissed and should be investigated in the future; however, at this time there is no definitive evidence for site significance under criterion D.

¹⁴ National Register of Historic Places, The African American Experience in Twentieth Century Detroit Multiply Property Documentation Form. Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #100006099, 34.

¹⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

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8.	tatement of Significance				
(Ma	Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)				
X	A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant broad patterns of our history.	t contribution to the			
X	B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in o	our past.			
	C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, per construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses h or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose co individual distinction.	nigh artistic values,			
	D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information importa history.	nt in prehistory or			
	ria Considerations "X" in all the boxes that apply.)				
	A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes	3			
	B. Removed from its original location				
	C. A birthplace or grave				
	D. A cemetery				
	E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure				
	F. A commemorative property				
	G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the pas	st 50 years			

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Areas of Significance	
(Enter categories from instructions.)	
Ethnic Heritage: Black	
Social History Commerce	
<u>Commerce</u>	
D 4 1 401 40	
Period of Significance	
<u>1965-1972</u>	
Significant Dates	
1965 (Vaughn's Book Store opens)	
1966 (Forum '66) 1967 (1967 Rebellion)	
1907 (1907 Rebellion)	
Significant Person	
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)	
Edward Vaughn	
Cultural Affiliation	
Architect/Builder	
Not known	

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Vaughn's Book Store is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criteria A and B in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Black, Social History, and Commerce. Under Criterion A, Vaughn's Book Store is significant for its important role in the civil rights movement and the African American experience in Detroit. Prior to Vaughn's Book Store, the only other known Black-owned bookstore to sell Black literature prior to Vaughn's Book Store was a short-lived store in the 1933. Some public library branches maintained small collections of books by African American authors, various exhibitions featured the work of Black writers and artists, and it is possible that White-owned stores carried some Black literature, as they occasionally advertised in the city's local Black newspapers. Edward Vaughn, along with his aunt and business partner, Polly Rawls, purchased the building at 12115-12123 Dexter Avenue in 1964 and opened Vaughn's Book Store about January 1965.¹⁷ It was at the forefront of a new genre of Black-owned bookstores that focused on themes of Black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and related topics. Vaughn's was likely the second such bookstore in the country, after the African National Memorial Bookstore in New York City's Harlem, which Vaughn cited as an influence. Vaughn's Book Store quickly became a valuable resource within the community not just for providing books found no place else in Detroit or the region, but as a cultural meeting place that helped to define a new sense of Black consciousness as it emerged in Detroit and nationwide. As Vaughn's Book Store hosted and sponsored several conventions and events related to the Black experience, Edward Vaughn became a leading organizer of both the Black nationalism and Black Arts movements in Detroit. Its location and Vaughn's close relationship with Rev. Albert Cleage Jr. of the Shrine of the Black Madonna helped establish Detroit's Dexter-Linwood corridor as the center of Detroit's Black nationalist community in the 1960s. Vaughn's Book Store is also significant under National Register Criterion B for its direct association with Edward Vaughn, who became an important figure in the Civil Rights, Black Nationalism, and Black Arts Movements in Detroit. Vaughn's Book Store embodies Vaughn's important activities during his time in Detroit and reflects an important period of activism prior to his entry into local and state government and politics. This property remains the place in Detroit that best embodies Edward Vaughn's activities during this period and illustrates a significant aspect the African American experience in Detroit in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Vaughn's Book Store is nominated under The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). It is an eligible property type and meets the registration requirements established in the MPDF. The period of significance extends from the opening of the store in 1965 through 1972, when the business moved from the location.

1 '

January 1965 is given as the opening date in this nomination as it is the latest possible date provided in the available sources. An article, "New Book Store Specializes in Afro-Americans," in the January 2, 1965, issue of the Michigan Chronicle indicated Vaughn's Book Store was open. No earlier announcements, advertisements, or articles were located at this time.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Introductory Note

The preparation of this nomination was funded by a grant from the National Park Service Underrepresented Communities Grant Program to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office in 2020.

The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in Detroit

The modern civil rights movement, nationwide and in Detroit, came of age in the decade between 1954 and 1964. By the 1960s, and especially in 1963 and 1964 – when Edward Vaughn sold books from the trunk of his car and working to establish a permanent store – the movement was transformed as two trends simultaneously took hold.

First, civil rights advocates became increasingly disillusioned with the slow pace of progress. They were frustrated by the strong opposition of Southern Democrats in Congress and President John F. Kennedy's reluctance to put forth strong civil rights legislation. As the racial protests in the South grew more violent, Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for a non-violent response became less appealing. Second, civil rights movement activity expanded to include not only the fight for voting rights in the South but also housing segregation, educational, and economic inequity rampant in Northern cities.

The former sentiment is memorably expressed by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, wherein the minister laments "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride towards freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Klu-Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who . . . constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.'" As for the latter, Detroit activist Grace Lee Boggs recalls the zeitgeist of the city in her autobiography: "[1963] was the turning point, the year when Detroit became conscious of itself as the spearhead of the northern Black movement and the rest of the country became aware of the movement emerging in Detroit." 18

In 1963 and 1964 events of nationwide importance occurred in Detroit and the city's church and activist communities, many based in the Dexter-Linwood area, emerged as leading civil rights advocates. The first major civil rights march in America, the Walk to Freedom, was held in Detroit on June 23, 1963. The event was organized by Rev. C. L. Franklin¹⁹ and Rev. Albert Cleage and featured Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This event was where Dr. King first gave his "I

¹⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Accessed February 20, 2023, www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html; Grace Lee Boggs, Living for Change: An Autobiography (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 124.

¹⁹ Clarence LaVaughn Franklin was the pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit and a civil rights activist (Dillard, Faith in the City, 4 and 268-270).

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Have a Dream" speech and was the precursor to the March on Washington held two months

In contrast, at the Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, held in November 1963 at King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit, Malcolm X put forth revolutionary Black nationalist ideals in his *Message to the Grass Roots* address. When he spoke again in Detroit in April 1964 his message turned increasingly to issues of politics and civil rights. This was also the period when the Detroit NAACP sponsored a sit-in protest at First Federal Savings and Loan that ended after seven months when that institution agreed to stop its discriminatory loan and employment practices. A Black political party known as Freedom Now was established in Michigan by Detroit activists Albert Cleage, Grace Lee Boggs, and Milton Henry. It ran a full ticket of all-Black candidates in 1964, making Michigan the only state in the union to do so. Within this context of increased radicalization, Detroit came to played a critical role in the development of Black nationalism in America in the years that followed.

Black Nationalism, Black Power, and Detroit

Black nationalism is an ideology with varied interpretations that promotes the acquisition of political and economic power by Black people. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Black nationalist sentiment developed and was often connected to emigrating from the United States.²² Later forms often contrasted with integrationist ideals as Black nationalists sought to preserve a separate Black identity. In the 1920s Marcus Garvey promoted an early form of Black nationalism.²³ He and his followers organized as the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and Detroit was home to a large chapter of the group.²⁴ The Nation of Islam, founded in Detroit in the early 1930s by Wallace Dodd Fard and later led by Elijah Muhammad, also helped propagate Black nationalist ideals.²⁵ Although the Nation of Islam did not encourage political

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²⁰ National Register of Historic Places, The African American Experience in Twentieth Century Detroit Multiply Property Documentation Form. Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #100006099, 22.

²¹ Ruth Mills, et al. The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan: Survey Report Part 1: Historic Context. Michigan State Historic Preservation Office. Lansing, Michigan. April 2021.

²² There is no single accepted definition. Some scholars, for instance, consider revolts against slavery as evidence of Black nationalism, while others as more opportunistic acts against repression. Mark Newman, Black Nationalism in American History: From the Nineteenth Century to the Million Man March (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 9. For various early forms and expressions of Black nationalism, see ibid., 9-39.

²³ Peniel E. Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America, (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 2-4. For more on Marcus Garvey and UNIA, see Newman, Black Nationalism in American History, 48-79. 24 Angela Dillard, Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 197.

²⁵ For more on the Nation of Islam, see Newman, $Black\ Nationalism\ in\ American\ History,\ 80-113.$

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members, notably Malcolm X, became important Black nationalist leaders. ²⁶

Beginning in the 1950s new forms of Black nationalism that would eventually lead to the Black Power and Black Arts movements began to emerge. Never monolithic, various groups had different aims and ideas on how to accomplish them.²⁷ Generally they sought to empower Black people though community cohesion and pride in a shared history. Some radical and militant nationalists desired separation beyond the social and cultural spheres through the creation of states and nations controlled by Black people.²⁸ Decolonization and the liberation struggles of African nations were also influential in the development of new Black nationalist ideas, demonstrating the possibility of a society controlled by Black people and the manner in which that could be accomplished.²⁹ This cultural nationalism also emphasized and embraced folk

Especially in the early 1960s, these new types of Black nationalism gained popularity as many African Americans became disillusioned with the civil rights movement and its push for Black and White integration.³¹ Black Power ideology eventually grew from the belief that Black people had to not just control social and artistic venues, but oversee economic, financial, religious, and educational organizations.³² Black activists debated the effectiveness of the strategies of the civil rights movement, such as responses to growing protests in the South which they viewed as too moderate, with some rejecting a non-violence approach.³³

Black culture as the foundation for a Black nation.³⁰

²⁶ James Edward Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 181-182.

²⁷ See, for example, a description of groups operating in Harlem in the early 1960s: E. U. Essien-Udom, "The Nationalist Movements of Harlem," Freedomways 3, no 3 (1963): 335-342.

²⁸ For example, the Republic of New Africa, founded in Detroit, discussed below.

²⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," in The Black Power Movement, 255-257; and Komozi Woodard, A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 23-27.

³⁰ Woodard, A Nation within a Nation, 30.

³¹ Dillard, Faith in the City, 21 and 230-232.

³² Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," 273; and Joel Stone, "A Call to Action: The Changing Face of Inner-City Activism," in Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies, ed. Joel Stone (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 249. The Black Power Movement's origin is generally identified a speech given by Stokely Carmichael at the March Against Fear in 1966 (Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 132-173).

³³ An example from the 1950s was North Carolina activist Robert F. Williams, who was a proponent for armed self-reliance. See Simon Wendt, "The Roots of Black Power? Armed Resistance and the Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement," in The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145-165.

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Those pushing for a more militant approach often clashed with the older leadership of the Black community, such as conservative Black clergy and the leaders of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branch and the Detroit Urban League.³⁴ The NAACP in Detroit had been losing members since the 1950s after expelling some of its more radical left-leaning members.³⁵ The organizing of the Walk to Freedom in Detroit, a mass march held in 1963, exemplified these tensions. New nationalist leaders like Rev. Albert Cleage Jr. pushed for the march to be led only by Black people, but eventually speeches were given not just by Cleage and civil rights leaders like Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., but also White leaders like Jerome Cavanagh, Detroit's mayor.³⁶

The core of Detroit's Black nationalist leaders, according to the activist Grace Lee Boggs, included (besides herself) Rev. Albert Cleage Jr., Milton Henry, his brother Richard Henry, James Boggs, and Edward Vaughn. Boggs portrayed this leadership group in a very positive light, and described how they collaborated on various projects and in the formation of activist groups. Not all contemporaries viewed the group positively, but they agreed that these were the core of Detroit's new militant leadership. 39

Reverend Cleage had been a social worker previously, ⁴⁰ and after leading several congregations around the country, including Saint Mark's United Presbyterian Church in Detroit, he eventually formed Saint Mark's Congregational Church. He then moved his new congregation to the Brewster-Pilgrim Church at 7625 Linwood in 1958, and adopted the name of Central Congregational Church, which he later renamed the Shrine of the Black Madonna). ⁴¹ Vaughn

³⁴ Rev. Cleage and his associates often wrote about the ineffectiveness of the leadership of older organizations like the NAACP, and his belief that most Black people in Detroit trusted newer, more militant, leaders. See, for example, Albert B. Cleage, Jr., "NAACP Snafu," Illustrated News, May 27, 1963, 2-3; and Henry W. Cleage, "Black Militants Have Support of Negro Community," Illustrated News, November 25, 1963, 4-7.

³⁵ Ruth E. Mills, Saundra Little, and Amy L. Arnold, "Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan: Survey Report," Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, April 2021, 74.
36 Dillard, Faith in the City, 268-272.

³⁷ In the early 1970s Cleage took the name Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman (Dillard, Faith in the City, 303). We use "Cleage" for clarity due to its use in primary material from the period of significance and continued use in later secondary material.

³⁸ Grace Lee Boggs, Living for Change: An Autobiography, 118-120. Vaughn is also noted in a contemporary article: Hoyt W. Fuller, "The Evolution of Black Leadership in Detroit," Negro Digest 17, no. 1 (1967): 34. See also Matthew Birkhold, "Theory and Practice: Organic Intellectuals and Revolutionary Ideas in Detroit's Black Power Movement" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2016), 86-87.

³⁹ Louis E. Lomax, "Riot Snipers Organized, Got Residents' Help," *The Detroit News*, August 8, 1967, 1 and 21. Lomax essentially identifies these leaders as cause of Detroit's 1967 Rebellion. N.b. James Boggs was erroneously called John in the article.

⁴⁰ For Cleage's early life, see Dillard, Faith in the City, 239-251. 41 Ibid., 249-251.

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and the other leaders all attended the church. ⁴² A cultural Black nationalist, Cleage was critical of liberals and middle-class Black people, and especially Black clergy. He founded the radical newspaper the *Illustrated News* in the latter half of 1961 as a platform for his social views, and long worked as an activist. He helped found the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) along with the Henrys and Boggses, originally to fight bias in Detroit's school system before moving on to other initiatives. ⁴³ Along with Edward Vaughn, he was integral in organizing the Black Arts Conferences, discussed below.

Milton Henry was a lawyer who had graduated from Yale Law School and served as a city commissioner in Pontiac in the 1950s. Frustrated by segregation and the lack of change, he turned to activist causes and frequently worked with Cleage and his brother Richard Henry; this included running for office under the banner of the Freedom Now Party. Milton and Richard Henry founded the Republic of New Afrika in 1968, with the aim of creating a new nation controlled by Black people that would consist of the current American states of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina.⁴⁴

Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs, a married couple who were both leftist activists, were also influential to the development of Black nationalism in Detroit and beyond. Grace Lee earned a doctorate in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College in 1940, and gave talks to various socialist and communist groups. She worked continually to organize with labor and Black nationalist groups, and served as editor of the radical left journal *Correspondence*. She was also a panelist in both the First and Second Annual Black Arts Conventions, which Edward Vaughn helped to organize. James had been a union organizer in the 1930s, and active in the Socialist Workers Party. He wrote *The American Revolution: Pages From a Negro Worker's Notebook*, published in 1963, an important text to the Black Power movement. In Detroit, the Boggses worked with Cleage and others, in addition to working with various local activist groups like UHURU.

43 Ibid., 252-263.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴ Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 54-55 and 278; and Milton Henry, interview by James Mosby, 1970, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C., Ralph J. Bunche Collection, RJB 699.

⁴⁵ Dillard, Faith in the City, 226-227. See also Boggs, Living for Change.

⁴⁶ Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement, 187-187.

⁴⁷ The First Annual Black Arts Conference and Work Shop agenda, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 15, 3; and The Second Annual Black Arts Convention agenda, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 16, 9.

⁴⁸ Dillard, Faith in the City, 226-227.

⁴⁹ Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," 263.

⁵⁰ UHURU was founded by Wayne State University student Luke Tripp, a political group that organized Black militants aiming to bring about revolution. See Birkhold, "Theory and Practice," chap. 6; and Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 54 and 58-59.

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Edward Vaughn and Polly Rawls

Edward Vaughn was born in Abbeville, Alabama, and educated at Fisk University, a historically Black university in Tennessee. At Fisk, Vaughn majored in history and government and received a bachelor of arts degree in 1955. As he neared the completion of his studies at Fisk, a friend encouraged him to attend an event at which Thurgood Marshall – then director of the NAACP's legal branch – was a speaker. Vaughn was so moved by Marshall's words that he chose to pursue a career in law.⁵¹

Vaughn left the University of Illinois Law School after one year, however, citing a racist atmosphere. He moved to Detroit to join his sister, but soon after was drafted into the United States Army. His educational background allowed him a choice in deployments, and he elected to go to Germany to serve as an artillery surveyor for two years (he married his wife, Wilma, prior to departing for Europe). In early 1959 he returned to Detroit and worked for the United States Postal Service. He and Wilma raised a family of four children, first in an apartment on Boston Boulevard, then in a home in Conant Gardens, and finally, by the late 1960s, in a house on Longfellow Avenue in LaSalle Gardens.

Polly Lathion Rawls, Wilma Vaughn's aunt, was born in North Bibb, Alabama, in 1919. A registered nurse, she served in World War II.⁵⁵ In general, African American women were admitted to serve in the various branches the United States military in extremely small numbers; the Army Nurse Corps, of which Rawls was a member, enlisted about five hundred Black women despite thousands of qualified applicants and a dire nursing shortage on the European front. Most were assigned to care for prisoners of war at segregated bases in Arizona, Louisiana, and North Carolina.⁵⁶

Rawls later worked as a psychiatric nurse at City Hospital and the Lafayette Clinic in Detroit.⁵⁷ She lived on Longfellow Avenue after the war and by the 1950s on Gladstone Avenue, about a mile east of the location that would become Vaughn's Book Store.⁵⁸ Rawls had an interest in

⁵¹ Eric Thomas Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore: Axis of Black Consciousness," Riverwise, Spring 2017, 26 and Edward Vaughn, interview by authors, December 27, 2022.

⁵² Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

⁵³ Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26; and Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, United States Senate; 90th Cong. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 1431-1432.

⁵⁴ Eric Vaughn, interview by authors. Eric, the oldest of Edward Vaughn's four children, was born in 1960.

⁵⁵ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

⁵⁶ Alexis Clark, "The Army's First Black Nurses Were Relegated to Caring for Nazi Prisoners of War," Smithsonian Magazine, May 15, 2018.

⁵⁷ Charles, "Books for Every Mood," 5; and Eric Vaughn, interview by authors. 58 According to U.S. Census records. Later in life, she moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where she died in 1999.

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African history and had traveled throughout Africa.⁵⁹

Black-Owned Bookstores in the United States before 1960

Abolitionist David Ruggles may have founded the first bookstore in the United States owned by an African American. Opened in May 1834 in Manhattan, his store was also a circulating library, and Ruggles used the space to print and bind books, as well as frame pictures. During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans founded other bookstores, although most only stayed open for a few years. Evidence for such Black-owned operations is sparse, but various sources note the existence of stores around the country. For instance, a 1901 Union League directory lists a shop for school and scientific books in Washington, DC, while Booker T. Washington described a store he visited in Greenville, Mississippi, in the autumn of 1908.

The Black-owned bookstores during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries that remained in business for a significant period did so by sending a substantial amount of material by mail order and selling to African American churches and fraternal organizations.⁶⁴ Stores were not numerous, and rarely did they sell only books and printed material.⁶⁵ The owners frequently had other occupations as well, running their store as a side business.

Black literature was also available from the Crisis Book Shop, a mail-order enterprise associated with the national NAACP and located at the organization's headquarters in New York City. Reviews of important works and advertisements for the book shop appeared in *The Crisis* as late as the 1920s, and perhaps earlier.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Eric Vaughn, interview by authors.

⁶⁰ Graham Russell Gao Hodges, David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010), 60.

⁶¹ Joshua Clark Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 40.
62 Andrew F. Hilyer, The Twentieth Century Union League Directory: A Compilation of the Efforts of the Colored People of Washington for Social

Compilation of the Efforts of the Colored People of Washington for Social Betterment (Washington, D.C.: Union League, 1901), 25 and 107. The store was owned by John H. Wills.

⁶³ Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery* (New York: Doubleday, 1909), 202-203. The owner, Granville Carter, told Washington that his was the largest bookstore in the area.

⁶⁴ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 40.

⁶⁵ In addition to David Ruggles' store mentioned above, an example is the Faulkner News Agency in Chicago, which operated in the 1910s: it also sold newspapers and stationery. Alisha R. Knight, "'To Have the Benefit of Some Special Machinery': African American Book Publishing and Bookselling, 1900-1920," in U.S. Popular Print Culture, 1860-1920, ed. Christine Bold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 447.

⁶⁶ This date is based on available issues of The Crisis. The book shop may have operated much earlier.

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As a later example, the Aquarian Book shop in Los Angeles, opened in 1941, which had a special focus on occult and what would later be known as New Age-related texts. Its owners had other jobs in order to make a living, and the store spent several years as a mail order-only business.⁶⁷

Bookstores owned by African Americans tended to offer, in addition to some limited Black-interest material, books from a variety of genres and authors. Part of the reason was a dearth of published material by Black authors, as large mainstream publishers ignored the African American market, not realizing that it could be substantial.⁶⁸ Black authors and their publishers often resorted to selling their own books directly to customers or with the help of individual agents, marketing their works by word of mouth.⁶⁹ Still, some Black-owned stores in the midtwentieth century, such as the Hugh Gordon Bookshop in Los Angeles, did focus on Black-interest material.⁷⁰

The first African American-owned bookstore to not only prosper for a lengthy period of time but to also achieve national prominence was the National Memorial African Bookstore in New York City. Lewis Michaux, its owner, began to sell books from a wagon in Harlem around 1932 and soon thereafter opened a store. Michaux was interested in featuring Black-authored and Black-interest books, even if he had few of them in the early days of his store. By the 1950s, however, he had an impressive collection for sale. From the 1930s forward he was involved in Black nationalist causes, and supported, for instance, Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa movement. His store attracted various groups considered radical: communists, labor activists; other Black nationalists gave speeches in front of his store.

⁶⁷ Juana E. Duty, "Age of Aquarian Book Shop: Bookstore Still Surviving in 'Starvation Business," Los Angeles Times, March 24, 1982, F1 and F4; and Alfred Ligon, interview by Ranford B. Hopkins, Department of Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, February 10-March 24, 1982, https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb4g5009q6&query=&brand=oac4.
68 Knight, "'To Have the Benefit of Some Special Machinery,'" 438-440.
69 Ibid., 442-447.

⁷⁰ Owned by Adele Young, the Hugh Gordon Bookshop opened in the late 1940s and specialized in Black-interest books. Young also seems to have tried to get well-known authors to speak there: see W. E. B. Dubois, Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to Hugh Gordon Bookshop, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Amherst, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, Series 1, Correspondence,

https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b128-i273, and Helen Whitley, "Hugh Gordon Book Store: Ghetto's Cultural Center," Baltimore Afro-American, September 10, 1966, A5. See also Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 42; and Langston Hughes, "Harlem's Bookshops Have a Wealth of Material by and About Negroes," The Chicago Defender, February 14, 1953, 10.

⁷¹ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 40-41.

⁷² Langston Hughes ("Harlem's Bookshops," 10) wrote in 1953 about Michaux's store, saying that "the very sight of so large a display of literature by or about Negroes is almost breathtaking."

⁷³ Gerald C. Fraser, "Lewis Michaux, 92, Dies: Ran Bookstore in Harlem," New York Times, August 27, 1976, 34.

⁷⁴ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 41.

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The availability of Black literature in Detroit in the early twentieth century was similar to the rest of the country. The *Michigan Chronicle* and *Detroit Tribune*, both Black newspapers, carried articles that promoted the availability of Black books, typically through limited collections at public and school libraries or special events like a 1930 exhibition of arts, books, and magazines held at the Lucy Thurman Branch of the YWCA. To the mid-1940s, the Iota Phi Lambda sorority donated a collection of African American history books to the Detroit Public Library Utley Branch for the so-called "Negro Bookshelf project."

The first Black-owned bookstore in Detroit may have been Brown's Book Shop at 602 East Elizabeth Street, a building that appears to have been a dwelling.⁷⁷ Advertisements for Brown's appeared in the *Detroit Tribune* in 1933 and indicated that the shop carried "a complete line of all Negro books, newspapers, and Magazines."⁷⁸ The shop was operated by Noble H. Brown, who was listed in Detroit city directories as a confectioner. It may have been that both enterprises operated from Brown's residence, as no other addresses associated with Brown or his businesses were identified. The shop appears to have been short-lived, however, as advertisements for it do not appear beyond 1933. Noble Brown was listed in a few later editions of the city directory, but again as a confectioner located on East Adams Street. Later information for Noble H. Brown was not found and it is not known if he remained in Detroit.⁷⁹

The Founding of Vaughn's Book Store

During a visit to New York City, Edward Vaughn visited Michaux's National Memorial African Bookstore. The visit was an important moment, as he later recalled the experience: "I was simply mesmerized by the number of books that Mr. Michaux had there that I had never heard of, that I had no way of knowing how to get. And I said I have got to do something like this somewhere other than in New York. And I said I want to do it in Detroit." 80

Vaughn worked for the United States Postal Service in Detroit, and around 1962 or 1963 he sold copies of Ralph Ginzburg's 100 Years of Lynchings⁸¹ from the trunk of his car to co-workers and

^{75 &}quot;Detroit YWCA Valentine Parties to be Given 14th," Detroit Free Press, February 9, 1930.

[&]quot;76 Sorority Donates Historic Collection," Michigan Chronicle, February 26, 1944.

⁷⁷ The 1921 and c. 1950 Sanborn maps for this area of Detroit indicate the building at 602 East Elizabeth Street was a dwelling. This house and the surrounding buildings have all been demolished. The site of this house would have been about where the Ford Field Parking Deck is now located.

⁷⁸ Brown's Book Shop Advertisement, Detroit Tribune, May 13, 1933.

⁷⁹ It is not clear what happened to Noble H. Brown. A World War II draft card is available for Noble Hamilton Brown, then living on Beaubien Street in Detroit. If this is the same Noble Brown, he was born in Greenville, Alabama, in 1894, and worked for the Ford Motor Company in Dearborn during the war.

⁸⁰ Edward Vaughn, Vaughn's Book Store Community Meeting, held May 3, 2022. 81 Ralph Ginzburg, 100 Years of Lynchings (New York: Lancer Press, 1962). The

book compiles newspaper articles describing lynchings across the United

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Name of Property ordered copies directly from the publisher. 82 Vaughn also remained in contact with Lewis Michaux, whom he later described as a "mentor," and used Michaux's bookstore as a source for hard-to-find titles.83

Vaughn soon sought out a location to open a permanent store. After an investor backed out, Vaughn searched for a place he could afford. As he recalls: "I walked up Dexter Avenue in Detroit and I saw them remodeling this four-unit building, and I went to a man who was standing outside, a Jewish gentleman, [and asked] 'do you know who owns this building?" The man was Saul Lumberg, the owner. When Vaughn inquired about renting one of the storefronts, Lumberg offered to sell him the entire building on a land contract with a modest down payment.⁸⁴

Vaughn partnered with his aunt Polly Rawls and purchased the building. They opened Vaughn's Book Store about January 1965.85 Although Vaughn and Rawls were equal partners at first (Vaughn later purchased Rawls' share), Edward Vaughn seems to have served as the public face of the business. 86 Vaughn's name was mentioned prominently in advertisements and brochures; Rawls' name, when used, was listed second.⁸⁷

The building had previously served a variety of neighborhood-oriented retail uses over its nearly three-decade history. The longest occupant was a laundry at 12117 Dexter Avenue that opened in 1927 or 1928 and remained until the purchase of the building by Vaughn and Rawls. 12123

States.

⁸² Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26, and Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 50.

⁸³ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

⁸⁴ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors. According to Detroit's building permit card index, a building permit from May 22, 1964, indicated the approval of alterations to the store fronts at 12115-12123 Dexter. 85 A catalog put out by Vaughn's Book Store in the 1970s noted that the business was founded in December 1964 (Edward Vaughn Papers, box 2, folder 18). The conference quides to the First and Second Annual Black Arts Conventions in 1966 and 1967 (ibid., box 1, folders 15 and 16) date the opening of the store to January 1965. In addition, work was done by the previous owner on the building in May 1964 (as discussed above). The Michigan Chronicle published an article, "New Book Store Specializes in Afro-Americans," in its January 2, 1965, issue that indicated the store had opened. The Chronicle was published weekly, which makes it possible the store opened in late December. No other articles that discuss the opening have been located in Detroit newspapers. Other sources have erroneously stated when the store was opened or provided broader dates: Campbell stated it was at the end of 1959 ("Vaughn's Bookstore," 26), but also relates the story about Ginzburg's book, which was only published in 1962. Vaughn stated in an interview that it was "about 1962" (Interview by Sam Pollard, Eyes on the Prize Interviews, Washington University Digital Gateway Texts, June 6, 1989), while Charles ("Books for Every Mood," 5), Davis (From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 5) and Stone ("A Call to Action," 238) gave 1963. 86 Eric Vaughn, interview by authors.

⁸⁷ One such example was an advertisement in the 1970 Central High School [Detroit] yearbook, which highlighted both Vaughn and Rawls as proprietors.

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Dexter Avenue held a hardware store for only about a year, in 1925 and 1926; it was then a fish market, meat market, or grocery store under various business names until it became Vaughn's Book Store. In the other two units, 12115 and 12121 Dexter Avenue, businesses came and went over the years including a shoe repair shop, a beauty salon, a fruit market, and a roofer. Kandel's Fish Market, the final occupant at 12123 Deter Avenue prior to Vaughn's, also occupied the adjacent unit at 12121 Dexter Avenue.⁸⁸

Dexter Avenue

Edward Vaughn and Polly Rawls had chosen a location that was, in general, centrally located with respect to Detroit's expanding African American population. That section of Dexter Avenue, in northwest Detroit, had initially been developed in the 1920s with White residents and businesses. During the 1930s the Jewish population of the area went from being only a small minority, to constituting about half of all residents. ⁸⁹ Its transition to a largely Black area began in the 1940s and accelerated in the 1950s as urban-renewal-era policies demolished the traditional Black business districts and communities of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley and that population migrated north and west. ⁹⁰

About a mile and a half south of Vaughn's Book Store was the Old West Side—Detroit's first African American community outside of the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley area, established in the 1920s, and southeast of that was the Twelfth Street area that, by the 1950s, had become another significant concentration of African American residents (many of whom would be displaced by the construction of the John C. Lodge Freeway, completed in 1957). A few blocks north of Vaughn's Book Store is the Russell Woods-Sullivan neighborhood, two subdivisions developed from the 1920s through the 1940s that, by the late 1950s, had become a prominent African American middle-class neighborhood. Although in the first half of the twentieth century the city's African American population was mostly in the near east side and along the Woodward Avenue corridor, by 1960 it had grown and dispersed to cover much of the city's west side as far as Livernois Avenue on the west and McNichols Road on the north.

The section of Dexter Avenue where Vaughn and Rawls located was, along with nearby Linwood Avenue, also developing into the geographic center of a growing Black activist community. Vaughn's Dexter location was later recalled by Stuart House, a Detroit-based

⁸⁸ Polk City Directory (Detroit: J. R. Polk and Company, various years).

⁸⁹ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 22.

⁹⁰ National Register of Historic Places, The African American Experience in Twentieth Century Detroit Multiply Property Documentation Form. Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #100006099. Thomas J. Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 242-244 discusses the relationship between Jewish and Black migration on Detroit's northwest side. 91 Ibid., 38, 47, and 242-245.

⁹² Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board, Russell Woods-Sullivan Final Report; and Mills, Little, and Arnold, Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience, 33-34.

⁹³ Sugrue, The Origins of the Urban Crisis, 186.

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Secular institutions in the vicinity included those of an African American literary or political nature. About two miles south, on Fourteenth Street, King Solomon Baptist Church was the location of the Boone House, a forum for poetry, literature, and music founded by Margaret Danner, an African American poet and activist, 98 in 1962. Dudley Randall, one of the Boone House poets, in 1965 began to operate Broadside Press out of his home just a few blocks west of the bookstore, at 12651 Old Mill Place in the Russell Woods neighborhood. Randall's enterprise was a key publisher and distributor of Black poetry. 99 The Detroit office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was directly across the street from Vaughn's Book Store, at 12322 Dexter Avenue. 100 The Republic of New Afrika located its Detroit consulate at 9823 Dexter Avenue, less than a mile south of the bookstore, in 1969. 101 As the surrounding area continued to evolve, additional institutions established themselves within the vicinity and Vaughn himself invited like-minded enterprises to operate within the other storefronts of the building that he owned.

The Purpose of Vaughn's Book Store

An important aspect of the civil rights struggle in the mid-1960s was the rise of Black pride that resulted from the intersection of the Black Arts, Black Nationalism, and Black Power

⁹⁴ Stuart House, as quoted in Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26. See also Ruth E. Mills, Saundra Little, and Amy L. Arnold, "Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan: Survey Report," Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, April 2021, 26-28. 95 Boggs, Living for Change, 121.

⁹⁶ Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board. Final Report: Masjid Wali Muhammad/Temple No. 1 Detroit. Historic Designation Advisory Board, 2011. 97 National Register of Historic Places, Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #1100006132.

⁹⁸ For more on Margaret Danner and Boone House, see Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement, 205-207.

⁹⁹ Julius E. Thompson, Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2005),

¹⁰⁰ Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 27.

¹⁰¹ Edward Onaci, Free the Land: The Republic of New Afrika and the Pursuit of a Black Nation-State (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 215.

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Movements. African American people increasingly began to explore their African heritage and embrace the African American experience. This cultural acceptance was expressed by popular slogans like "Black is Beautiful." This period saw a push for African American Studies programs in colleges and universities, exhibitions of the work of African artists, and the adoption of traditional African clothing and natural hairstyles. For a people that had felt unseen in traditional White American society, Black pride was a means of cultural self-expression and Vaughn's Bookstore became a haven for that expression. It offered a significant amount of Black-interest material and at that time it was the only place in Detroit to do so.

At the same time, the fight for equal employment opportunities had resulted in an increase in the disposable income of African Americans. Gains in income combined with a decrease in the cost of books due to a proliferation of mass market paperbacks just as the demand for Afro-centric works by African American readers was rising. Despite this, White-owned bookstores largely ignored books by Black authors (as did White publishers), save for a few popular literary figures like Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin. Vaughn sought to create an expansive collection of Black-interest material from the start, ordering all titles in the *Books In Print* catalog with certain words like "black," even if some ended up being irrelevant. As Dudley Randall, Detroit poet and founder of the Broadside Press, recounted:

During the 60s, I would go to Vaughn's Bookstore and observe the people. He wouldn't even have to try to sell a book. I remember a time when all he had to do was stand behind the cash register and ring up sales. People have told me they have spent hundreds of dollars there because when the big bookstores wouldn't stock black books, it was the main place to go to get them. ¹⁰⁴

In the early twentieth century, the Black educator and author Booker T. Washington had advocated Black business ownership as a way to reduce racial inequality. Washington believed that successful Black-owned businesses would contribute to a wider market and become essential to the whole, thereby acting as a means of Black progress. He viewed direct confrontation with regards to social equality as harmful. The National Negro Business League, founded in 1900 by Washington, continued to promote his views of economic self-help. ¹⁰⁵

Beginning in the late 1950s, however, scholars like E. Franklin Frazier, a sociologist whose work would influence the Black Power movement, challenged Washington's belief. Frazier argued that Black businesses should not just focus on being successful and profitable enterprises: rather, they should use their position to push for social change. ¹⁰⁶ African American businesses were not to focus solely on profit but to serve their communities by providing physical spaces integral to advancing Black self-determination. ¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 42-43.

¹⁰³ Edward Vaughn, Vaughn's Book Store Community Meeting.

¹⁰⁴ Melba Joyce Boyd, Wrestling with the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 235.

¹⁰⁵ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 43-44.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 46-47.

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Locally, organizations based in Detroit had long promoted Black-owned businesses. In 1930, Rev. William Peck, minister of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded the Booker T. Washington Trade Association, a group that encouraged the establishment of Black businesses. ¹⁰⁸ Fannie Peck, William's wife, created the National Negro Housewives' League, ¹⁰⁹ which encouraged women to patronize Black-owned enterprises and businesses that hired African Americans, even canvassing Black neighborhoods to support them. ¹¹⁰ Groups such as these served as precursors to the efforts of Black business owners like Vaughn and Rawls.

Vaughn's Book Store did not exist merely as a conduit to sell books, even Black-authored or Black-interest titles: Edward Vaughn and Polly Rawls developed a politically activist outlook to bookselling. In a 1969 interview, Polly Rawls explained to *Michigan Chronicle* reporter Irah M. Charles that the purpose of the bookstore was to "make available to the community the wealth of materials on the contributions of the black man to civilization." Providing Black-interest material not available elsewhere was not seen as a savvy business opportunity, but one of cultural and political importance. Taking pride in being Black¹¹² also meant being proud of the accomplishments and history of Black people. The store's purpose was therefore similar to those of Black activist groups like GOAL, which pushed for Detroit's public school system to remove textbooks that only focused on European and White heritage and history. They advocated instead to bring in new texts that discussed Africans' and African Americans' place and contributions to the nation's history. The slogan of Vaughn's Book Store was "Knowledge is the key to a better tomorrow," howing that Vaughn and Rawls were well aware of the power of books.

In the early 1960s, Black nationalists in Detroit and across the United States published and disseminated their own texts as a way to gain political power and to recover a lost sense of heritage and history.¹¹⁵ Vaughn's was founded at the very beginning of this period, just as these

¹⁰⁸ Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 171-172; and Dillard, *Faith in the City*, 51-52.

¹⁰⁹ Known also as the Detroit Housewives' League or National Housewives' league in various sources.

¹¹⁰ Fannie B. Peck, "Declaration of Purpose of the National Negro Housewives' League," Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, MS Housewives League of Detroit 1:3. See also Victoria W. Wolcott, Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 176-183. She would later found a credit union to support Black Detroiters; see "Mrs. Peck Rites Are Held Monday," Michigan Chronicle, November 21, 1970, 1; and Mills, Little, and Arnold, "Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience," 8.

¹¹¹ Irah M. Charles, "Vaughn's-That's where the Black Literature Action Is, Michigan Chronicle, June 14, 1969.

¹¹² Stephanie M. H. Camp, "Black Is Beautiful: An American History," The Journal of Southern History 81, no. 3 (2015): 675-690, esp. 686-89. 113 Ibid., 252-263.

¹¹⁴ Sometimes a variant was used: "Knowledge is a better key to tomorrow" (ibid).

¹¹⁵ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 37.

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new ideas gained popularity and was integral to their propagation. "You've got to remember that this was before the explosion of new Black knowledge. We were just at the very prelude to all of this," Vaughn later emphasized. ¹¹⁶ The idea that knowledge gained through literacy in and of itself was a way to personal and political power was not new. ¹¹⁷ But the civil rights gains made during World War II and the early postwar years led to a new interest in Black history, arts, and culture for African Americans, which in the 1960s spurred the establishment of many new publishing houses and works.

The promotion of Black history and knowledge easily fit with the goals of running a bookstore. But the creation of Black public spaces was also extremely important, as Black-owned businesses could provide their communities with places to nurture a culture of self-determination. The bookstore on Dexter served as such a place: bi-weekly meetings, held on Thursday nights, discussed literary and political topics, a place where members of the community could speak about the problems around them and possible solutions. These meetings were sometimes advertised in the local Black press, with Edward Vaughn frequently serving as moderator. In addition to the more formal gatherings, Vaughn's served as a safe haven and encouraging place for Detroit's Black community to discuss history, culture, and politics. Many who visited the store when they were young recounted that children were encouraged by Vaughn and Rawls to sit and read in the store while their parents read, shopped, and spoke with other patrons. The for many, Vaughn's Book Store was the only place where Black-interest material could be accessed and explored. Visitors to the store were encouraged to linger and read books even if they did not make a purchase; Vaughn would frequently play

¹¹⁶ Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26.

¹¹⁷ Since at least the eighteenth century African Americans had understood reading and writing could impart an identity and an understanding of the world. Enslavers forbade enslaved people from reading or even possessing books, fearing the spread of new ideas about rights and power. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, 'When I Can Read My Title Clear': Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 14-17; and Knight, "African American Book Publishing and Bookselling," 438 and 441-442.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 37-39. See also Joshua Clark Davis, "Black-Owned Bookstores: Anchors of the Black Power Movement," African American Intellectual History Society, January 28, 2017, www.aaihs.org/black-owned-bookstores-anchors-of-the-black-power-movement.

¹¹⁹ The meetings began fairly soon after the opening of the bookstore, as a Michigan Chronicle article notes two meetings on "What the New Negro Is Thinking" to be held on February 13 and March 2, 1965 ("Bookstore Conducts Rights Forum," February 13, 1965, 6). The forums held every other Tuesday evening seem to have continued into at least 1967, as noted in an advertisement for Vaughn's Book Store in an autumn issue of the Journal of Black Poetry 1, no. 6 (1967): 40. See also Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26; and Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 50.

^{120 &}quot;Bookstore Conducts Rights Forum," *Michigan Chronicle*, February 13, 1965, 6. The forum entitled "What the New Negro Is Thinking" was to be held at Vaughn's on February 13 and March 2, 1965.

¹²¹ Vaughn's Book Store Community Meeting.

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recordings such as the *Message to the Grass Roots* address by Malcom X. Vaughn and other family members also traveled to conferences and other events to promote and sell books. ¹²²

A c. 1969 store catalog reflects the activist goals of Vaughn and others and is not a mere list of titles. 123 It opens with a paragraph on Black culture, including a list of African boys' and girls' names, along with Zulu, Swahili, and Yoruba vocabulary. The books featured in the catalog include Black-authored fiction, poetry, and children's books, as well as various non-fiction categories ranging from African American and African history to cultural and sociological studies. Vaughn's carried practical texts to provide help for people in their daily lives (e.g., African cookbooks and career testing books) as well as specialist and academic works (e.g., Algeria's Infrastructure: An Economic Survey of Transportation, Communication, and Energy Resources). Pamphlets, periodicals, as well as non-textual material were also sold, including African carvings, hats, pictures, records, buttons, and educational films.

The activist goals of the bookstore meant that it not only existed as a space to provide popular literature by Black authors and books about African American and African history, and literature, but rather serve as ground for radical political change. Black nationalists and radical political activists were attracted to the store, ¹²⁴ reflecting its position as an institution integral to the Black nationalist movement. ¹²⁵ The store's catalog made the revolutionary outlook explicit in its introduction: "the Black revolution today is world wide and will continue until the dignity of Man is realized. We feel we are contributing in a small way to that revolution." ¹²⁶ The catalog also listed revolutionary texts not directly connected to African Americans or Africa. An entire section was devoted to books from China, included numerous titles by Chinese Communist Party chairman, Mao Zedong, many of which had been imported directly from China. ¹²⁷

According to Stuart House:

Vaughn's was a place within the movement for everyone... It spanned a lot of the ideological divisions, and there were many, between Marxists and Nationalists, Christian Nationalists and all the various factions; but it was a place that all of

¹²² For one example, Paul Lee, now a notable scholar of Malcolm X, was one of Vaughn's regular customers. Edward Vaughn claims to have inspired Lee's interest in the Malcolm X by recommending the minister's books. Eric Vaughn, interview by authors.

¹²³ Edward Vaughn Papers, box 2, folder 18. The catalog's cover has both the Dexter and Mack store addresses, but no material listed dates to later than 1969. It is possible the catalog was put together to coincide with the opening of the Mack store in the latter half of 1969 or January of 1970. 124 Vaughn soon emerged as a leader in Detroit's small but growing black nationalist community, and radical activists began to congregate at his store." Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 50.

¹²⁵ Vaughn's was one of the "Hardcore nationalist institutions [that] underpinned the black cultural life of Detroit to a significant extent too." Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement, 225.

¹²⁶ Edward Vaughn Papers, box 2, folder 18, 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 49; and Edward Vaughn, Vaughn's Book Store Community Meeting.

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these people from all of these varied belief systems could find a common ground, which made it kind of a unifying force. 128

Vaughn's Impact and the Black Arts Conventions

The rapid rise in popularity of Vaughn's Book Store coincided with the development of the Black Arts Movement (BAM), which emerged in the mid-1960s as an African American literary, theater, and fine arts movement. The goal of BAM was to create art that was directly linked to the hopes and needs of African Americans. The writer Amiri Baraka, then known as LeRoi Jones and founder of the Black Arts Repertory Theater School in Harlem, has been called the movement's father. ¹²⁹ Considered an aesthetic analog to the Black Power ideology, it went beyond style by drawing a direct connection between art and politics. ¹³⁰ BAM's stated link between art and politics paralleled the goals of Vaughn's Book Store: the store had political aims that could not be separated from its economic and business ventures.

BAM did not just develop as a result of Black nationalist and Black power ideologies, but rather they were an inexorable part of one another. Black cultural leaders often saw themselves as political leaders, and artistic conventions would include talks on politics and political gatherings could include poetry readings. Political groups emphasized the importance of arts organizations. Political magazines and journals, like *Correspondence*, edited by Grace Lee Boggs, included sections on Black art. The need to develop Black art and culture was a political priority. 133

The popularity and renown of Vaughn's Book Store is inseparable from the rise of Black Power ideology and BAM in Detroit, and indeed played an essential part in their development. This is made clear by two important events: the Black Arts Conventions held in Detroit in the summers of 1966 and 1967. ¹³⁴ Edward Vaughn had organized a Black nationalist group called Forum '66 which sponsored the two conventions. ¹³⁵ The first conference agenda described how the idea for the conference grew out of the bi-weekly meetings at the store. Black nationalist Austin Chavou had originally suggested the meetings "to stimulate and educate black people to our glorious past

¹²⁸ Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore: Axis of Black Consciousness," 27.

¹²⁹ Woodard, A Nation within a Nation, ix and 63-68.

¹³⁰ Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," $Drama\ Review\ 12$, no. 4 (1968): 28-29.

¹³¹ While BAM is considered the "cultural wing" of BPM, BPM could also be considered the "political wing" of BAM. Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, 14-15

¹³² Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 73.

¹³³ Smethurst, The Black Arts Movement, 15-16.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 226.

¹³⁵ Dudley Randall, "Assembly in Detroit," Negro Digest 17, no. 1 (1967): 42. Most sources associate Forum '66 with Vaughn, but his leadership is explicitly stated here. Its headquarters was given at the same address as the bookstore, 12123 Dexter; see "On the Conference Beat: Second Annual Black Arts Convention," Negro Digest 16, no. 8 (1967): 19-20; Note that secondary material often confuses the names of these conventions and Forum '66, and sometimes call the conventions Forums '66, '67 or even "Forum '65" (e.g., Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 50).

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and the promising future that awaits us if we are but willing to incorporate programs of self-help and self-determination." The convention's sessions, which included various panels and workshops, took place at the Central United Church of Christ. In addition to the sponsorship of Forum '66, the conference agenda's description of how the conference came to be and full-page ad for the store on the back make the connection to the bookstore clear. ¹³⁷

While the first of these was held only a little over a year after Vaughn's Book Store opened, the convention attracted national attention and was attended by prominent artists and activists. The *Negro Digest* noted the upcoming event, which was held from June 24 to June 26 of 1966. It was to feature artists such as John O. Killens and LeRoi Jones (the latter did not end up attending), activists like Charles P. Howard, and representatives from various organizations like CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), the Freedom Now Party, and even United Nations delegates from various African countries. Dudley Randall wrote a report on the convention, which began with an opening statement from Stokely Carmichael (who had been unable to attend due to an injury). A panel on literature discussed the difficulties faced by Black authors, as well as their opportunities, while problems with various religious belief systems were debated. African American history and art exhibits were shown, and further panels on music, education, drama, and politics were held. The meeting had an enthusiastic air, one akin to a "religious revival."

The Second Annual Black Arts Convention took place in the summer of 1967, and it too had a national reach. Randall again wrote a report on the gathering in the *Negro Digest*. Expanded to a four-day event, panels were held at the Central United Church of Christ and Vaughn's Book Store. A trade fair was held the first day, and on the second a youth conference that had sessions on inner city schools, Black unity, and Black Power. Keynote speeches were given by Daniel Watts, founder and editor of *Liberator Magazine*, and H. Rap Brown, SNCC's new

¹³⁶ For more on Chavou, see "Leading Pan-Africanism in Detroit, Austin Chavou Joins the Ancestors," *Michigan Citizen*, January 9, 2004, B4; Conference agenda, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 15, 4.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 4 and 12. A section even describes Forum '66's flag, featuring the Pan-African colors of red, black, and green, along with a star (ibid., 5).
138 The back page of the convention agenda is an advertisement for Vaughn's Book Store, which notes that the store is "only one year old but growing!" Ibid.

^{139 &}quot;Black Arts Convention in Detroit," Negro Digest 15, no. 8 (1966): 91.

¹⁴⁰ Dudley Randall, "A Report on the Black Arts Convention," $Negro\ Digest\ 15$, no. 10 (1966): 54-58.

¹⁴¹ The First Annual Black Arts Conference and Work Shop agenda, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 15.

¹⁴² Randall, "A Report on the Black Arts Convention," 58.

^{143 &}quot;Second Annual Black Arts Convention," 19-20.

¹⁴⁴ Dudley Randall, "Assembly in Detroit," Negro Digest 17, no. 1 (1967): 42-48

¹⁴⁵ The Second Annual Black Arts Convention agenda, Edward Vaughn Papers, box 1, folder 16. This agenda is reproduced an exhibit to a congressional investigation: Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, 1464-67.

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chairman. ¹⁴⁶ The third day consisted of numerous panels and workshops, including ones on religion (with Rev. Albert Cleage and Rev. C. L. Franklin), literature (panelists included Nikki Giovanni and John O. Killens), Vietnam and war (chaired by James Boggs), jazz, art, racism in education, African and African American history, and Black women. Edward Vaughn himself moderated a panel on economics and self-help. The final day included a parade and African American history festival.

In addition to building upon the first conference, the second conference was dedicated to the memory of Malcolm X, who had been assassinated in New York in 1965, and emphasized the importance of unity. A copy of *For Malcolm*, a collection of poetry compiled by Dudley Randall and Margaret Burroughs (artist and poet), was presented to Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's wife. ¹⁴⁷ The agenda included a short essay on Black culture, one that emphasized unity and welcomed all participants. ¹⁴⁸ A meeting of the Black Arts Confederation of Unity was held at Forum '66's headquarters in the Vaughn's Book Store building, and all conference delegates were requested to attend. There Edward Vaughn asked the various organizations gathered to put aside ideological differences to form a "national liberation front." ¹⁴⁹

Just weeks after the convention ended, however, a rebellion began.

Vaughn's Book Store and the 1967 Rebellion

Vaughn's Book Store again attracted national attention due to the 1967 Rebellion. The attention, however, was uninformed and resulted in misplaced blame on the roles Edward Vaughn and other Black nationalist leaders played in the event.

In the early morning of July 23, 1967, the Detroit police raided an after-hours party in a Black neighborhood at Twelfth and Clairmount Streets. This event set off a five-day uprising, one of many that occurred around the country in the summer of 1967. Forty-three people were killed (thirty-three of them Black, often at the hands of Detroit police and the Michigan National Guard), and hundreds of buildings were destroyed in acts of vandalism and looting that were later understood as expressions of Black social and political protest. ¹⁵⁰ The neighborhood immediately around Vaughn's Book Store was one of the affected communities. While the raid

¹⁴⁶ Watts founded the radical magazine in 1960. See Joseph E. Peniel, "Waiting till the Midnight Hour: Reconceptualizing the Heroic Period of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," Souls: Critical Journal of Black Politics & Culture 2, no. 2 (2000): 11.

¹⁴⁷ Randall, "Assembly in Detroit," 47-48; and Dudley Randall and Margaret G. Burroughs, eds., For Malcolm: Poems on the Life and Death of Malcolm X (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1967). Two poems dedicated to Malcolm X, by Leroi Jones and George Norman, were also included in the conference's agenda (The Second Annual Black Arts Convention agenda, 5).

¹⁴⁸ The Second Annual Black Arts Convention agenda, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Randall, "Assembly in Detroit," 47.

¹⁵⁰ Detroit Urban League, The People Beyond 12th Street: A Survey of the Attitudes of Detroit Negroes after the Riot of 1967 (Detroit Urban League, 1967).

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was the immediate impetus for the rebellion, the longstanding anger of Black residents at a range of discriminatory practices (including police brutality and a failure to integrate a largely White police department, housing segregation, employment discrimination, and perceived exploitation by business owners) fueled it.¹⁵¹

Vaughn was not present at the beginning of the rebellion; he was in Newark, New Jersey, for a Black Power conference. On July 23, 1967, with the trunk of his car filled with books he had purchased from the African National Memorial Bookstore in New York, Vaughn rushed back to Detroit, though his return was impeded by difficulties along the way. He was stopped by police in Newark, only a few days after a series of riots had occurred in that city; from the Ohio-Michigan border he had to take back roads the rest of the way to avoid roadblocks. When he arrived at the store, he found graffiti on the front facade: "Long Live the African Revolution." Yet despite being in an area on the west side of the city that saw a large amount of destruction, itself surrounded by destroyed buildings, 153 there was no other damage, and the store was fine.

Two days afterwards, however, the store was attacked. The building was set on fire, but it failed to catch, and the necessary clean-up was not extensive. But the next night the store was broken into. Displays and objects were destroyed, posters were torn, and books were ripped and thrown onto the ground where they were ruined by a flood caused by a faucet left running over a stopped up sink. While Vaughn had not been at the store during the night, local residents identified the vandals as Detroit police officers, who came in several vehicles in the early morning and wrecked the store. Vaughn recounted calling the mayor's office, who only told him to call the police:

So then I called the 10th Precinct and the Sergeant in charge who told me his name was Sergeant Slaughter, said that, "yes, we did it, we did it before and we'll do it again." And he said that, "the reason we did it is because we heard you guys were storing guns in the store." And he said, "we, you know, we, we don't intend

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¹⁵¹ For more on the 1967 Rebellion, see Sidney Fine, Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), originally published in 1989; Mills, Little, and Arnold, "Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience," 85-86; and the essays in Joel Stone, ed., Detroit 1967.

¹⁵² Vaughn's journey back to Michigan has been recounted several times. See Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 51-52; Kim D. Hunter, "1967: Detroiters Remember," Against the Current, September-October 1997, 20-21; Vaughn, interview by Sam Pollard; and Vaughn, interview by authors.
153 An article about the store's destruction a few days later notes that it had remained a "neat white-front building incongruously nestled among devastated and gutted hulks." Aretha Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed: Witnesses Blame Police," Michigan Chronicle, August 5, 1967, 4.
154 Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 52; and Vaughn, interview by Sam Pollard.

¹⁵⁵ Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed," 4.

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to have any of that and I know you guys are the ones who started the riots, and sure we did it, and we'll do it again." ¹⁵⁶

Rawls believed that they targeted the store after it had remained unharmed in the initial violence and was seen as a symbol of pride to African Americans. The police also perceived Vaughn's Book Store as a threat due to its importance as a prominent site for Black nationalist, and, in general, Black political organizing in Detroit. 158

Although incident made the local news, it was clear that some not only believed the destruction was deserved, but that Edward Vaughn had supposedly been one of the instigators and planners of the rioting. ¹⁵⁹ An article in the *Detroit News* cast blame for the rioting on the leaders of the radical Black community: Albert B. Cleage Jr., Milton and Richard Henry, James and Grace Lee Boggs, and Edward Vaughn. ¹⁶⁰ Despite no hard evidence being presented (and indeed some that would suggest the opposite) the claim was made that the Revolutionary Action Movement had been meeting at Vaughn's Book Store, despite Edward Vaughn and Polly Rawls' explicit denials, and that they had orchestrated the violence. ¹⁶¹

Edward Vaughn was also investigated by the police and FBI as part of a group of Black leaders who were accused of causing the violence in Detroit. ¹⁶² In the aftermath of the summer of 1967, several commissions were formed to study the events that affected cities across America. One of the most respected was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission (after its chair, Otto Kerner Jr.), who published their extensive report in 1968. ¹⁶³ Another was a series of hearings held by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, led by its chair Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas. ¹⁶⁴ McClellan was a conservative senator who signed the Declaration of Constitutional Principles (known as the Southern Manifesto), which opposed desegregation in public places after the United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

¹⁵⁶ Edward Vaughn, interview by Sam Pollard.

¹⁵⁷ Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed," 4.

¹⁵⁸ Suzanne Smith, Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 199 and 202.

¹⁵⁹ For example, in a publishing and bookselling trade magazine that described the effects of the 1967 events: "Detroit: A Riot-Torn City Survives and Bounces Back," *Publisher's Weekly*, August 28, 1967, 266-267. Another report appeared in *The Journal of Black Poetry* 1, no. 6 (1967): 39.

¹⁶⁰ Lomax, "Riot Snipers Organized, Got Residents' Help," 1 and 21.

¹⁶¹ Lomax notes that Cleage and the Miltons went to the roof of the City Council building to protest but acknowledges that they were not armed. Ibid,

^{21;} Namely the Revolutionary Action Movement; ibid., 21. Vaughn denied that RAM met at his store; see Watkins, "Book Store Destroyed," 4.

¹⁶² Lomax, "Riot Snipers Organized, Got Residents' Help," 1 and 21.

¹⁶³ Known as the Kerner Commission, after its chair. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).

¹⁶⁴ The full report is entitled Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders: Hearings Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations.

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He wanted to focus on a lack of strict law enforcement even before the hearings began, and was supported by the FBI who had targeted various Black nationalist groups. ¹⁶⁵ Even bookstores were targeted by the FBI, as its head, J. Edgar Hoover, justified his harsh methods by describing his fear that Black nationalists would join Communists to threaten the United States. ¹⁶⁶ The hearings on "Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders" took a different approach from other commissions, which instead emphasized social and economic problems as underlying causes for the violence.

A large portion of the hearings focused on Detroit. A Detroit Police Department officer, Lieutenant William R. McRoy, gave extensive testimony on various Black leaders and organizations operating in the city. Vaughn was among the radical Detroit leaders that were given extensive biographies. The Second Black Arts Convention was portrayed as a meeting of radicals who were all "militants and advocators of violence." As an example, H. Rap Brown was quoted saying "Motown, if you don't come around, we are going to burn you down." To many of the senators and law enforcement officers at the hearings, there was a clear and direct connection between the convention and the violence that transpired a few weeks later. Although there was also much talk about various radical groups, their possible armaments, and their political views, the hearings produced no explicit evidence connecting these groups to violent activities in the city.

Despite the attention of federal authorities, Vaughn was never charged with any crime connected to the events of 1967. As Vaughn put it in a later interview, those who rioted and looted were not generally revolutionaries like him and the Henry brothers, but average people.¹⁷¹ In the hearings McCoy even noted that "Vaughn states that he is a black nationalist and that he feels that black nationalism is not racially violence prone, though he admits that some members of the black nationalist movement could possibly be violent."¹⁷² Although the belief that Vaughn instigated

¹⁶⁵ Andrea A. Burns, "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of 'Subversive' Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot," Michigan Historical Review 30, no. 1 (2004): 10-14; and Kenneth O'Reilly, "The FBI and the Politics of the Riots, 1964-1968," The Journal of American History 75, no. 1 (1988): 109-112.

¹⁶⁶ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 63-65; and Joshua Clark Davis, "The FBI's War on Black-Owned Bookstores," The Atlantic, February 19, 2018, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/fbi-black-bookstores/553598/. 167 Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, part 6, 1385-1451.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 1431-1432. Others identified in the hearings were the Richard and Milton Henry, Grace Lee and James Boggs, and Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., 169 Ibid., 1415-1416. The agenda for the conference was entered as an exhibit (ibid., 1464-1467).

¹⁷⁰ Senator McClellan then asked: "Who is Motown?" Lieutenant McCoy then clarified that "Detroit is quote often referred to as the 'Motor City' or 'Motown.' This is one of many examples of how far removed McClellan was from understanding what happened (Burns, "Waging Cold War in a Model City," 13-14).

¹⁷¹ Edward Vaughn, interview with Sam Pollard.

¹⁷² Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, 1464-1467.

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or secretly led rioters was false, the hearings correctly identified him as an important leader in Detroit, as well as the bookstore as an integral space to the Black community.

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Vaughn's Book Store Post-Rebellion

Vaughn's Book Store non only withstood the events of 1967, it blossomed in the aftermath. After literary publications spread word of the alleged vandalism of the store by the Detroit Police, unsolicited donations of books began to arrive, and the store inventory was quickly replenished. "Every publisher in America was sending me books, free books, you know, and they said they had not seen anything like the burning of books since Hitler's time," recalled Edward Vaughn. 173

The store prospered as popular interest in its offerings increased during a time of growing interest and enthusiasm in Black nationalist ideas in Detroit and nationwide. Vaughn purchased a second location, at 10721 Mack Avenue (demolished c. 2015) on Detroit's east side, which opened in 1969.¹⁷⁴

Vaughn recalled that he was able to travel during this time, and established contacts in Ghana and other West African nations, from whom he could purchase books not available in the United States. His ability to stock hard-to-find books meant that his bookstore was a destination for prominent individuals and celebrities, such as entertainers visiting Detroit or Windsor, Ontario, for shows. Rosa Parks and her husband Raymond, who lived nearby on Wildemere Avenue at this time, were regular customers, along with Louis Farrakhan and other Nation of Islam leaders. Poets Gwendolyn Brooks, Naomi Madgett, John O. Killens, Eloise Carver, and Oliver LaGrone had also come to the store to read their work.

The success of Vaughn's Book Store also marked the end of its presence at 12123 Dexter Avenue. Around 1972, the store had outgrown that storefront and moved two doors down to a larger building at 12135 Dexter Avenue (extant), which Vaughn also purchased. Vaughn continued to own his original building, and leased the old bookstore space to a record store, Yopps Record Man.¹⁷⁷

This era of prosperity, however, was short lived. As Vaughn acquired the new buildings and expanded his offerings, he also witnessed a rapid transition in the book industry. Vaughn described the early 1970s as "the ending of the Black book era." He remembered that after the Rebellion, his business "bloomed and blossomed [for] about five or six years before all of that was pretty much over." Corresponding to the broader acceptance of African Americans into American society following the civil rights push in the 1960s, a collapse occurred in the popularity of militant Black nationalist movements nationwide in the 1970s and an overall

¹⁷³ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

¹⁷⁴ It first appeared in the store's 1969-1970 catalog. Edward Vaughn Papers, box 2, folder 18.

¹⁷⁵ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

¹⁷⁶ Irah M. Charles, "Vaughn's-That's where the Black Literature Action Is, Michigan Chronicle, June 14, 1969.

¹⁷⁷ Polk City Directory.

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decline in interest in Black history and culture, ¹⁷⁸ African American customers shifted their interests to other genres. According to Edward Vaughn:

The bottom fell out of the Black book business . . . the average Black reader stopped reading Black books and started reading astrology books. So they were selling astrology books out in Ferndale, Michigan, and all of my customers that had been interested in Black books—but were not really the kind of reader that I was, where they also wanted to organize—they got off into astrology. . . . I lost most of my customers and it was a big thing at the time. ¹⁷⁹

Vaughn, on principle, chose to retain the store's focus on Black history and activism rather than adapt his approach to the changing market. "I just didn't want to get off into all that," he recalled. He maintained a small astrology section that focused on works by Black astrologers, but this did not stop the decline of his business. Despite a core of devoted customers, books by Black authors became harder to find as publishers and distributors ceased to provide them. ¹⁸⁰ Finally, a global economic recession from 1973 to 1975 marked a challenging time for small business owners in general.

Vaughn struggled to make payments on his three commercial buildings and his home was threatened with foreclosure. He was spared from the latter only because the attorney tasked with seizing the house happened to be one of his loyal customers.¹⁸¹

Other Occupants During and After the Period of Significance

Vaughn's Book Store occupied only the northernmost space in the four-unit building: 12123 Dexter Avenue. The longest tenant was Chuck's Barber Shop, next door at 12121 Dexter Avenue, run by a Black barber who moved into the building earlier in 1964, prior to the sale to Vaughn and Rawls. ¹⁸² Vaughn and his family received haircuts there; it remained through the 1970s. Both 12123 and 12121 Dexter Avenue had been vacated earlier in 1964 by the departure of a fish market that had occupied that half of the building. The southern half of the building, 12115 and 12117, had been occupied by a gift shop; the owner promptly left of her own

¹⁷⁸ Davis, From Head Shops to Whole Foods, 66-71.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Vaughn, interview with authors. Eric Vaughn, who worked at his father's store in the 1970s, makes the same observation: "A lot of Blacks weren't really looking to learn about history... Times had changed." Interview by authors.

¹⁸⁰ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

^{181 &}quot;[The bank] would not give it to a Black lawyer in Detroit to take my house, they were going to give it to a White suburban lawyer. What they didn't know was that the White suburban lawyer was one of my best customers. He read Black books, too! He said 'Brother Vaughn, don't you worry about it, I'm going to sit on it.'" Interview with authors.

¹⁸² Dates and tenant names are obtained from Polk and Bresser's city directories unless otherwise noted.

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accord.¹⁸³ Thus, Vaughn soon established a collection of businesses and entities with whom he had a personal relationship beyond that of landlord and tenant.

12117 Dexter Avenue served as the campaign office of Rev. Albert Cleage Jr., Vaughn's pastor at the Shrine of the Black Madonna, when he ran for Detroit City Council in 1965. 184 It was later the Easel Art Shop, owned by Glanton Dowdell, painter of the Black Madonna mural at Cleage's church. Around 1970 Dowdell's business was replaced by Charisma Gift Shop, at 12117 Dexter Avenue, started by Edward Vaughn and later taken over by Kwame Atta; it remained until 1977. 186 12115 Dexter Avenue was the home of Hair Fashions by Wendell; by 1970, it was Pretty Dolls Beauty Salon.

After Vaughn's Book Store relocated to 12135 Dexter Avenue, Edward Vaughn continued to own the building and lease space. Yopps Record Man was the next occupant of 12123 Dexter Avenue, established in 1974. The Pan African Congress opened the Uhuru Sasa Institute at 12117 Dexter Avenue in 1975. By the early 1980s, Vaughn sold the building on a land contract to the owner of the Instant Impressions print shop, one of his tenants, thus ending his association with the building.

With his selection of tenants, Vaughn demonstrated that he was not merely a businessman seeking to generate revenue; he was using his position as a property owner to build relationships within Detroit's Black nationalist community and to empower Black business owners in general. According to Eric Vaughn, Edward's son who later purchased the bookstore's final, Livernois Avenue location to operate his own business, "I think he would invite anybody that had something or kind of believed in the same things that he believed in, in terms of the community and activism, and people that had an idea . . . He was all about empowering Black businesses and people going into business." 189

¹⁸³ According to Vaughn, "the next two units had been a gift shop by a White lady . . . she was so upset that I had moved in with the bookstore, until she just got out of there." Interview by authors. The 1964 Polk Detroit West Side Directory lists "Ong Jimmie laundry" at 12117 Dexter Avenue and "vacant" at 12115 Dexter Avenue, suggesting that all four units turned over in 1964 (potentially prompting, or prompted by, Lumberg's remodeling) and the gift shop that Vaughn recalled was a new arrival.

^{184 &}quot;Fight Police Brutality: Make the Common Council a Police Review Board," Albert B. Cleage campaign flyer, 1965, at http://riseupdetroit.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Fight-Police-Brutality-Elect-Albert-B.-Cleage-Councilman-.pdf.

¹⁸⁵ Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, 1433.

¹⁸⁶ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors, and Polk city directories.

¹⁸⁷ University of Pennsylvania Fall 2018 Preservation Studio, 146.

¹⁸⁸ Vaughn does not recall the date of the transaction. Interview by authors; Detroit tax records show a transfer in 1982.

¹⁸⁹ Eric Vaughn, interview by authors.

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Departure from Dexter Avenue and Edward Vaughn's Later Career

As the book business declined, Vaughn focused on other endeavors. He purchased a vacant, deteriorated movie theater a short distance west of the Dexter Avenue, at 13125 Livernois Avenue (demolished). With his children, he rehabilitated the building and opened the Langston Hughes Theatre, which offered stage plays and music festivals from 1976 through 1980. 190 He closed the 12135 Dexter Avenue location in 1979 and sold the building. Vaughn never left the book business entirely, however. He operated a small book shop in the Langston Hughes Theatre; after closing that business, he briefly operated a bookstore location on Seven Mile Road before purchasing the final location of Vaughn's Book Store at 16527 Livernois Avenue (extant). There, Edward Vaughn continued to also offer space to like-minded activists, as he did at the original Dexter Avenue location. He later sold the building to his son Eric. The building became and continues to be a frame shop and art gallery, with a small collection of books and greeting cards, carrying the legacy of Vaughn's Book Store into the 2020s. 191 At each location, Edward Vaughn endeavored to purchase the building rather than rent, and when his four children went into business as well, he encouraged them to do the same. "My father always said, you always want to own a building . . . that way you can be in control of your own destiny," recalled Eric Vaughn.¹⁹²

Concurrently with operating the Langston Hughes Theatre and the Seven Mile and Livernois bookstore locations, Vaughn embarked upon a career in city and state government, a development that parallels the story of many Black nationalist leaders in Detroit and nationwide who transitioned from activism to electoral politics in the mid-to-late 1970s. "I had to survive somehow," Vaughn remembers, "I went on and on, and I got into politics, and I was able to do pretty well in that." He worked for Detroit mayor Coleman A. Young but was forced to resign when Young became aware of his ambitions for elected office. ¹⁹³ Vaughn was elected to the Michigan legislature on his first attempt, and served in the state House of Representatives from 1978 to 1980 and from 1995 to 2000. He ran unsuccessfully for Detroit mayor in 1997 and a state Senate seat in 2001.

Black-owned Bookstores Today and the Future of Vaughn's Book Store

Black bookstores in the United States again experienced a resurgence in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. Haki Madhubuti, poet and publisher who founded the Third World Press, noted in 1990 that there were now about "fifteen times" as many Black bookstores as in the 1960s: about 250 nationwide. A renewed interest in Black history and culture accompanied such

^{190 &}quot;Langston Hughes Theatre," Ann Arbor Sun, November 5, 1975, 11; and The Concert Database, "Langston Hughes Theatre," accessed February 19, 2023, https://theconcertdatabase.com/venues/langston-hughes-theatre.

¹⁹¹ Eric Vaughn, interview by authors.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Edward Vaughn, interview by authors.

¹⁹⁴ Alisa Samuels, "Black Bookstore Renaissance," Los Angeles Times, February 10, 1990.

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developments as the Los Angeles riots, the golden age of hip hop, and increased African American political organizing.

The number of Black bookstores, however, again dropped—to just fifty-four in 2014, according to one estimate, paralleling a steep decline in independent bookselling nationally as the market came to be dominated by, at first, chain bookstores, and later, internet retail. However, the number is again slowly increasing (seventy in 2016), with contemporary Black-owned bookstores frequently offering other services in addition to retail bookselling, and often serving as event venues or community gathering spaces, much as they did in the 1960s. A handful of such locations are located in Detroit today; in some cases, they cite Vaughn's Book Store as a direct inspiration and influence.

The future of Vaughn's Book Store itself, however, is uncertain. By the early 2010s the final retail occupant had gone out of business and the building came under City of Detroit ownership—a situation that typically arises as a result of tax foreclosure. After the building was added to the city's list of buildings to be demolished, the Detroit City Council promptly voted to remove it from the list, noting its significance. A 2019 Planning and Development Department plan for the Russell Woods and Nardin Park area recognizes the history and importance of Vaughn's Book Store and recommends National Register of Historic Places listing but does not provide further details regarding the building. Yaughn's Book Store presently remains vacant and open to the elements (as noted in the Narrative Description, above).

National Register Criteria, Registration Requirements, and Areas of Significance

In addition to the significance of Vaughn's Book Store in the context of Black-owned bookstores nationwide, and its association with Edward Vaughn as a significant person, Vaughn's Book Store is also evaluated within the historical contexts described in *The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit, Michigan* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), a context framework approved by the National Register of Historic Places in 2020. To be significant within this context, properties must (in addition to being located in Detroit, and attaining significance between 1900 and 1976, and retaining integrity) "possess historical associations related to the theme of twentieth century African American civil rights" as described in the MPDF. 198

¹⁹⁵ Char Adams, "Black-owned Bookstores Have Always Been at the Center of the Resistance," Mic, February 6, 2020, www.mic.com/impact/black-owned-bookstores-have-always-been-at-the-center-of-the-resistance-21738486.
196 El-Ra Adair Radney, "Pan African Agency and the Cultural Political Economy of the Black City: The Case of the African World Festival in Detroit," PhD diss, (Michigan State University, 2019), 151, 175, 187, and

¹⁹⁷ City of Detroit Planning and Development Department, "Russell Woods and Nardin Park Neighborhood Framework," 2019.

¹⁹⁸ National Register of Historic Places, The Civil Rights Movement and African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit Multiply Property Documentation Form, 39.

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Vaughn's Book Store has gained significance within the identified context theme "Detroit's Black-Owned Businesses: 1900–1976" described in Section E of the document. Specifically, the MPDF notes "because African Americans were denied access to services in areas outside traditional Black neighborhoods, there was a strong push within the African American community for the establishment of Black-owned businesses. They not only offered services to Blacks; successful business owners reinvested in the Black community." The MPDF also identifies the theme "Finding a Voice: Detroit's African American Community and the Media 1900–1976" in which entities, including bookstores, promoted an Afrocentric point of view in supporting the Black Arts Movement and Afro-American studies.

Edward Vaughn, through Vaughn's Book Store, provided Detroit's Black community with products and services unavailable at White-owned bookstores. As a successful and prominent outlet for various forms of Black literature, Vaughn's Book Store was integral to the social and economic success of Black authors and presses and provided an important local venue for the discussion and dissemination of important ideas, some considered radical at the time, in the cause of civil and human rights. Vaughn's Book Store also provided Black Detroiters with access to important national figures through the numerous events hosted at the store.

The MPDF establishes that resources of the "commercial building" subtype are eligible under Criterion A when they are "the site of significant civil rights activities, such as printing presses or bookstores associated with the printing and sale of African American literature." Vaughn's Book Store is an important example of a Black nationalist bookstore that was at the forefront of a national trend of African American bookselling. Secondarily, Vaughn's Book Store also falls under the "social institutions" subtype as it served as a meeting venue for a variety of educational, social, and activist events."²⁰⁰ It also aligns with the period of significance "1964—1976: The Second Revolution in Detroit."²⁰¹

The MPDF states "the overarching Area of Significance for civil rights resources in Detroit is Ethnic Heritage: Black;"²⁰² the document also suggests Social History.²⁰³ Commerce is also considered as an Area of Significance due to the relationship of Vaughn's Book Store to the broader context of Black-owned bookstores and businesses in Detroit.

Under Criterion B, Vaughn's Book Store meets the registration requirements of the MPDF. Of the properties associated with Edward Vaughn, only three remain: in addition to the original 12123 Dexter Avenue (1965–c. 1972) location, the buildings at 12135 Dexter Avenue (later 1970s) and 16527 Livernois Avenue (the most recent and final Vaughn's Book Store location) still stand. Of the three, the original Vaughn's Book Store bears the strongest association due to its period of operation from 1965 to 1968, which was at the peak of the civil rights movement, its social significance to Detroit's Black community as a place for the expression of Black Arts,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 6. This is listed as a subtheme under the broader theme

[&]quot;Employment."

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 24-28.

²⁰² Ibid., 5.

²⁰³ Ibid., 2.

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Black Nationalism, and Black Pride, its role as a prominent Black-owned Business in the city of Detroit, and for its ability to illustrate the significance Edward Vaughn attained through his organization of Forum '66 and events of the 1967 Rebellion.

Although deriving significance, in part, for its association with a living figure, Vaughn's Book Store is associated with a specific and significant, eight-year period in Edward Vaughn's long association with social activism and his important achievements in Detroit. Vaughn's association with the bookstore and the period of significance extend beyond fifty years and occurred during an "explosion of Black knowledge" in Detroit.²⁰⁴

Prior to acquiring the building and opening the store in 1965, Vaughn was not associated with a particular place, and had just begun activities that formed the earliest years of his activism. After moving the bookstore in 1972, Vaughn noted the market for Black literature in Detroit underwent profound change, the location of the bookstore changed, and its importance within the city declined. In 1978, Edward Vaughn began a career in public service that included positions in both local and elected state government. When he retired from public service in Michigan, Vaughn returned to his hometown of Dothan, Alabama. There he was active in the NAACP Dothan/Wiregrass Branch, and eventually served as vice-president of the branch. From 2005 to 2009 Vaughn served as the president of the NAACP Alabama State Conference. In the early 2010s, Vaughn became involved in local government and served on the Dothan Historic Preservation Commission where, among other activities, he was involved in establishing the NBCAR Historic District. His term ended in 2013, and he then served on the city's Zoning Board of Adjustment. As of the nomination of this property, Edward Vaughn continues to live in Alabama.

Although Edward Vaughn continued to be involved in politics, government, and activism after he left Michigan, those activities must be considered within Alabama, when considering local-and state- level significance. His importance within the context of the civil rights movement and the African American experience in Detroit, generally, and within the Black nationalism and Black pride movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Detroit are best illustrated by Vaughn's Book Store.

²⁰⁴ Campbell, "Vaughn's Bookstore," 26. This quoted text appears previously in this document in full.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National Register designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # recorded by Historic America	- -
Primary location of additional data:	
State Historic Preservation Office	
Other State agency	
Federal agency	
Local government	
University Other	
Name of repository:	

Vaughn's Book Store			Wayne County, MI
Name of Property			County and State
Historic Resources Sur	rvey Number (if	assigned):	
10. Geographical Data	l		
Acreage of Property:	Less than one (0.	165 acres)	
Use either the UTM sys	tem or latitude/lo	ngitude coordinates	
Latitude/Longitude Condition Datum if other than WC (Enter coordinates to 6 of the coordinates)	GS84:	_	
1. Latitude: 42.381857		Longitude: -83.125894	
2. Latitude:		Longitude:	
3. Latitude:		Longitude:	
4. Latitude:		Longitude:	
Or			
UTM References Datum (indicated on US	SGS map):		
NAD 1927 or	NAD 19	83	
1. Zone: 17T	Easting:	Northing:	
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:	

Vaughn's Book Store	Wayne County, MI
Name of Property	County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

W DEXTER 116-115 LEWIS & CROFOOTS SUB NO 5 L27 P70 PLATS, W C R 14/194 60×120

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Verbal Boundary Description is the legal description for the property as derived from the City of Detroit Parcel Viewer, https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/city-detroit-parcel-viewer. Lots 115 and 116 comprise the entire parcel associated with the Vaughn's Book Store building (12115–12123 Dexter Avenue) during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael F. Webb and Melanie A. Markowicz

organization: Vinewood Preservation Planning

street & number: 1068 Vinewood Street

city or town: Detroit state: Michigan zip code: 48216

e-mail: <u>michael@twosixfour.net_</u>

telephone: <u>313-265-9266</u> date: February 28, 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Vaughn's Book Store

Name of Property

Wayne County, MI

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Vaughn's Book Store

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne State: Michigan

Photographer: Timothy Boscarino

Date Photographed: July 6, 2022, unless otherwise noted

Description of photograph(s) and number:

1 of 11. Dexter Avenue streetscape; 12115–12123 Dexter Avenue viewed from intersection

of Dexter Avenue and Monterey Street.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0001

2 of 11. Dexter Avenue streetscape; 12115–12123 Dexter Avenue viewed from intersection

of Dexter Avenue and Duane Street.

MI_Wayne County_Vaughn's Book Store_0002

3 of 11. Front (east) facade of building.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0003

4 of 11. Southeast corner of building, March 25, 2022.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0004

5 of 11. Rear (west) facade of building, March 25, 2022.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0005

6 of 11. Northwest corner of building.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0006

7 of 11. North facade of building, March 25, 2022.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0007

8 of 11. Northeast corner of building, March 25, 2022.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0008

9 of 11. Interior of 12123 Dexter Avenue looking from front (east) entrance west towards

back of store.

MI_Wayne County_Vaughn's Book Store_0009

Wayne County, MI
County and State

Name of Property

10 of 11. Interior of 12123 Dexter Avenue looking from back (west) of store towards front (east) entrance.

MI Wayne County Vaughn's Book Store 0010

11 of 11. Interior of 12115–12123 Dexter Avenue looking from north end of building to south end of building.

MI_Wayne County_Vaughn's Book Store_0011

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:


Tier 1 – 60-100 hours


Tier 2 - 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 - 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination		
Property Name:	Vaughn's Book Store		
Multiple Name:	The Civil Rights Movement and the African American Experience in 20th Century Detroit MPS		
State & County:	MICHIGAN, Wayne		
Date Rece 6/15/202	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,		
Reference number:	MP100009177		
Nominator:	SHPO		
Reason For Review	r.		
X Accept	Return Reject 8/4/2023 Date		
Abstract/Summary Comments:	Meets registration requirements of MPS. Locally significant for its association with Edward Vaughn, a leader in local civil rights activities. This was his bookstore, a central gathering place and source for Black-authored and Black-centric materials. Vaughn used this location as a physical manifestation of the Black power movement for 7 years until the character of the movement changed and he moved the location to another building. POS 1965-72		
Recommendation/ Criteria	Accept / A & B		
Reviewer Jim Ga	abbert Discipline Historian		
Telephone (202)3	54-2275 Date		
DOCUMENTATION	I: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No		
If a nomination is re National Park Service	sturned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the ce.		



GRETCHEN WHITMER GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

QUENTIN L. MESSER, JR. PRESIDENT

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper National Park Service National Register of Historic Places 1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228 Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed file contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for Vaughn's Book Stor Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan . This property is being submitted for listing in the Nationa Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a <u>X</u> New SubmissionResubmission Additional Documentation Removal.
1 Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
2 Locational maps (incl. with nomination file)
0 Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (incl. with nomination file)
2 Pieces of correspondence (incl. with correspondence file)
11 Digital photographs
Other (incl. with nomination file):
COMMENTS:
Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
This property has been approved under 36 CFR 67.
The enclosed owner objections constitute a majority of property owners.
This nomination has been funded by the following NPS grant: 2020 URC Grant; Grand No. X P21AP11722-00
Other:
Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at (517) 331-8917 or walsht@michigan.gov.
Sincerely yours,
1 2 1-2

Martha MacFarlane-Faes

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer





March 30, 2021

Amy L. Arnold, Preservation Planner State Historic Preservation Office 300 N. Washington Square Lansing, MI 48913

Dear Ms. Arnold,

On behalf of the Planning and Development Department, City of Detroit, the Office of Historic Preservation supports your efforts in applying for an Underrepresented Community grant to complete a National Register nomination for the former Vaughn's Bookstore property at 12115 Dexter, Detroit. This historically important property, upon request of our office in late 2019, was found eligible for the National Register by SHPO, as it meets Criteria A & B in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage, at a local level.

As property owner, the department consents to your application for grant funding and completion of a nomination, and subsequent consideration for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Working with the Detroit Building Authority, this department has worked to ensure that reasonable measures, including boarding and fencing, are in place to prevent trespassing at the site and preservation of the building's historic integrity.

Sincere regards,

Garrick B. Landsberg

Director of Historic Preservation

cc:

Katy Trudeau

Acting Director, Planning and Development Department