

THE mOTHER ROAD

Rediscovering Springfield's
African American Route 66 Story

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Every Community Has Stories Waiting to Be Heard



Listening to Springfield







Built from

- 19 archived oral histories
- Missouri State University Libraries
- Special Collections & Archives
- Community partnership

VIDEO

A Building That Tells a Story

Benton Avenue Educational Center

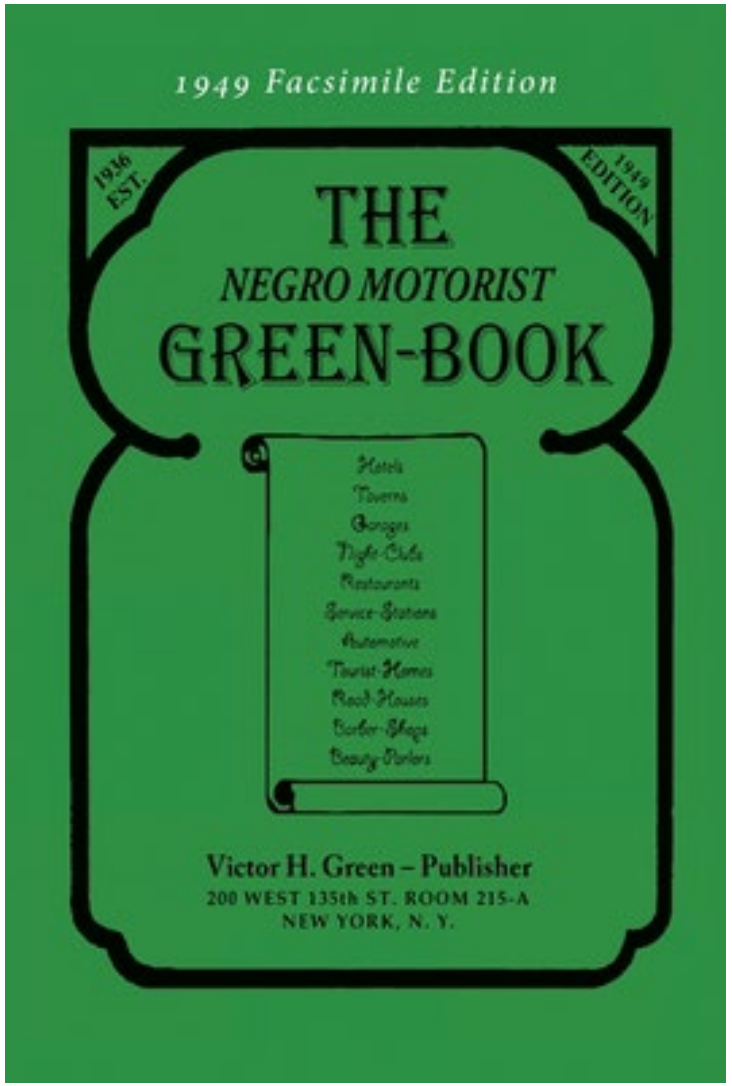
- Built between **1922 and 1926**
- Former Benton Avenue AME Church
- Final church of **Rev. Oliver Brown**
- Home of *The mOTHER Road* exhibit



Travel Was Never the Same for Everyone

Traveling Required More Than a Map

- Where could you stop safely?
- Where could you eat?
- Where could you spend the night?
- Who could help if something went wrong?



What Did That Look Like in Springfield?

Springfield, 1958

22 Hotels Surveyed

2 welcomed African American guests

(Alberta's Hotel and the YMCA)

57 Motels Surveyed

9 welcomed African American travelers



Alberta's Hotel

More Than a Place to Stay

A place where travelers found

- Safe lodging
- Hospitality
- Conversation
- Community



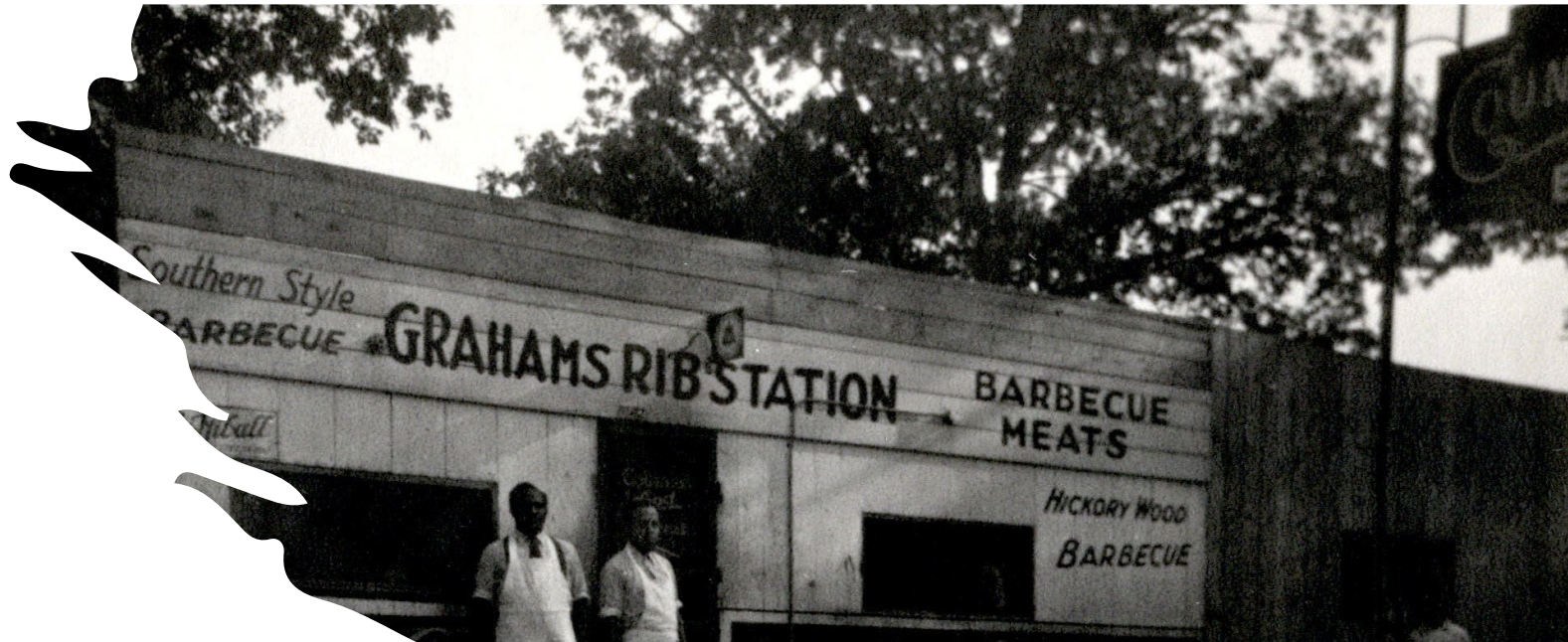
Graham's Rib Station and Motor Courts

Where Community Came Together



A place for:

- Great food
- Music
- Friendship
- Community



Conclusion

At the end, the African American community in Springfield responded to both legal and informal segregation by building strong networks of support and connection. Places like Alberta's Hotel, Graham's BBQ, and Alberta's farm in Ash Grove provided safe spaces where residents and travelers could gather, enjoy music and food, and share conversation. Travel guides, word of mouth, and a strong sense of community made these experiences possible. When carefully navigated, Route 66 could become not just a road of hardship, but the road to freedom.



The Legacy Lives On

History comes alive when people share it.

Visit the Exhibit!

The mOTHER Road
The African American Experience on Historic Route 66

- Benton Avenue Educational Center
- 830 N. Benton Ave.
  Springfield, Missouri
- Free Admission
- Wednesday–Saturday
  10:00 AM–4:00 PM