

t i m e l i n e

**MARTINDALE  
BRIGHTWOOD  
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Indianapolis  
Indiana

1872-1994







Interior of Brightwood Y.M.C.A., 1905

Indiana Historical Society, Bass Photo Co. Collection #4501

- 1872** Original plat for Brightwood is signed by manufacturers Clement A. Greenleaf and John L. Mothershead and merchants William D. Wiles and Daniel H. Wiles. Greenleaf is the inventor of a turntable to rotate railroad cars and locomotives.
- 1873** Martindale area is settled by Frederick Ruschaupt and Gustave Zschech, operators of the Indianapolis Car Works railroad machine yard.
- 1874** Plat of Brightwood is amended. New plat outlines plans for a residential community to surround industrial and commercial areas. Plat is supported by employees of the "Bee Line." Brightwood becomes Indianapolis' railroad suburb.
- 1875** Brightwood opens a high school, originally known as district school No. 12 of Center township. Located at 27th St. and Sherman Dr., the school is razed in 1890 following the incorporation of Brightwood into Indianapolis.
- 1876** Community is incorporated as the town of Brightwood.
- 1877** The "Bee Line" opens a major yard and machine shop in Brightwood.

- 1878** African-Americans make their homes and build churches in the area around Beeler St. in Martindale.
- 1880** In the census, a majority of Brightwood adult men are identified as skilled or unskilled workers; about 40 percent are foreign-born or first-generation, predominantly of German, Irish, or British ancestry.
- 1886** Brightwood Methodist Church is founded.
- 1892** Hillside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is organized. The church first located at 1942 Hillside Ave. is moved to 1831 N. Ingram St. in 1912.
- 1894** Private waterworks are installed in Brightwood. Also c. 1894, two volunteer fire departments are organized—the "Wide-a-Wakes" at 25th and Station streets and the "Alerts" at Roosevelt Ave. and Only St.
- 1895** Beeler St. becomes Martindale Ave.
- 1897** Brightwood is annexed into Indianapolis.  
  
Cohen Bros. department store opens at the corner of 25th and Station streets and continues operation into the 1960s.

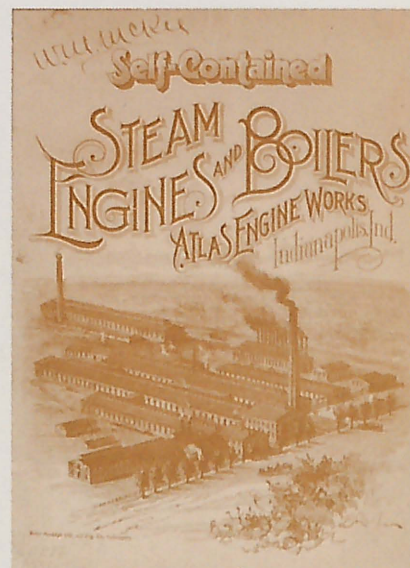
**1898** St. John A.M.E. Church is founded.

**1899** Fire-engine house No. 21 is established in Brightwood.

Brightwood is a "thriving town of nearly 4,000 people. ...it is a model little city of cottages in appearance resembling a large park. The fact that so many men living in the town work together in the great engine and car shops makes the community seem like one big family." Electric car service connects Brightwood with downtown Indianapolis.

**1901** Indianapolis opens a branch library in Brightwood. The library becomes one of the most patronized branches, loaning 7,632 books during its first year.

**The Atlas Engine Works historically employed many of the area's workers.**



Indiana State Library



**1902** Brightwood is a railroad town with four-fifths of the population dependent upon the railroad. Other industries booming at this time are terra-cotta works, Laycock Manufacturing Company, Topp Hygienic Milk and Ice Company, George F. Neher & Sons. The "Big Four" railroad companies (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis) build a new roundhouse.

New YMCA is proposed for Brightwood. Membership includes 575 railroaders, many who sleep and dine there.

Brightwood has a new ten room school built.

**1903** St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church builds new school. The school remains open until 1970 and reopened in 1977, only to close again when the parish was closed in 1983.

**1906** Rev. A.E. Bolster becomes pastor at Brightwood Baptist Church (later known as Calvary Baptist Church).

**1908** Mayor Charles Bookwalter calls Brightwood's water-works "a joke." Plans are made to connect Brightwood with the Indianapolis water supply.

**1911** Brightwood residents organize a commercial club to build the suburb by acquiring additional factories and municipal improvements. Goals include establishment of a park and public playground and an addition to IPS School 51 allowing a two year high school curriculum.

**1912** Hillside Christian Church relocates to a new building at 1831 N. Ingram St. from its original site on Hillsdale

**1913** Hillside Christian Church in Martindale, under the pastorate of Rev. Charles M. Fillmore, opens a free medical clinic. Report indicates 200 hundred students in the Washington School need medical attention.

St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Brightwood builds a church at 22nd St. and Avondale Pl. which remains open until 1983.

**1919** An extension of St. Bridget's, Indianapolis' first African-American parish, is organized as St. Rita's Church.

**1921** Douglas Park is dedicated to serve the African-American population in the Martindale neighborhood and throughout the city.

**1924** Trinity C.M.E is established.

IPS School 38, The John James Audubon School, 2050 N. Winter Ave., operates a free dental school for needy students.

**1926** St. John Baptist Church, 17th St. and Martindale Ave., holds ground breaking ceremony. The Indianapolis News reports, "The campaign for money for an institutional church has resulted largely from the great need of social betterment work for the east side of the city. ..."

**1930** The total population of the neighborhood is estimated at 21,869. The makeup is 58.18 percent European-American and 41.81 percent African-American.

PTA of IPS School 38 volunteers with the Red Cross to offer many social services to the neighborhoods needy—Thanksgiving baskets, clothing, milk for the malnourished.

**1931** IPS School 56, Francis S. Parker School, 2353 N. Columbia Ave., an African-American segregated school builds new facility for \$137,345.02.

**1935** The Brightwood Community Center is founded with headquarters at 2305 N. Rural St. The center acts as a social and educational headquarters for many African-Americans in the neighborhood.



**The Oakhill Convalescent Tuberculosis Camp near Brightwood, ca. 1916**

Indiana Historical Society, #C5651



Rev. Bernard Strange begins his service at St. Rita's Catholic Church.

IPS School 37, located at 2605 E. 25th St., has a new principal Mrs. Jeanette Cary from Kentucky whose training includes speech correction for African-Americans.

The PTA of IPS School 37 becomes the first African-American school to become a unit of the State and National Congress of Parents and Teachers and to receive a charter.

**1940** The estimated total population is 22,947 with 57.49 percent European-American and 42.50 percent African-American. Growth for the neighborhood is 4.93 percent.

Calvary Baptist Church at Stuart and 23rd streets. Rev. William O. Breedlove, pastor, celebrates its 50th anniversary. The church was originally established as Brightwood Baptist Church, a mission of First Baptist Church.

IPS School 38 opens "The Jive Canteen," community center for the neighborhood children who live too far to use the Brookside Community Center.

IPS School 38 is active in the war effort. The school raises \$13,608.30 in the sale of war stamps and bonds. The money is used for the purchase of an ambulance. The school also collected \$350 worth of scrap metal and donated an additional \$100 to the war fund. The PTA continues to contribute to a number of causes throughout the city: Red Cross, Community Fund, Christmas Seals, Riley Hospital Fund, Students Fund, and Merciful Relief.

**1940s** IPS School 51, James Russell Lowell School, actively celebrates religious holidays, holding religious services for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

During the war years, the Cardinal Pioneer Club, a boy's club at IPS School 56 helps the war effort and cleans up the neighborhood by planting a victory garden in a lot previously filled with garbage.

**1941** Douglas Park expands to its current boundaries.

**1942** Brightwood business district acquires new street lights including Station St., Roosevelt Ave. and 25th St.

Hillside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) celebrates its 50th anniversary.

**1944** IPS School 38 PTA is one of five schools in the city to be awarded a superior rating for the 1943-44 school year.

Brightwood is no longer a railroad stop and the railroad station is razed.

**1945** Martindale Avenue Christian Church is organized. The church is located at 1322 E. 24th St. and is the second African-American Christian Church in Indianapolis. The African-American congregation is supported by the East Central Indiana Men's Fellowship, Inc., a group made up of 33 white churches.

The East Side Baptist Center opens at 1519 Martindale Ave. Mrs. Edna Martin is director.

**1947** IPS School 56 provides physical examinations for students prior to the beginning of the 1947-48 school year.

St. Rita's Catholic Church at 19th St. and Arsenal Ave. operates a summer youth center to combat juvenile delinquency.

**1948** Brightwood petitions to expand its business district.

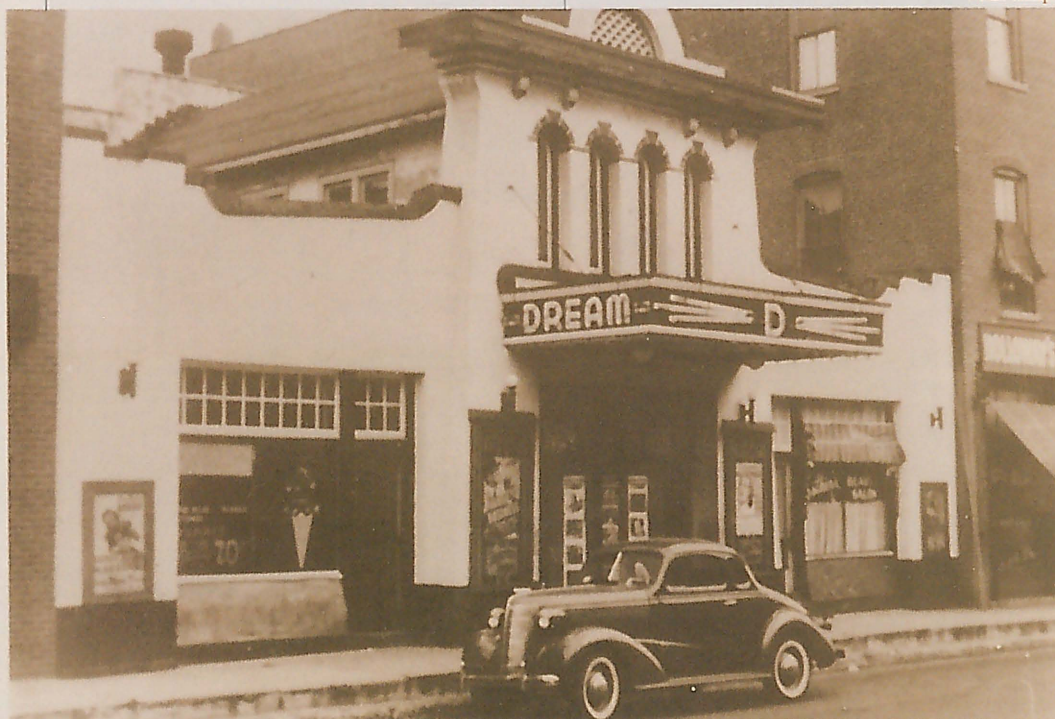
**1936** Brightwood Free Methodist Church begins as a mission in a storeroom, but a building is not erected until 1943.

**1938** In his tribute to Mrs. Hazel Hendricks, former principal of the school, who dies in 1938, IPS superintendent calls school 37, "one of the most important colored schools in the city." Mrs. Hendricks had served the school for 33 years. After her death the school is re-named in her honor.

**1939** IPS School 38 hosts Christmas dinner for all 600 students.

### The Dream Theatre, ca. 1940

Susan Trittipo





Calvary Baptist Church, 3419 East 23rd St., expands its 50 year-old church building. Seating in the new structure will allow for 350 in the sanctuary and an additional 200 in the balcony and chapel. The congregation includes a number of electricians, cement finishers, stone workers, block layers, and other skilled laborers who volunteered their services for the construction of this new structure.

**1949** Father Bernard Strange of St. Rita's organizes a summer camp for underprivileged African-American boys. St. Rita's, also involved in improving the appearance of Martindale, encourages residents to paint their homes.

**1950** Renovation and expansion is finished at Calvary Baptist Church, 3419 East 23rd St.

Total population is 25,418 and reflects the largest growth at 10.77 percent. European-Americans account for 50.33 percent and 49.63 percent are African-American.

Groundbreaking initiates the construction for the new St. Rita's youth center in Martindale.

New Bethel Baptist Church at 1519 Martindale Ave., operates a community center providing food, clothing, unemployment assistance, child care, and health services.

**1954** St. Rita's Catholic Church opens a new school building.

**1955** New Bethel Baptist Church, 1519 Martindale Ave., destroyed by fire. The original structure was built in 1875.

## Railroad



Susan Trittipio



St. Rita Church

## First Holy Communion Class at St. Rita's, Spring 1937

**1957** Brightwood Methodist Church, 2410 Station St., begins offering Sunday school classes for children with learning difficulties. Mrs. T. G. Robeson is the teacher.

**1958** Zion Tabernacle Apostolic Church, 3302 N. Arsenal Ave. opens. Elder G. C. Mills is pastor. Cost of construction of the is \$130,000. The 500 seat church also includes a dining room, women's lounge, nursery, Sunday school rooms, choir room, kitchen, pastor's office, and parking lot.

**1959** Trinity C.M.E. breaks ground for a new church to be built at 23rd St. and Martindale Ave. and expands its ministry through the use of a telephone prayer line.

St. Rita's opens its new church building at 19th St. and Martindale Ave., built to serve 500 families for a cost of \$200,000.

**1960** Martindale Avenue Church of Christ opens new building.

Brightwood loses the last of its railroad connections when the New York Central, owners of the Big Four, move all operations to Avon.

A Moslem mosque and mission house are established at 2248 Yandes St. A local minister of the "Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam" is Aminullah Khan.

The Flanner House Homes project challenges aspiring homeowners to invest their own labor in the construction of modern ranch houses in a new development near Douglas Park. Eventually, about 700 families built new homes in the project.

The neighborhood population reaches its high at an estimated 25,702. Growth for the period increases 1.12 percent. The makeup is 44.68 percent European-American and 55.26 percent African-American.

**1960s** Residents form the Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood association as a result of the area's participation in Model Cities, a federal, urban-renewal and rehabilitation program

**1961** Brightwood Methodist Church celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Brightwood is a "neighborhood in transition." Growth of suburbs has effected the village atmosphere of Brightwood. As the railroads leave the neighborhood, the population begins migration to suburbs.

Station St. remains the business center of Brightwood. Businesses on this street include a shoe repair shop, laundry, jewelers, beauty parlor, doctors, dentists, sporting goods, hardware store, insurance agent, and a cafeteria.



Industrial expansion into residential areas of Brightwood begins.

Hillside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1737 Ingram St., relocates to 10th St. and Mitthoeffer Rd. The building is purchased by the Association of the Christian Churches in Indiana for development of an "inner city" ministry.

- 1962** Operation Prove It, an inner-city ministry program that involves seventeen near North Side churches begins work. Dr. F. Benjamin Davis, pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church, 1541 Martindale Ave., is the organizing president. The goals of the organization are to address the inner-city housing conditions, juvenile delinquency, interracial tensions, and job insecurity.

- 1963** The Brightwood Church of Christ, 2446 North Gale St., moves to new location east of Brightwood. The old church building is occupied by the Pentecostal, First Bible Church.

### Street Scene, Brightwood, ca. 1940



Susan Trittipio

- 1965** St. Rita's Catholic Church, 1859 N. Arsenal Ave., offers a number of programs to aid underprivileged children and adults. Programs developed at St. Rita's and other inner-city churches as a means to increase church attendance which has been declining for thirty years as churches have continued to move to the suburbs.



Susan Trittipio

### Schaller's Pharmacy, ca. 1940

Construction of the I-65 and I-70 routes through Martindale-Brightwood causing residents to relocate. The interstate will eventually divide portions of the neighborhood and cause residents and businesses to move from the area.

- 1967** Enough of Martindale's nearly 6,000 families meet the Federal definition of "poor" to have Martindale declared a poverty target area. Martindale Area Citizens Service (MACS) organizes to provide aid. Poverty, deteriorating houses, health problems, crime, and unemployment threaten the neighborhood. Mrs. Fay Williams is project director. St. Rita's and Scott Methodist provide services.

- 1969** The area is designated a "most in need" district as part of the federal Model Cities rehabilitation program.

- 1970** Total population is estimated at 18,928 which shows a large decline of 26.36 percent.

European-Americans account for 22.90 percent of the population while 76.92 percent are African-American.

The African-American population is 80 percent of the total population-up from 46 percent in 1960.

St. Paul AME Church holds ground breaking ceremony for a new community building at 1900 East 25th St. The building is to be used as a center for community activities in district three of the Model Cities program. The center offers daycare facilities and training programs. Total cost of the project is \$154,000.

- 1971** Indianapolis seeks \$5.6 million in federal aid for urban renewal projects in Brightwood.

Judge S. Hugh Dillin declares IPS guilty of de jure segregation — segregation resulting from deliberate administrative acts — based on racially motivated building and transfer policies, optional attendance zones, and school boundary changes enacted by the IPS board. Dillin orders the immediate desegregation of all single-race schools.

- 1972** Rev. Andrew J. Brown celebrates his 25th anniversary at St. John's Missionary Baptist Church.



**1974** Dr. Edna M. Martin, director of the East Side Baptist Center, dies.

**1976** St. Rita's Catholic Church sponsors Saturday night dances, with DJs from WTLC, attracting between 500 and 800 youth each week.

Construction of I-65 and I-70 is finished. Much of the original Martindale-Brightwood area is now replaced by interstate system and the economy of the neighborhood continues to decline.

Mount Nebo Baptist Church at 2325 Hovey St., established in 1967, dedicates its new church building. The Pastor is Rev. Jack C. Perkins.

Brightwood's Station St. business district is almost vacant. Many merchants are relocating to Brightwood Plaza.

**1970s** Brightwood loses a doctor's office, accounting and bookkeeping services, cafe, insurance company, Salvation Army store, drug store, pool hall, and pet store. Crime and vandalism continues to rise.



St. Rita Church

**Procession for new Church Cornerstone Laying Ceremony, Sept., 14, 1958**

**1980** St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2410 Station St., with a remaining congregation of 76, dissolves and transfers its property to the First Korean United Methodist Church.

With total population estimated at 15,366, growth declines further by 18.82 percent. The makeup of the neighborhood is 5.06 percent European-American and 94.55 percent African-American.

Brightwood Community Center, NAACP, and several block clubs organize against unemployment, loss of businesses, crime, lack of housing rehabilitation funds, social services, red-lining, new housing, and commercial investments.

**1983** St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, 2191 Avondale Pl., closes after 102 years in Brightwood. Parish membership has declined to about 100 losing substantial membership since the 1950s when the railroads moved south to Beech Grove, followed by the intersection of I-70 cut through the Brightwood area. The parish debt is \$275,000.

**1984** St. Rita's Catholic Church joins the Urban Parish Cooperative organized to help inner-city parishes cope with the increasing costs of parish work.

**1985** Merchants National Bank, the last remaining branch in Brightwood, announces plans to leave the community.

**Brightwood Street scene, ca. 1940**



Susan Trittipio



**1986** City zoo leaves Washington Park on northern boundary of the neighborhood and is partially replaced by a police station.

**1987** Martin University opens branch campus at 2171 Avondale Pl. which later becomes central campus.

**1989** St. Rita's Catholic Church celebrates 70th anniversary.

**1990** New Bethel Baptist Church, 1535 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., celebrates 115th year with membership at 1,500. Rev. F. Benjamin Davis, began serving the church in 1954 which is also headquarters of the Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Indiana, an undergraduate school offering bachelor's degrees in theology, missions, and education.

Total population for the neighborhood reaches its low at 11,289 with another substantial decline in growth of 26.53 percent. European-Americans account for 4.10 percent of the population and African-Americans for 95.55 percent.

**1991** Martindale-Brightwood is targeted by law enforcement for programs to combat gang and drug activity. Juanita Smith, president of the Martindale-Brightwood Neighborhood Association and Rev. Arthur Kelly, executive director of the St. Nicholas Youth Ministry, represent the neighborhood.

**1994** St. Rita's celebrates its 75th Anniversary

Scott United Methodist Church erects new building

**1995** Martindale-Brightwood Community Development Corporation opens a new housing development, Ralston Estates.

Under an IndyParks program, Oasis of Hope Baptist Church assumes management of Douglas Park while St. John's Missionary Baptist Church manages J.T.V. Hill Park.



**Brightwood, ca. 1940**

Susan Trittipio

**1996** Clergy from 11 churches, the Martindale-Brightwood Community Development Corporation, and National City Bank cooperate to form the Community Resurrection Partnership "to enhance the lives of individuals and families."

**1998** The suburban East 91st Street Christian Church opens the Jireh Sports facility to teach gymnastics, as well as academic tutoring and religious education.



Edna Martin Christian Center

**Mrs. Martin at the Eastside Christian Center, ca. 1970**

Prepared by



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