Slowly, Surely, One Plat, One Binder at a Time: Choking Out Jim Crow and the Development of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intersections of a Black Power leisure identity, real property ownership, the progression of economic agency and land development through the example of Black resorts, focusing on Azurest North, a summer community in Sag Harbor, New York developed in the 1950s by Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. The project traces the history of real estate syndicates during the mid-twentieth century as a way to circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing discrimination. Independent mortgage financing and land development especially in the field of resort housing, also points to the emergence of what I call a Black Power leisure identity. This study also seeks to determine how the American pursuit of leisure during the twentieth century forged identity and how real estate property ownership has been used to maintain and secure community and individual identity.

INDEX WORDS: Azurest, Jim Crow, Architecture, Suburban, FHA, Real estate syndicate
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by

GRACE LYNIS DUBINSON

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences Georgia State University 2012
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May 2012
DEDICATION

The research and documentation of regional influences of the African Diaspora, are my greatest intellectual pursuits. It is in this vain that my intellectual property always function as the best answer to the Ancestors prayers. Hence this thesis is dedicated to all those who have lead the way for me, those who have stood along the way with me and those who are yet to come. May my research slake the thirst of intellectual curiosity that resides in every adventurous soul.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge the leadership of my advisor, my committee, the staff and faculty at Georgia State University, it has been a rewarding and academically enriching experience. Special recognition should be given to Professor Matthew Lasner of Hunter College, City University of New York, who, while listed as a reader on this thesis, in fact directed it. He was my primary advisor but left his position at Georgia State before I completed it. Professor Joseph Perry agreed to take over chair of my committee for official purposes, but it was Lasner with whom I worked throughout the entire project. Additional acknowledgements are due Ms. Kathleen Tucker, Historian, Eastville Community Historical Society, Sag Harbor, New York; Mr. Lucious Edwards, Jr., Archivist, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Ettrick, Virginia, and Ms. B. Joyce Skillman, Research Assistant, Atlanta Georgia, for their invaluable assistance with sorting through the primary records of the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers and Azurest North Private Collection. Lastly, I am extremely grateful to Mr. Earl G. Graves, Publisher, New York, New York, for quietly bringing to my awareness the existence of the Azurest North Private Collection.
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LEISURE: ACT OF DEFIANCE

This thesis explores the intersections of a Black Power leisure identity, real property ownership, the progression of economic agency and land development through the example of Black resorts. Research focuses on Azurest North, a summer community in Sag Harbor, New York, established in 1947 and developed in the 1950s by the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. The project traces the history and use of real estate syndicates during the mid-twentieth century as a way to circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing discrimination. Independent mortgage financing and land development especially in the field of resort housing, also points to the emergence of what I call a Black Power leisure identity.
This study explores and argues that it is through the pursuit of leisure, that American identities are created, transformed, maintained and secured. Property ownership, consumerism and taste, all inform identity and become signifiers that communicate individual ideas about leisure. Often neglected in the scholarly treatment and analysis of the African Diaspora experience, is the significance of leisure in the lives of people of African descent. It is through this dynamic of agency and resistance to the limited bounds of personal expressions that spurs the development of the Black Power leisure identity in the post Civil War African American experience in the United States. Black Power leisure identity is defined as a transgressive platform where identity, leisure, creativity, consumerism and real estate property ownership converge to support and sustain the existence of each other. When viewed as a transformative agent, the capitalization of Black Power purposefully embraces the breadth of its restorative attributes.

Although not apolitical in nature, it is an identity that embraces, encourages and is grounded in the rewards of leisure that have been earned as a result of successfully negotiating the quagmire of subjugation in a continuously racialized American society. The evolution of American society and the struggle for African American full citizenship are directly tied to the Eleatic penalty system devised under American Slavery. Subsequently, any means of economic, political and social progression are measured in relationship to the African American legacy of forced labor.

The Azurest community is symbolic and readily demonstrates through the use of the linguistic play on words, as you rest, that the naming of Azurest was chosen to purposely communicate a designation intended for leisure, time at ease and respite from the reality of the greater
A uniquely liberatory and in deliberate contrast to any reference to the pursuit of social striving and the world of work, Azurest was created to provide a community where African American people could feel comfortable to express, establish, and maintain cross regional ties, derived from and cultivated within a personalized Black Power leisure identity.

Since the Civil War generations of African descended people have satisfied their urgency to foster, establish, and maintain a sense of place that centered upon a personalized expression of Black Power leisure identity, that can be observed in different regions nationally. Thus it is from the perspective of identity that this discussion will investigate the significance of African Diaspora landownership and the development of the Azurest community.

This research also seeks to determine how the American pursuit of leisure during the twentieth century forged identity and how real estate property ownership has been used to maintain and secure community sovereignty and individual identity. The role of leisure in the fight against Jim Crow is especially significant because the battles against segregation are frequently perpetrated on the land. Therefore as a tool of political and social analysis, this study will illus-

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1 Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 1 Folder 1a, Maude Kenney Terry obituary. Wright, Gwendolyn, Building the American Dream, p. 160 - 162
trate how Jim Crow was routinely subverted by the African American leisure and real estate consumer markets.

Perceptions of leisure can be broad and all encompassing. In a critical consideration of recreation and leisure, Geoffrey Godbey states that writing about leisure is like throwing stones to the wind.² A library catalog search for leisure studies produces a broad range of considerations on the topic, which range from the empirical that measure the quantitative and qualitative value. To the valuation of leisure as a commodity that requires control, enforcement and the subsequent platforms of resistance and expression. The array of titles foreshadow the vastness of leisure scholarship. The random library catalog search for “leisure studies” renders titles that begin in 1934 with, Leisure: A Suburban Study, by George Andrew Lundberg and then spikes during the later half of the twentieth century with a plethora of books that include demographic differentials to analyze gender, age and a broad range of specializations that give attention to special needs populations.³

Important research findings illuminate the possibility that play is the foremost fundamental element in human culture. The properties of play make it possible to create, repeat or eliminate facets of an activity. One such study that explores the role of recreation was Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture and proposes that games and amusement are extremely significant because, “Once played it endures as a newfound creation of the mind, a treasure to be


³ Lundberg, George, A. Leisure: A Suburban Study New York, Columbia University Press, 1934, were found in a random Georgia State Library catalog search of leisure studies, which rendered titles, which ranged in context from the insightful and investigative, to the reaches of the transparently biased which were at best disparaging and yet in some cases thoroughly admonishing.
The analytical treatment of leisure scholarship stands as a powerful methodological lens to analyze how children learn and understand the greater world through play. *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America* examines the recreational activities of enslaved children and youth because play is voluntary, enjoyable and it embraces freedom. Hence the liberatory element of leisure resides in the mind and therefore can transcend beyond the limitations of an individual’s physical circumstance. The values of play are timeless and when transmitted from one generation to another they foster a tradition.⁵

Historical tourism combines leisure and structured narrative to describe invisible, ephemeral places within the modern landscape, that bear witness to occurrences in the built environment from past eras in history. In the absence of concrete architectural structures, the triplicate series of maps becomes a visual connection to an experiential leisure activity that is modeled on a relationship between culture and the physical landscape.⁶

Leisure at the intersection of politics and labor further attests to the broadness of leisure studies, and its measurable influence can be gauged by the publication of numerous books that offer interpretative analysis. Some books examine leisure through the lens of market research studies and over the course of the twentieth century, these research findings have chronicled the shift in American society from a production based, to a consumer based economy. Extending the interest and range of leisure scholarship further is the body of literature, which is dedicated to

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⁵ King, Wilma, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 43

issues of leisure management, sports and recreation. While other titles posit forecast projections for the future of leisure.

The vastness of the topic of leisure studies guarantees a highly contentious yet engaging platform for a textured discourse that both encourages exploration, while at the same time it also proposes an inquiry that asks, how has leisure been used to forge identity? Further, how are leisure and identity secured through the acquisition of real estate property ownership and the development of community sovereignty? Finally, studying leisure values and activities for specific population segments in society, provides insights into the aggregate level of available freedom and make it possible to assess how it is being used.

FINDING ANSWERS

There are many resources available which contribute varying views and interpretations about the politics of identity, leisure and the significance of land development. Archival records, internet sources and newspaper articles are used to construct a frame of reference, which is designed to support a particular hypothesis of interest. The aim of this endeavor is to conduct in-depth interpretive analysis, intended to contribute new information and to provide a greater understanding of African American’s historic use of leisure, as a force to challenge the restrictive precincts of Jim Crow, petit apartheid. The quest for leisure was also used as a source of inspiration to forge and secure identity, through the acquisition of real estate property ownership. The intention of this research is to make a contribution to the existing historiography that chronicles the African American experience specifically as it relates to leisure and real estate property own-
ership. This thesis seeks to firmly situate Azurest Syndicate as a significant example of citizen resistance, used expertly as a form of economic empowerment.

Documented evidence from the historical record supports the hypothesis that the legacy of the African American experience and housing discrimination, has made the founding of the Azurest Syndicate a probable and yet fascinating byproduct of the mid-twentieth century national real estate land development boom. Research findings identify how the American pursuit of leisure during the twentieth century forged identity and how real estate property ownership has been used to secure identity.

The research seeks to provide an examination and analysis of race and gender to identify how Azurest Syndicate operated as an economic vehicle of empowerment and agency. This will be accomplished primarily through the use of the archives of the Azurest North Private Collection and the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers. The purpose of researching these primary resources is to identify and locate the role of twentieth century women to contributions in American architecture. Azurest was developed and designed by a majority women organization and heavily influenced by the architectural and land development expertise of Amaza Lee Meredith. It is from this new perspective that we consider the history of land ownership on the east end of Long Island.

HISTORY AS AN AGENT OF RESISTANCE FOR WOMEN: THE PRIVATE COLLECTION

“Do you think that minutes should be kept of each meeting? In this way a complete history of the Syndicate will be recorded. I have the feeling that the organization is making history and none of it should be lost. (I fear some already is lost.)”
-- Amaza Lee Meredith, Azurest North Private Collection

This quote was one of many memorable and thought provoking comments that were made by Azurest co-founder, Amaza Lee Meredith, and that can be found throughout the Azurest North Private Collection. Each memorandum of meeting minutes, margin notation, or random sidebar, that when combined portray the story of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated as a fascinating and complex business entity. Possessing the capacity to inspire and pique the curiosity of any willing and intellectually curious researcher, the sheer depth of information contained in this collection was both compelling and captivating. Unsurprisingly it raised my interest enough to instigate the unsolicited archival processing of the Azurest North Private Collection, with the aim to create a proper Finding Aid. The collection contents would provide the contextual structure of this research study. The findings rendered are published in this thesis titled, Slowly, Surely, One Plat, One Binder at a Time, Chocking Out Jim Crow and the Development of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated.

The Azurest North Private Collection came into my possession as a result of my participation on a archival processing assignment for a New York publishing corporation, during the summer of 2008. Primarily a private collection of business records, my unlimited access to the collection was granted because the publisher had prior knowledge of my research interest in the history of African Diaspora resort communities. Upon the first review, it was obvious that the collection housed a wealth of ephemeral artifacts and administrative records that chronicled in great detail the procedures involved in the mid twentieth century development of an American resort enclave in the Hamptons, on Long Island, New York. As a response to this under re-

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7 Azurest North Private Collection, Series U, Correspondence 11/11/58 – 11/20/58 item B3.
searched boon of architectural history that was safely archived in a three ring binder, with dis-
patch an inventory and corresponding documentation were prepared for the creation of the
aforementioned finding aid. Once completed its existence would enable the future research of the
Azurest North Private Collection.8

The Azurest North Private Collection was owned and compiled by Amaza Lee Meredith
(1895–1984), in her capacity as co-founder, land developer and recording secretary for the Azur-
est North community development corporation, Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. The scope of
Azurest North Private Collection consists of 744 items. The contents are arranged in titled sec-
tions, and the document arrangements have been maintained during processing with minimal dis-
turbance or rearrangement of the original order. Binder sections are arranged as series; A
through W, with descriptive titles as provided in the table of content. Items within the series, as
well as the table of contents, appear in the original order. Currently, the Azurest North Private
Collection (ANPC) consists of photocopies of the original collection that remains housed in a
three ring binder, and is located in a small private repository in Atlanta, Georgia, since December
2008.9

Working with her sister and co-founder, Maude Kenney Terry, Dorothy C. Spaulding, at-
torney, and James P. Smith, civil engineer, the syndicate served to regulate the subdivision's lot
sales, plan infrastructural improvement projects, and guide the direction of the new resort en-
clave. Incorporated in 1953, an analysis of a decade (1953-1963) worth of meeting minutes indi-

8 Hunter, Gregory, S. Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives, New York, Neal Schuman Publishers, 2003, p. 97

9 The exact disposition of the Azurest North Private Collection, from 1984 until December 2008, is unknown.
icates that the first ten years were both an exhaustively difficult and an extremely rewarding pe-
riod of adjustment and growth.

This thoroughly tumultuous time for Azurest was characterized by abrupt administrative
changes, internal dissent and contentious relations between the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated
and the Azurest Property Owners Association. Internal distress was the most worrisome during
the first five years, from 1953 – 1958. The record indicates that these early years became a pe-
riod of intense activity defined by the responsibilities of infrastructural and road improvement
projects, that were coupled with the specter of encroachment threatening the autonomous balance
of this fledgling community.

Yet it is during this period of time that Amaza Lee Meredith enters retirement from her
formal career as Art Professor at Virginia State University in 1958 and immediately assumes the
official duties of Recording Secretary, for the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. She maintains this
role until 1974 and as an expert familiar with architectural development, her leadership directives
and initiatives appear consistently in meeting minutes and in discussions that are documented in
the series, her heavy influenced is evident particularly from 1957 - 1962. Conversely it was the
achievement of developmental successes and the fulfillment of the final mortgage payment in
August 1962, which proved to be the greatest source of celebration and appreciation for Mere-
dith personally and for the group at large.¹⁰

The topic of housing provokes debate and social action. The history of American houses
shows how Americans have tried to unify social issues in residential architecture, and how they

¹⁰ Series Q, July 15, 1962, 7/10/57
have tried, at the same time, to use this imagery to escape a social reality that is always more complex and diverse than the symbols constructed to capture it.\footnote{Wright, Gwendolyn, \textit{Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America}. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1983, p. xix.}

The first architectural endeavor undertaken by Meredith was Azurest South, a small one story international styled house built in 1939, that is located in Ettrick, Virginia. In the 1980s, Azurest South was donated to the Virginia State University, National Alumni Association and since then, the house has been selected as a National Register of Historic Places site. When Azurest South was the primary residence for Amaza Lee Meredith and Dr. Edna Meade Colson, it was filled with art and modern furnishings that were carefully documented in Meredith’s scrapbooks.\footnote{Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Virginia State University, Special Collections and Archives, Petersburg, Virginia, Box 15, Untitled scrapbook, “Homes Sweet Home”} Upon surveying Azurest South and a review of the \textit{Homes Sweet Homes} scrapbook, [plate 3] it became starkly evident of the importance of recording an accurate and descriptive visual record of any architectural work. In the absence of evidence in the visual landscape, the ephemeral record assures the future understanding of the intended articulation of architectural design.\footnote{Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Virginia State University, Special Collections and Archives, Petersburg, Virginia, Box 15, Untitled scrapbook, “Homes Sweet Home” The conclusion provides a full exposition regarding the significance of the well documented historical record.}
A thorough review of the Amaza Lee Meredith Collection and the Azurest Private Collection, provides evidentiary support that Meredith actively created, maintained and secured her own ideas about identity in everything that she conceived. Conveyed through the painting of canvases, the construction of scrapbooks, and the accumulation of a vast collection of photographs, Meredith lent significance to African American life, via the proliferation of positive visual representations of African Diaspora figures. Interpreted as a statements of the self, these artifacts demonstrate personal agency in determining one’s own representation.14

Regarding identity Meredith could be seen as an example of a world traveler, from the perspective of a person outside the dominant society who acquires an adept sense of flexibility in shifting from the mainstream construction of life. Her multiple registers of existence fully illustrate her complexities, which in turn provide us with an understanding of Amaza Lee Meredith as an artist, architect and community builder. It is through her ease in juggling cultures and maintaining plural identities that an analysis of Meredith’s accomplishments can be conducted, to comprehend the significance of her work as a purposeful strategy, used to combat cultural racism. Similarly when interpreted from a feminist world traveler methodology, the achievements of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated also stand as evidence of a feminist-centered definition of order, which successfully challenged the limitations of the patriarchal construction of personhood.15

An examination of the Azurest Syndicate North Private Collection, and the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers will provide a frame to interpret, identify and understand how mid twentieth

14 Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, Series B, Item 2; and Gold, Susanna, W. Recovering Identity: Nineteenth Century African American Portraiture, American Quarterly, Volume 58, Number 4, December 2006, p. 1168;

century African American citizens quietly devised ways to subtly resist segregation. These re-
sources also offers a platform to analyze the role of African Diaspora consumers and suppliers in
the real estate, recreation and leisure markets, as they progressively challenged the constraints of
institutionalized Jim Crow. The documentary evidence from the historical record spans from ap-
proximately 1947 through 1974, and supports the hypothesis that the legacy of the African
American experience and civil rights struggles, have made the founding of the Azurest Syndicate
a probable and yet fascinating byproduct of the mid-twentieth century national real estate land
development boom. Through the use of these primary sources, this investigation surveys the
landscape of segregation, from the objective gaze of the twenty first century.

Another purpose of this methodological approach is to examine and analyze race and
gender, to identify how Azurest Syndicate operated as an economic vehicle of empowerment and
agency. These sources combined, identity and locate the role of twentieth century women to
contributions in American architecture. The significance of Azurest Syndicate is also a part of a
larger movement to redefine the nature of American society, by re-viewing and re-imagining the
historic landscape. Through the reconstruction of memory, the landscape and its builders no
longer appear monoracial, monoethnic, monocultural, nor monogendered.  

IDENTITY AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

In many ways this study is about the legacy of American land ownership, the significance
of leisure, the development of cultural identity and the role of resistance social movements. In
pursuit of the American dream, these goals were achieved through the development of enclaves

16 Upton, Dell, “Preface” Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race, Craig Evan Barton ed., New
York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2001, p. vii, ix
of space, in suburbia and the vastness of the American landscape, expressly to foster a safe environment for creativity. As well, this thesis seeks to stand as another brick in the path of resistance that directly challenges the propagandization of American lifestyles, culture and leisure as a monographic portrait of Anglo Saxon bliss.\textsuperscript{17} First Nation, Asian, and particularly African American citizens contributed significantly to the “community of color” and thus became the community builders of importance.

Early examples can be drawn to the small informal antebellum networks that secretly administered sundown schools and maritime communication networks, which defied the restrictions of enslavement in the American South and Jim Crow in the American North. These grassroots organizations would become the forebears of the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) campuses. Funded by the Morrill Land Grant Acts, many HBCUs were founded and built throughout the United States as land grant institutions, in the late nineteenth century. Within two generations these institutions would contribute significantly to an increase in the population of educated African American professionals with disposable income.\textsuperscript{18} College faculty and other African American professionals sought and developed venues of recreational leisure outside the confines and constraints of the Jim Crow influenced, mainstream public marketplace. Schools, churches, colleges and university campuses would become the largest preserves of land that would first be made available for African American leisure. These sites of cultural significance would become important venues where the taste, style, and look of the Black Power leisure identity aesthetic would be defined and expressed in the American built environment.


\textsuperscript{18} Morrill Land Grant Acts were first established in 1862 and again later in 1890 a second act was enacted to include the former Confederate states. \url{http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Morrill.html} Seen on 11/29/11
WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

It is not often that a historian is given the opportunity to study a range of social phenomenon during a period of much cultural, economic, political, and technological change, similar to the mid twentieth century. A careful analysis of this time frame, provides an interesting platform to analyze gender, through the perspective of a small self selected group of American women, who represented the major stakeholders of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. This group was comprised of family, friends and acquaintances, of which none of them were experienced community builders. Yet this microcosm of humanity, proved committed and prepared for the tasks necessary for successful community building and land development on the eastern end of Long Island.

Through review of the Amaza Lee Meredith collection, the Azurest North Private Collection, Amaza Lee Meredith gallery of art work, and interpersonal remembrances; a description of the Kenny Meredith sisters, Maude and Amaza, can be used to fully analyze the significance of change in mid twentieth century America. This time period can also be documented as an important era for the advancement of American women. The development of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, provides the broad arena to consider the precincts of American property ownership, identity, leisure and the creation of African American vacation resorts and enclaves.

Although racial divisions were central to the construction of individual spatial mobility, the period between 1918 and 1959, offered the growing Black middle class an opportunity for

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19 Amaza Lee Meredith Collection. Virginia State University Archives and Special Collections, Ettrick VA.
greater spatial and social equality. The automobile as well as real estate were instruments of cultural power for the emergent African Diaspora middle class and provided them access to both personal mobility and the means to circumvent segregation, by avoiding the use of public conveyances of transportation.

This research also seeks to further dispel the myth that Jim Crow was a southern construct. Segregation was an act of political power that sought, first and foremost, to naturalize categories of racial power. Hence this study illustrates that Jim Crow was indeed a national problem that required of African Americans, a high level of ingenuity to creatively devise means to circumvent the imposed restrictions.

Thus the aim of this examination is to conduct in depth analysis that will firmly situate Azurest Syndicate as a significant example of citizen resistance, used expertly as a form of economic empowerment. This particular point directly challenges the notion that African Americans were guileless victims of Jim Crow and instead positions them as triumphant victors who unwittingly establish cultural cache and community sovereignty outside of the confines, of an exceedingly racialized political landscape.

The survey traces the history of real estate syndicates during the mid-twentieth century as a way to comprehend its efficacy to circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing discrimination. It is through an exploration of the role of independent mortgage financing and land development during the mid-twentieth century, that a determination can be made about Azurest Syndicate.

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cate as a contributory factor in the continued development and rise in popular participation of a Black Power leisure identity.

Finally, an in-depth analysis of Azurest will provide a greater understanding of and contribute new information that features a unique interpretation of the legacy of African Diaspora cultural influences on leisure travel. Casting attention upon the role of leisure travel, provides the opportunity to open a discussion that prompts the following inquiry: What drives an economic initiative the size of Azurest? What makes one real estate syndicate fail and yet another successful? How is the application of feminist agency exercised from the standpoint of property ownership, and the subsequent success of the Azurest land development syndicate, of particular interest to this discourse? How has a legacy of land ownership in the African Diaspora community cultivated the development of a national Black Power cultural identity that influences art, commerce, education, politics, religion and leisure?

This essay documents and provides an understanding about how the Syndicate was designed to challenge and circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing discrimination in the American North. The use of the archives of the Azurest North Private Collection and the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, identifies and locates the role of twentieth century women to contributions in American architecture. Hence through the use of these primary resources the research is interpreted from an African American hegemonic base. It is also through the analysis of these primary resources, that allows this study to document the significance of Amaza Lee Meredith as both architect and land developer. Which by so doing clearly illustrates that she was largely responsible for ensuring the feminine articulation of architecture on the landscape of Sag Harbor, Long Island.
2  Plat, Lot, Yard, Land: Identity, Leisure & American Property Ownership

Slavery and racism, industrial exploitation, the segregation of classes, and a limited role for women have found expression in American patterns of residential architecture.

-- Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America\textsuperscript{23}

If what Wright says about the articulation of social signifiers upon the American landscape is true, then a thorough appraisal and understanding of class, gender, and identity are warranted in this discussion. The chapter focuses on leisure to further explore the significance of property ownership in the United States. This methodological analysis is accomplished via a brief historical synopsis of the American petit apartheid system, the subsequent African American resistance and the progressive strides made toward political equality.\textsuperscript{24}

HOME SWEET HOME: WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

A longstanding tension exists between the housing model based on communities of similar dwellings and an apparently opposing idea of individualized, self contained dwellings. Given the national tendency to endow domestic architecture with both individual character traits and a social profile, these two patterns carry the weight of a social, as well as an aesthetic dichotomy.\textsuperscript{25} Because each element informs identity, any valid discussion of leisure in American culture must explore the connections between professional affiliations and social, economic or political asso-

\textsuperscript{23} Wright, Gwendolyn, \textit{Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America}. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1983,

\textsuperscript{24} Grier, Eunice, George Grier, \textit{Equality and Beyond: Housing Segregation in the Great Society}, The Negro American, Vol 95, No 1, p. 77

\textsuperscript{25} Wright, Gwendolyn, \textit{Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America}, Cambridge, 1981, xvi
citations, and how in concert they impact the individual and combined marketing of consumerism, recreation, real estate development and property ownership.\textsuperscript{26}

Home ownership was heavily imbued with themes of patriotism and similar to others, the African Diaspora community relentlessly sought the perceived rewards with determination and unquenched enthusiasm. In dispelling the myth that African American homeownership was a development of the post Civil War period, it is important to clearly identify the African American imprint on the American built environment, by establishing the history of Black property ownership in New York. As early as 1643 the Dutch West India Company recognized African land claims on the Bowery in lower Manhattan. Deeds reveal the most enduring testament of freehold rights to property held by local residents of African descent. Since land rights were hereditary, during the Dutch era gender based restrictions did not impede women from owning land and no less than twelve African women were the registered property owners in New Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{27} Historically landownership was a cohesive agent that held the African American community together and these enclaves predate by nearly two centuries, the formal marketing of the American dream.

The mostly lost and uncommemorated grounds upon which African American history developed, benefit directly from the use of cartography. By using the current grid of Manhattan and an overlay illustrating, respectively, the configuration of New Amsterdam from 1623-1664, British New York from 1664-1783 and New York City 1783-1899, a review of maps can both display perpetual progression and illuminate sites of significance. Site typologies include listings of pub-

\textsuperscript{26} Rugh, Sessions Susan, \textit{Are We There Yet: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations}, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2008, p. 91

lic spaces like churches and burial sites, as well as privately held African American owned businesses, farms, schools, orphanages and homes.\textsuperscript{28} The palimpsest of settlement patterns analyzed through the use of mapping, offers ephemeral evidence to accurately read the landscape. Archival processing work that focuses on issues such as political resistance to zoning regulations, land rights and property sales, provide an illuminative setting for understanding relic landscapes and the context for establishing the legacy of African American property ownership. These tools of analysis are particularly useful in the absence of tangible authentication on the visual landscape.\textsuperscript{29}

Over the course of American history, African Americans continued to be challenged by the limitations of housing discrimination that were enforced and judicially supported by Jim Crow legislation. Yet despite these seemingly unsurmountable obstacles to acquiring the American dream of real estate property ownership, the struggle to secure full citizenship yielded many advances. Cumulatively the continued establishment of nineteenth century African Diaspora residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, communicated an undaunted spirit of survival and an uncompromising belief in their inherent right to work diligently to acquire the spoils of full citizenship.\textsuperscript{30} Hence another significant aspect of inquiry that this chapter explores is, which ways were the American quest for recreation and leisure aesthetic, used during the twentieth century to forge identity? Specifically, how was real estate property ownership used to both maintain individual identity and to secure community sovereignty?

\textsuperscript{28} Davis, Felecia, “Uncovering Places of Memory: Walking Tours of Manhattan”

\textsuperscript{29} Holdsworth, Deryck, W. “Landscape and Archives as Texts” Understanding Ordinary Landscapes, Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, ed. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997, p.47

\textsuperscript{30} Wright, Gwendolyn, Building the Dream, p. 25 and Sessions, p. 69
PLANTERS, PIMPS, PLAYERS; ALL THREE BEGIN WITH THE LETTER P.

From the perspective of the late twentieth century, the story of antebellum interracial summer resorts is documented in *Wench*, a fictionalized history that chronicles a mid nineteenth century vacation resort in Xenia Ohio, which was frequented by Southern slaveholders accompanied with entourages of enslaved men and women. Unwittingly, it was Southern patrons in the presence of enslaved courtesans that was seen as risque and socially unacceptable and when combined, these factors eventually tarnished the reputation of the Tawawa Resort. The pluralistic natural of the Plaçage system was not seen as respectable, and was antithetical to the prevailing abolitionist sentiments in Ohio. From 1852 -1855, annual visits from the Southerners albeit reluctantly endured, the cumulative effect of these circumstances contributed to the decline in popularity and the eventual closing of the facility.

By no means was the need to abide by the local customs of social conformity, abandoned in the nineteenth century. To the contrary, large groups still endure social pressure and readily yield to the bevy of consensus. Within a twenty first century context, newspaper accounts and legal proceedings record numerous instances of negative responses from chagrined home owner associations and apartment building cooperative boards, when threatened with the prospect of admittance into the community at large, of less conservative or otherwise unsavory homeowners. In comparative analysis, chattel slavery, or the owning of bodies to garner wealth, are actions that mimic pimping. Hence pimping is the plantation ideology orchestrated in a Cadillac.

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POWER OF PLACE

The Tawawa’s land and surrounding area were sold to the Cincinnati Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and one year later in 1856, it established the Ohio African University. With the onset of the Civil War, enrollment declined and the original campus was closed. The property was resold and purchased by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1863, when it was renamed Wilberforce University and it continues to be the nation’s oldest, private, HBCU. Local folklore attributes the earliest students at Wilberforce, to be the children produced from the unions between the enslaved concubines and the male enslavers.33

Despite the 1855 closing of the Tawawa Resort, the law of innkeepers would become essential to Black people’s efforts to secure civil rights in public places. As millions of African Americans struggled to secure freedoms denied them during the enslavement bondage era, the restructuring of citizenship and the forthcoming Civil Rights Movement were first played out in the cataclysmic period of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. From the time of its ratification in 1868, applications of the Fourteenth Amendment were used as a legal basis for securing equal access to public accommodations by African Americans. When Southern Whites resisted these efforts, whether through evasion or violence, every local incident became a symbolic marker in the battle, which threatened to become a flashpoint, in the ongoing political struggle for equality.34


PUBLIC SPACE

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, exclusion from hotels and other public places had become a full scale cultural trend in American life. By far the most widespread and frequent manifestation remained discrimination against African Americans. The refusal of service to Jews was much less prevalent, nevertheless the practice intensified after the Civil War. Numerous resort hotels barred Jewish patrons and this trend grew with the increased immigration from central and eastern Europe that began in the 1880s. This development was linked to another, somewhat different exclusionary tendency, one based on class. When hotelkeepers and resort owners barred Jews, they did so in part out of fear that their presence would democratize their establishments by driving away affluent patronage and turning them into haunts of the common people. While this kind of status anxiety and class snobbery was in many respects different from racial or religious discrimination, all of these examples of exclusion indicated that public accommodations had become a barometer of acceptance and citizenship in the United States.35

Public accommodations thus became a sort of index of the progress of American society, a set of physical locations where people could find out whether the national ideals of freedom, equality and pluralism were actually being practiced. This reality was heightened in the twentieth century, when the ongoing increase in human mobility and the presence of an international press transformed Americans’ treatment of visitors from abroad, into a major diplomatic concern.

35 Sandoval-Strausz, A.K. *Hotel: An American History*, p. 299
Hence the built environment becomes the milieu to wage claims for civil rights and equal access to public accommodations.\footnote{Sandoval-Strausz A.K. \textit{Hotel: An American History}, p. 310}

Yet at the turn of the twentieth century, the strategic forecast for obtaining access to equal rights and full citizenship would prove to be a tedious and arduous journey, full of hostility and violence. Surmounting obstructions in freely accessing public accommodations would become just one of many tactical platforms, which African Americans used to choke out the hinderances and restrictions of Jim Crow.

COMMUNITY SOVEREIGNTY

Generally the status quo limited, regulated and whenever possible thwarted, African American economic advancement, free social expression and the quest for leisure. Early challenges to the status quo can be first observed by the 1870s with the rise of African American owned, operated and supported vacation enclaves and amusement venues. These independently financed business enterprises can be seen as an expression of Black Power leisure identity. Hence these examples of defiance signify political agency and the radical embrace of change. Furthermore these challenges provided African Americans the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and leisurely pursuits that were usually available only to White Americans.\footnote{Drewal, Margaret, Thompson “Nomadic Cultural Production in African Diaspora”, \textit{Diaspora and Visual Culture Representing Africans and Jews}, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, (New York: Routledge, 2000) 119. Specifically, Black Power Leisure Identity is a quality which has evolved over the course of time.}

As historian Manning Marable notes: “part of what racism does in the U.S. is deny Black folk notions of celebration, of leisure, of creative cultural space, to do, your own thing. I think what
Black folk, for several generations, have tried to do, is to carve out those niches, where they can celebrate with their friends, and you don’t have to explain a damn thing."

Challenging the limited majority offerings, communities such as Aquinnah, Eastville and Chappaquiddick in Massachusetts and Little Neck, Eastville-Sag Harbor and Montauk, on the east end of Long Island, New York, have a history as designated or restrictive enclaves for non-White populations that predate 1870. These designated restrictive enclaves existed nationally along American coastal waterways, because many African American men worked in the maritime industry. At this same time, African American leisure travel to mainstream destinations was primarily restricted to the shoulder season, which is usually defined as the months that immediate precede or follow the peak vacation season. It is through the development and maintenance of year round African American communities that many resort communities can draw conceptual ties. In the book *The Waterman’s Song*, David S. Cecelski, acknowledges the significance of the wave of scholarship about Black seafarer communities in the Atlantic, as crucial to grasping an understanding of how local maritime culture was entangled with the Afro-Caribbean, with the work culture of seafaring men, and with revolutionary political tides that roiled the Black Atlantic.

**HOW WE PLAY AND HOW WE PLAY WITH OTHERS**

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The role of leisure in the fight against petit apartheid is especially significant because the battles against segregation are frequently perpetrated on the land. Therefore as a political and social tool, the pursuit of leisure became the stage where Jim Crow was routinely subverted by the African American leisure and real estate consumer markets. This was accomplished throughout the United States, with the establishment of independent vacation enclaves in the Great Lakes region of Michigan and along the Atlantic coast, extending from Florida to New York, Massachusetts and Maine. By the 1880s the African American leisure market had begun to exercise its financial power to flout the constraints of Jim Crow segregation and readily embraced greater mobility afforded by advances in transportation technology.41

Overtime these communities would precipitate further community development, which would extend the borders beyond the original neighborhood boundaries. It can be further argued that the fear of encroachment and resistance to African American community development coupled with the rise of Jim Crow segregation nationally, fueled the growth of early twentieth-century community building initiatives.42 Beginning with the 1889 establishment of Highland Park, Maryland, followed in succession by the lakeside resort of Idlewild, Michigan, established 1921, the beachfront enclave of American Beach, Florida, established 1935, and the incorporation of Azurest, Long Island, New York, in 1947; within a sixty year timeframe, four resort communities were established nationally by and specifically for African American leisure travelers.43 As the


42 Dolgon, Corey, The End of The Hamptons: Scenes from the Class Struggle in America’s Paradise, p. 164

newest community, Azurest was built to incorporate the most positive aspects of these examples, at a time of much cultural, economic, political and technological change.

According to W. E. B. Du Bois in his 1897 essay, “The Problem of Amusement” he insisted that “the manner, method, and extent of a people’s recreation is of vast importance to their welfare.” While he agreed with other leading Black activists that recreation was not the most pressing concern facing African Americans during an era of Jim Crow violence and restrictions, Du Bois maintained that adequate and appropriate leisure time activities were an essential component of the Black community’s cultural and social well being. Du Bois’ ideas about space for leisure are crucial to our understanding of the significance of leisure to the African American experience and the expression of Black Power leisure identity.

In his description of Idlewild, Michigan written in the Summer 1921 issue of *Crisis* magazine he wrote, “for sheer physical beauty---for sheen of water and golden air, for nobleness of tree and flower of shrub, for shining river and song of bird and the low, moving whisper of sun, moon and star; it is the beautifulest stretch I have seen for twenty years.” Du Bois was an adamant proponent of the healing and reparative benefit of respite from the social politics of Jim Crow. Along with other community leaders he endorsed the security offered by black owned resorts. Especially those in rural areas, which combined a general belief in nature’s benefits in the minds of African Americans, who were strongly encouraged to invest these particular spaces with the health inducing energy that was en vogue during the segregation era. The strides gained

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by establishing safe and healthful spaces for leisure, were immeasurably beneficial in success-
fully escaping the protocols of systematic and systemic racial discrimination.

EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE

Most poignantly Du Bois contrasts mainstream that which permitted access with racial-
ized limitations, such as Atlantic City, New Jersey as compared with Idlewild, Michigan, a resort
created specially for the African American market. Idlewild, Michigan was one of the first en-
claves of its type or size developed in the American North. Established from 1912 -1920, Idle-
wild enjoyed great popularity until the 1970s and continues to be a primarily African American
village in Yates Township, Michigan. Du Bois articulates his sentiments as he ponders the re-
wards of Black owned vacation destinations, “not for one moment in fine joy of life, absolute
freedom from the desperate cruelty of the color line and for the wooing of the great silence
which is Peace and deep Contentment--not for one little minute can they rival or catch the
bounding pulse of Idlewild.” As a brief comparative analysis of Black owned versus Black ac-
cepted resort communities, the examples of Highland Beach, Maryland, Idlewild Michigan,
American Beach, Florida and Azurest, Long Island represent the former and Oak Bluffs, Massa-
chusetts, Cape May, New Jersey and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, the later.

The growth of Black leisure paralleled more general trends in the United States. For Afri-
can Americans, exercising control of the direction of one’s leisure transforms an existence of
subjugation into a lifestyle of cultural triumph. In an address at the Chautauqua Institution in
New York State in 1880, James A. Garfield, soon to be president of the United States, com-

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46 Armstead, Myra B. Young. “Revisiting Hotels and Other Lodgings: American Tourist Spaces through the Lens of
mented that: “We may divide the whole struggle of the human race into two chapters: first, the
cight to get leisure; and then the second fight of civilization--what shall we do with our leisure
when we get it”.  

47 The increasing dominance of a middle class culture and its influence on the
democratization of leisure are primary factors in the American play ethic. Historians of tourism
have posited that travel was a way of affirming one’s identity as an American and have argued
that travel was a ritual of citizenship.  

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The principle of democratization is followed closely by the commercialization of
leisure. The democratization of leisure was developed through the tradition of the annual
social gathering, which were defined and self selective ethnic, academic, regional and
spiritual associations. At the end of the nineteenth century and earliest years of the twen-
tieth century, these yearly events would both fuel and be responsible for the rise of sea-
side resort communities nationally.

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In a direct response to Jim Crow exclusion, African American amusement facilities de-
veloped in response to majority developed facilities, designed specifically to exclude or severely
limit, African American participation.  Early references to the financing of African American
leisure can be traced to tourist attractions in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Catering to the fledgling
African American leisure market, in 1894 businessman George Walls opened a bathhouse near
the Missouri Avenue beach in Atlantic City. Another entrepreneur, B. G. Fitzgerald opened an
impressive two story hall at the start of the 1899 summer season. In the summer of 1906, Wall’s
pavilion and bathhouse and Fitzgerald’s Auditorium, were lauded in the Colored American

48 Rugh, Susan Sessions, Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations, p. 69-70
Magazine as suitable Atlantic City amusement venues and proclaimed that “the few places that may object to our presence are only teaching us a lesson, the meaning of which is to spend your money among your own people.” Participating in the concept of Buy Black, Wall and Fitzgerald unabashedly created leisure venues “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Nationally as Jim Crow legislation accelerated and solidified into a racialized caste system during the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, it was primarily left to African American proprietors to provide lodging and board for African Diaspora tourists and travelers. As upward mobility improved the African American financing of leisure pursuits, word of mouth networks and information conduits contributed to the development of a burgeoning leisure and travel industry that created publications and acted as a catalyst for the development of enclaves of African American second home communities.

Built near neighboring year round communities, beginning in the 1870s on the east coast in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, Saratoga Springs, New York and Newport, Rhode Island, African American vacation homesteaders build businesses that serviced the wider resort community and residential enclaves to accommodate African American workers, family members, visiting friends and vacationers alike. In response to denied access to a Maryland vacation destination, Charles Douglass purchased a nearby beachfront parcel of land and encouraged friends and family to buy neighboring land. At first called Arundel on the Bay, the area was later renamed High-land Beach and in 1922 was incorporated as the first Black town in Maryland.

50 Alnutt, “Negro Excursions”, p. 99

51 Armstead, Myra B. Young, “Revisiting Hotels and Other Lodgings: American Tourist Spaces through the Lens of Black Pleasure-Travelers, 1880 - 1950”,

52 Armstead, Myra B. Young, “Revisiting Hotels and Other Lodgings: American Tourist Spaces through the Lens of Black Pleasure-Travelers, 1880 - 1950”
pendently established resort community is American Beach, Florida, a 200 acre coastal community of African Americans on the southern end of Amelia Island, located in the northeast corner of Florida. [plate 4] Akin to many African American resort communities, American Beach has a historical legacy, which dates to the American colonial period. The present twenty-first century American Beach community was developed and incorporated in 1935, by the Pension Bureau of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, Jacksonville, Florida.53

Establishment of independent Black enclaves, townships, real estate financing options and the pursuit of Black Power leisure identity, collectively became clear and identifiable forms of active resistance, that struck a sharp blow to the societal limitations of otherness. For Black people one of the greatest rewards for developing and maintaining community sovereignty was the ability to set the record straight, by using the acquisition of consumer goods as physical examples of their ambition and superiority in the face of Jim Crow. Within the historical context, community building is defying spatial mobility and is a course of action that is rarely taken nor permitted to African Americans and from this perspective therein lies the significance of Azurest Syndicate.

THE NATIVE THEORIST, MY HOUSE

Throughout the twentieth century, the American pursuance of leisure continued to forge identity and at the same time, property ownership was increasingly being used to further define and secure identity. This is especially significant because spatial mobility has often been a means to or evidence of the social mobility of racial others. Thus regimes of white supremacy have sought to control or curtail those forms and moments of [African American] mobility that they could not instrumentalize for their own purposes.\textsuperscript{54} Since unencumbered time serves a useful purpose under normal circumstances, it follows that persons living under unusual conditions like, petit apartheid, slavery, or war would benefit greatly from leisure activities that differed from their usual routines.\textsuperscript{55}

One such coping mechanism to fortify identity, can be observed in the 2003 film, \textit{A Place of Our Own: a Family, a Refuge, a History}, which examines the intersections between land ownership, self actualization, and aspirations of civic engagement as a means to highlight the significance of themes of identity, leisure and real property ownership in the African Diaspora community. In a provocative scene one subject recounts his earliest childhood recollection of racism and how this experience motivated him to buy a vacation home. His words suggest an understanding of ownership as political act: “I wanted to be in a place that made a statement. We too like it nice, we like it in the brightest sunshine; we like to be right at the beach, too! The legend that I wanted to create was that I, a \textit{Negro} wanted to own waterfront property on Martha’s Vineyard. And let

\textsuperscript{54} Seiler, Cotten, “So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By”: African American Auto- mobility and Cold-War Liberalism” \textit{American Quarterly}, 58 (Dec. 2006), p. 1092

\textsuperscript{55} King, Wilma. \textit{Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America}, p. 44
that alone stand for my determination.” 56 Simple yet profound, this testimony suggests ties that bound leisurely pursuits to the practice of power and privilege. The implication is that wholesome recreational enjoyment along desirable stretches of shore and in pleasant surroundings could prove so difficult for African Americans that would often elicit irrational fears and violent hostilities. 57

Whether encountered in the residential or vacation home fronts, throughout American history antagonistic acts of violence were a catalyst for change. Stemming unanimously, from aggressive elements within the majority community, these acts of aggression were frequent occurrences for the Black community, which reinforced the importance of protecting and solidifying the precincts of community sovereignty. 58

Attitude surveys uncovered a widespread inclination among African Americans to own homes of their own. The unswerving appeal of home ownership among African Americans of every social class was the clearest indication of continuity between pre and post war suburban values. The meaning and experience of home ownership was influenced by African Americans’ experience as racial outsiders in White dominated space and society. In a world where public places were routinely hostile and Whites behaved as though the greater part of metropolitan ter-


57 Kahrl, Andrew William, On the Beach: Race and Leisure in the Jim Crow South, dissertation. Bloomington, Indiana University, 2008, p. 3 and Bombings in Birmingham of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham,

tory belonged to them, private spaces such as homes and neighborhoods became places of refuge from and sites of resistance to the wider White world.\textsuperscript{59}

Suburban residential neighborhoods and housing needs were a fundamental concern to working and middle class citizens of the United States in the era immediately following World War II. During this same time period greater civic involvement took place in a variety of segments throughout American society. However within various African American communities nationally, citizens continued to resist the constraints of Jim Crow legislation and social custom. Evidenced by the accelerated momentum of what become known as the Civil Rights Movement, during this time period, issues of ethnic exclusion, citizen agency, action, reaction and response were frequently reflected in the residential arena.

Racism stalked Black suburbanites, transforming individual housing choices into explicit acts of racial protest and linking thousands in a common racial struggle. Seeking shelter outside established \textit{Negro} areas and exerting their rights through direct actions and the courts, African Americans across the nation took up the contentious politics of housing in the post World War II era.\textsuperscript{60}

The thorough examination of property ownership and the relevance of suburbia encourages the discussion and consideration of real time struggles over equitable access and distribution of public resources within a civil society. The development of suburban residential neighborhoods in the 1950s marked the second wave of suburban development for African Americans. Although Azurest Syndicate was developed primarily as a resort community, several parcels


\textsuperscript{60} Wiese, Andrew, \textit{Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century}. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 113
were sold as year round homesteads. Even as it reflected the shifting class structure within Black America, suburbanization reinforced the significance of race in American life and the ethics of self sufficiency.\(^{61}\)

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\(^{61}\) Kruse, Kevin M., Thomas J. Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, p. 102, 104
3 Jim Crow is a Damn Yankee, who Behaves Like a New Yorker

Economic empowerment can directly be attributed to the attainment of enfranchisement rights, access to education, real estate and most importantly, supreme dominion over the content, structure and creative expression of personal leisure. Jim Crow was a fully conceptualized political system, which included frequent assaults upon the personal dignity of African Americans. The reality of living in the American petit apartheid system was a concrete and multi sensory experience, which included the denied access to public accommodations, equitable due process of the law, and legal protection of person and property by law enforcement and routinely resulted in inadequate funding of infrastructure, roadways, and schools in African Diaspora areas. Life under Jim Crow segregation was rigid and restrictive, at best. At its worst, it quickly accelerated toward public aggression, which at a moment’s notice could escalate into fatal violence. Being relegated to the status of second class citizenship, however, did not deter the growth of citizen advocacy and activist initiatives. Despite legal setbacks and social humiliation, the African American body politic continuously sought redress and remedy for assaults upon their humanity.

Influenced and effected by the turbulent social legacy of pre nineteenth century Indian Removal, African enslavement, Confederate rebellion and the subsequent legislation of ethnic segregation, regulated by Jim Crow social custom and tradition; early twentieth century American society was plagued by parallel social identities. Inevitably, whether directly and indirectly, every segment of society impacted the built environment and the lives of each other.


This thread of reasoning strongly suggests that Jim Crow practices precede the nineteenth century and legislated segregation was an international phenomenon. The practice of American Jim Crow was not germane nor relegated solely to the Southern United States. Jim Crow political legislation and social mores originated in New York State during the nineteenth century prior to the Civil War.\textsuperscript{64} Jim Crow segregation would become a deep, abiding and often harsh fact of New York life during the nineteenth century and would continue as a silent legislative mandate until the ratification of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, of 1964 and 1965 respectively. \textsuperscript{65}

A brief analysis of the political machinations of the 1850s development of Central Park, situates the use of Jim Crow in New York, by a consortium of business interests, the press, politicians and law enforcement, as a tool in the dispossession of land and jeopardization of African American enfranchisement rights. The municipal use of the power of eminent domain to take possession of more than eight hundred acres of land for Central Park, represented an unprecedented intervention in the real estate market, and would become a precursor to city planning and urban renewal.\textsuperscript{66} The largest settlements located on the tract of land formerly known as Jones Wood, was the predominately owner occupied community known as, Seneca Village. This densely populated area between 82nd and 88th streets and Seventh and Eighth avenues, was a largely African American neighborhood. Its stable existence further contested the notion that


community sovereignty and property ownership eluded the ambitions of industrious Black New Yorkers. Census figures illustrated security of tenure based on landownership and exhibited a rate of property ownership, five times as great as New Yorkers as a whole.\textsuperscript{67} Although the city paid landowners for their property, more was at stake than money, the residents of Seneca Village had established a stable community. For African Diaspora men, landownership was still the key to full political participation, and the money they received for their land was not enough to buy property elsewhere in New York City. Compounding the situation, in other parts of the city the segregation of Blacks and Whites increased during this period of escalating interethnic hostility.\textsuperscript{68}

During the same time period, access to public accommodations would also become the stage where challenges to Jim Crow would take place. In two separate incidences between 1854 and 1863, African American women sought legal action and redress for the forcible removal and denied access to public transportation in New York City. The first law suit was brought by Elizabeth Jennings, a public school teacher, in response to an injury that she suffered when she defied the segregation policies of the Third Avenue Railroad in 1854. The second case took place in 1864, when Ellen Anderson, a war widow was forcibly removed from an Eighth Avenue Railroad streetcar. Both plaintiffs were awarded damages, Elizabeth Jennings was award $225 and court costs by a White jury in a decision that upheld the rights of \textit{colored} persons if sober, well behaved and free of disease to ride on the city’s streetcars. In the case of Ellen Anderson, upon winning her suit with the Eighth Avenue Railroad, the company issued a statement declar-

\textsuperscript{67} Rosenzweig and Blackmar, \textit{The Park and the People: A History of Central Park}, p. 67, 70

\textsuperscript{68} Harris, Leslie, \textit{In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626 - 1863}, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 266
ing that colored people were allowed to ride on transportation conveyances that the firm provided. Distanced by eight years, it is important to note that although the Third Avenue Railroad decision was made in February 1855, it is safe to surmise that occurrences of denied access continued throughout New York City, before the subsequent lawsuit was brought against the Eighth Avenue Railroad in 1863.

**PETIT APARTEID STEALS THE SHOW, THE LAND AND EVERYTHING ELSE, THAT IS NOT NAILED DOWN**

Despite a strong Jim Crow tradition in New York, as in other Northern states, I argue that the historical landscape of the Azurest site on Long Island was the catalyst for its emergence as an African American resort. [plate 5] By the early twentieth century, much of the Hamptons that was previously owned by local First Nation bands who for centuries had intermarried with African Americans had been disenfranchised and this land was no longer under the control of the original Shinnecock and Montaukett owners.70


70 Strong, p. 119
The East End not only stood in juxtaposition to the trappings of urban industrial society but also challenged the luxuriant and highly ritualized aristocratic order of other summer colonies, such as Newport, Rhode Island. It seemed rugged and unspoiled promised to be a perfect example of what the rapidly urbanized elite wanted nature to be -- a real seasonal respite from both capitalist production and elite leisure consumption.\(^{71}\) The distinction of the East End of Long Island, for its natural terrain, would become an increasingly commercialized aesthetic used by advertising, where capturing landscapes was always infused with a sense of property acquisition, partly symbolic but powerfully suggestive of a real shift in land use. Ironically by appropriating the past, new settlers can tell stories about the present that inscribe themselves and their status positions on the natural landscape.\(^{72}\)

In due course by the turn of the twentieth century, the continued arbitrary application of eminent domain would developed into a legacy that characterized the American domestic policy of land grabbing, politically aimed to intentionally disrupt the stability of non-White communities nationally.\(^{73}\)

SOLIDARITY AS A TOOL OF RESISTANCE

African Americans have always used overt and covert forms of resistance to assert their humanity and displeasure with discriminatory practices. The collective response to the systemic application of Jim Crow was observed in the ardent solidarity to the Pan African nationalist movement and was equally matched by the enthusiastic development of modern innovations, in-

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\(^{72}\) Dolgon, Corey, *The End of The Hamptons*, p. 9

\(^{73}\) Strong, *The Montaukett Indians*, p. 120
ventions and full participation in automobility and technological advancements. Whether expressed through channels of education, industry or politics, each form of resistance conveyed an economic component as well as one of personal identity. An allegiance and adherence to an African identity can be seen numerous ways.

The August 1889 AME church excursion, to celebrate the abolition of enslavement of Africans in Brazil, was held in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. This celebratory occasion not only provided participants with recreational outlet, it also served as signifier of African Diaspora solidarity. The grassroots support of the Pan African political agendas can be observed in African American support of other Diaspora political issues throughout the twentieth century. Resistance movements in the African liberation period that took place in Africa and the Caribbean during the 1950s and 1960s was no exception and shared ideological similarities with the African American struggle for civil rights. Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkruma, Fidel Castro, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, are a small sampling of mid twentieth century proletariat independence movement international leaders, to benefit from legal counsel, educational advisement and economic funding from the constituency of African American institutions.

INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INVENTION: AN EXERCISE IN AGENCY

To counter the restrictions of forced dominance, people who have endured generations of categorical ethnic stigmatization, employ agency as a successful means of resistance to dismiss

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75 Fredrickson, George, M. Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 15
challenges to their intellectual prowess. An early example of an explicit effort to establish this connection and perhaps the oldest and most celebrated is Benjamin Banneker’s unsolicited correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. In response to his essay titled, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, maligning African cognitive ability and intellectual capacity, over the course of a ten year period, Banneker a mathematician and astronomer produced an almanac, which he sent to Jefferson accompanied with the comment, “we have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and scarcely capable of mental endowments.” In a country that has placed an extraordinarily high cultural value on inventiveness, African Americans naturally sought to prove their own worthiness by means of academic achievement and technical accomplishment. Nineteenth and twentieth century activists were just as aware of the political value of innovation. By the time of his death in 1926, Representative George Washington Murray, congressman from South Carolina and inventor had compiled four massive volumes of drawings and the specification of patents, awarded to African American inventors.

Exploration and examination of the battles waged for African Americans to gain access to automobility and other technological advancements, provides a contextual framework for the time period from 1930 to the 1970s which also parallels with the early developmental period of Azurest. Representing the multi faceted talents of Amaza Lee Meredith, comprised within the contents of the Azurest North Private Collection, were a sub series of illustrated drawings, specifications and legal correspondences detailing an invention. Over the course of the spring and

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77 James, Portia, “To Collect Proof of Colored Talent and Ingenuity: African American Invention and Innovation, 1619 - 1930” *Technology and the African American Experience*, Bruce Sinclair, ed., p. 54, 60

summer of 1955, Meredith and her nephew in law, Frederick Richard, MD considered the cost of legal representation and sought application information about patent filing for a Golf Valet. Additionally Meredith invented “Kant Drop” a top designed to be recycled and attached to any reusable container. There is no evidence contained within the collection to determine whether an actual patent was ever granted for either invention. Nevertheless the existence of these documents illustrates the importance of invention and innovation in the life of Amaza Lee Meredith.79

The heavy involvement of African Americans in independent publishing endeavors can be seen as another tactical push back on the limits of discrimination and segregation. Literary contributions were used as a political informant tool of the empowerment press, and was also seen as validation of intellectual astuteness.80

A clever and exemplary example of the empowerment press is The Negro Motorist Green Book. [plate 6] Also referred to as simply the Green Book, the nationally distributed travel guide, was published by Victor Green from 1936 to 1966 and offered African Diaspora travelers a listing of accommodations that welcomed their business. The “Assured Protection for the Negro Traveler,” was both the motto and the inspiration for the registry.81 Another directory Travel-guide, edited by W.H. Butler began publication in 1946 and lasted throughout the 1950s. Travel-guide enjoyed tobacco and liquor advertisement revenues, and greater financial support was reflected in a sleeker format and appearance that also provided readers with state listings of Civil Rights Laws.82 Yet despite mainstream corporate sponsorship or perhaps because of it, compara-

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79 Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, Series Q, Item 6
80 Rugh, Susan Sessions, Are We There Yet?, p. 84
82 Rugh, Susan Sessions. Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations. Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2008, p. 78, 84
tively *Travelguide* was not as comprehensive in scope or range, as the independently funded *Negro Motorist Green Book*.

These publications and other travelogues represent how African Americans wielded the influence of the empowerment press to garner financial resources and politically instigate change. Although not a new occurrence, greater participation in these intellectualized forums of resistance reflected the shifting class structure within Black America and the presence of African Americans in automobility, technological innovation and suburbanization. Combined these elements reinforced the significance of race in American life in the mid twentieth century. \(^83\) Within the historical context, community building is defying spatial mobility and is a course of action that is rarely taken nor permitted to African Americans. When interpreted from this perspective as a transcendence factor, another important aspect of Azurest Syndicate is revealed.

Although not always recognized within the academic communities of architectural theory, for marginalized communities, architecture, landscapes and the built environment at large, stand as a platform to exercise resistance and challenge the dynamics of power and dominance. Not from the standpoint of man against nature but instead from the perspective of quelling the effects of oppressive man made political systems that include patriarchy, poverty, disenfranchisement and perpetual servitude.

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AUTOMOBILITY

The travel and leisure industry were technologically revolutionized in twentieth century by the introduction of the automobile. The automobile provided another opportunity to exert resistance to Jim Crow, therein lies the significance of Black automobile ownership. Mid twentieth century musician Chuck Berry’s *motorvatin* rock and roll tunes expressed a strong faith in mobility as a guarantee of dignity, democracy, pastoralism and equal opportunity. Belief in these principles stakes his and other African Americans’ claim to citizenship in the republic of drivers.

Car ownership and driving seem to have conferred or rather suggested dimensions of citizenship and status, that were blocked by formal politics and violently inhibited by informal codes.84 Like their White counterparts, many Black automobile owners felt a sense of escape and adventure when they got on the open road, temporarily removed from daily tensions. One correspondent for a national magazine noted in 1933 “...it’s mighty good to be the skipper for a change, and pilot whither and where we will. We feel like Vikings. What if our craft is blunt of nose and limited of power and our sea is macadamized; it’s good for the spirt to give the old railroad Jim Crow the laugh.”85 Whether expressed via individual conversations, in the lyrics of popular music, through the outlets of the empowerment press or the endearing embrace of technological innovation, African Americans used every channel available to communicate community dissatisfaction with Jim Crow customs, legislations, and the limitations of second class citi-

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84 Cotton, Seiler, “‘So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By’: African American Auto

mobility and Cold-War Liberalism,” *American Quarterly*, 58 (Dec. 2006), 1091–1117

85 Foster, Mark S. Foster “In the Face of Jim Crow: Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945”, p.141
zenship. The novelty of automobility is that it offered the prospect of greater spatial and social equality.

African Americans sought the autonomy of automobility and frequently utilized the assistance provided by the *Green Book* and the *Travelguide*. In the essay “The Open Road” an argument is advanced that documents evidence to support how African American narratives of progress used the automobile to insert African Americans into dominant discourses of economic prosperity, leisured mobility and technological savvy. The automobile, photography, and real estate acquisitions when used as instruments of cultural power, were the means employed to circumvent segregation. Additionally, these recreational activities were also used as a way to articulate material expression, and to suggest an adherence to racial uplift ideology. Combined they were used as a form of cultural politics meant to impress the African American right to full citizenship.86 In the broad view, for African Americans one of the greatest rewards for developing and maintaining community sovereignty was the ability to set the record straight, by using the acquisition of consumer goods as physical example of their ambition and superiority in the face of Jim Crow.

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4 Financing Leisure

Azurest is a private enclave, founded on the principle, practice and design to control an African American space of leisure, through the collective capitalization and development of a waterfront tract of Long Island real estate, in the Hamptons.\(^\text{87}\) Azurest Syndicate Incorporated was an impressive community-based land development organization, especially because it was both financially successful and fiscally conservative. Institution-building establishes cultural authority. Akin to other African American based institutions such as churches, fraternal organizations and schools, the Azurest Syndicate acted as a vehicle to solidify the institutions of family and community, within the context of a self selective social arena.\(^\text{88}\)

So what does it mean, Black Power leisure identity? In the Modern civilization the context of an African American experience is weighed by centuries that are heavily influenced by the history of the trans atlantic slave trade.\(^\text{89}\) The power to choose how personal leisure time is brokered, has a far greater meaning within the context of a class of citizens negotiating lives within the constraints of Jim Crow. For affluent African Americans, the negative impact on negotiating travel arrangements during the Jim Crow era, served as an inspiration for the development of African American owned and financed resort destinations.\(^\text{90}\)

\(^{87}\) Possible citation from Recovering Identity essay


\(^{89}\) Lowe, Kate, “Introduction: The Black African Presence in Renaissance Europe”, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10-11 and, Sweet, James, H. “Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought”, *The William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Series*, Volume LIV, Number 1, (January 1997), 157-161. By no means was public brokering of bonded laborers a new phenomenon in Europe. To the contrary, as early as the ninth century, the quays of Genoa, Venice and Pisa, were used as marketplaces where enslaved foreigners were auctioned regularly. However, a precedent was established August 8,1444 at Lagos in the Algarve, Portugal.

\(^{90}\) Foster, Mark S. Foster “In the Face of Jim Crow: Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 84. No. 2 (Spring 1999), p. 136
African American narratives of progress used leisure, travel and the automobile to insert African Americans into dominant discourses of economic prosperity, leisured mobility and technological savvy. Refusing to be victimized by the constraints of segregation, by the 1960s people of African lineage undertook a multi-targeted campaign to integrate roadside eateries. By maximizing the visual impact of televised media to raise awareness and rally support, the eventual access to previously restricted public accommodations was finally gained and secured by federal legislation, that outlawed Jim Crow.

FEMINIST ARTICULATION OF ARCHITECTURE ON THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

This sense of solidarity, fortitude and pride can also be observed in other aspects of community life and was an important factor in real estate transactions initiated by African Americans during the twentieth century. The context and symbolism of the name Azurest, inform our understanding of the African Diaspora pursuit of leisure. Before the Azurest Syndicate was formalized, or the land was purchased, located in the adjoining community of Eastville, Sag Harbor, the Hampton House stood as a definitive example of the incorporation of leisure into the family lifestyle.

During the 1930s the Hampton House was the summer house of Azurest co-founder Maude Kenney Terry and it was where she lived with her husband Hunter Terry, and their ex-

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91 Franz, Kathleen, “The Open Road: Automobility and Racial Uplift in the Interwar Years”. Technology and the African American Experience, ed. Sinclair Bruce, p. 132

92 Rugh, Sessions, Susan, Are We There Yet?, p. 86

93 Wiese, Andrew, Places of Our Own, p. 132

94 Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, Box 15,Untitled “Homes Sweet Homes” scrapbook
tended family during the summer season.\textsuperscript{95} [plate 7] A New York City public school teacher and the eldest sister of Ms. Meredith, it was the Hampton Street homestead that first established the family’s presence in Sag Harbor. It is over the course of spending summers in Eastville and hiking through the neighboring woodlands along the coastline of Haven’s Beach, on the Peconic Bay, that inspired Ms. Terry to seek the owner of what she considered “an enchanting parcel of land” that would eventually be developed into Azurest. Terry was inspired to create a congenial space to exercise the precincts of leisure. The Azurest community is the purposeful linguistic play on words, \textit{as you rest}.\textsuperscript{96} The phenomenon of choosing idyllic names for African American funded resort communities, can also be observed in Highland Beach Maryland, Idlewild Michigan, and American Beach, Florida.

The parcel of land that became known as Azurest was platted in its entirety, by the end of 1947. The Azurest subdivision was registered as two sections, as follows: Azurest Section 1, Situate Sag Harbor, Town of East Hampton, New York, filed Suffolk County Clerk Office on November 13, 1947 as Map #1585. Azurest Section 2, Situate Sag Harbor, Town of East Hamp-

\textsuperscript{95} Maude Kenney Terry, Hempstead New York (18 - 1968)

\textsuperscript{96} Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, Box 1 Folder 1a, Maude Kenney Terry, Obituary dated November 21, 1968.
ton, New York, filed Suffolk County Clerk Office on December 3, 1947 as Map #1664. Combined the parcel totaled 150 lots; section one compromised 50 lots and section two contained 100 lots. In 1953 the business entity Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, was formally established and registered with the State of New York.97

As the governing body, the Syndicate was created as a revenue generating vehicle, designed to assure the successful fulfillment of a ten year mortgage, which was held by the seller of the Azurest land parcel, Ms. Elsie Gale.98 Mortgage payments were paid semi annually, and in turn the Syndicate met its mortgage obligation through the profits generated from the individual sale and mortgage financing of platted lots. The initial offering ranged from $750.00 to $1,000.00 each, down payments averaged $100.00 per lot.99

The Syndicate was a creative financing tool that valued a heightened sense of hyper legality and fiscal transparency. Within the context of independent financing options, the thorough embrace of good credit by the African American middle class, allowed this venture to be a financial success. Additionally, the group maintained an ethos of integrity that was based upon solid financial footing, which was viewed as a protective measure used to prevent unforeseen hardships or loss of property, that arise from a lack of professionalism or financial preparedness.

The fundamental elements of this type of capitalization plan, particularly self sufficiency were also a characterizing symbol of Black Power leisure identity. Adherence to the ideology of fiscal conservatism and firm financial footing was a necessary component of community sovereignty, because credit financing options provided by the Federal Housing Administration, were

97 Azurest North Private Collection, Series V, Item 1
98 Elsie Gale, Huntington, New York.
99 Azurest North Private Collection, Series
not made available to mid twentieth century African American community builders. Ironically at the time Azurest was being acquired and developed, all over Long Island established African American communities were the focus of elimination. These neighborhoods were condemned as slums and demolished in renewal schemes, which destabilized community sovereignty. 100 Although it is safe to surmise that news reports of these concurrent events were unnerving to many African Americans in local Long Island communities, the founders of Azurest remained steadfast and undaunted by any threats to destabilize their plans.

Azurest Syndicate Incorporated in conjunction with the Home Owners Association also referred to as the Property Owners Association, were responsible for capital development projects including road improvements, sewers, playgrounds, commercial development and the maintenance of commonly held community property. A significant concern of the Syndicate was the establishment of territorial boundaries and the protection of community borders. Encroachment was a significant concern and provisions were made to insure that the integrity of physical boundaries and community ethos of Azurest would remain intact.

To commemorate the founding sisters, the first roads traced within the community were named Terry Drive and Meredith Drive. Transversing on a east west axis, Terry Drive was the most northern street in the subdivision, and the properties on the north side of the street, abutted the waterfront. Following an north south axis, Meredith Drive traverses along the eastern border of the development and provides access to the main thoroughfare of Sag Harbor, Suffolk County Route 114.

Situated on a waterfront lot, the first house to be constructed was the Terry Cottage, located at the northeast boundary of the neighborhood. [plate 8] Also known as HIHIL, it was built in 1949 and is believed to be the last remaining Northern example of an architectural design, by Amaza Lee Meredith. Drawn with a dramatic bow front, with formal and stylistic devices similar to the earlier Meredith designed, Azurest South. Another Meredith design was Edendot, a prairie-style house that she designed for fellow Syndicator, Dorothy C. Spaulding and her husband Edward. Also on Terry Drive and adjacent to HIHIL on the western exposure, Edendot, had a simple shed-roof cottage opening onto the dunes overlooking the Peconic Bay. Both Edendot and HIHIL cottages were the site of many strategic planning meetings throughout the operational years of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated.

MEET THE REST OF THE SYNDICATORS

As mentioned earlier, none of the Azurest Syndicators had any prior experience with community building, yet each core member of the Syndicate possessed some aspect

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101 Field study survey of Terry Cottage, HIHIL, March 23, 2011. Terry Cottage was owned by both Terry and Meredith. Azurest South, located in Petersburg Virginia was constructed in 1939. A full discussion of Azurest South follows later in this chapter in the section titled Azurest South.

102 Field study survey, Terry Drive, Azurest, Sag Harbor, NY, and archives visit at Eastville Community Historical Society, Edendot was raised circa 2000 and replaced with new construction; and http://dashingclaire.hubpages.com/hub/Sag-Harbor-NY, 11/29/11

103 Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, Box 15, Untitled scrapbook, Homes Sweet Homes: Azurest North Private Collection, Meetings minutes, Series D,G,M,P,S,T
of professional expertise, which was readily contributed to the fulfillment of Syndicate goals. Legal counsel was provided by Dorothy C. Spaulding, a practicing attorney with familial ties to the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Spaulding family.\textsuperscript{104} During the extended series of real estate negotiations between the seller, Elsie Gale, and members of the Azurest Syndicate, repeatedly, Ms. Spaulding was highly praised for her thorough understanding of the magnitude of risk and responsibility that a land development project of this size would require.\textsuperscript{105} Dorothy and husband Edward Spaulding lived year round in Brooklyn and after the finalization of the parcel purchase in 1953, were one of the first to buy a lot along the waterfront on Terry Drive. Following the tradition of linguistic turns, Edendot, the Spaulding’s Azurest home was pronounced Ed and Dot.

Although none of the Syndicators were land developers, Amaza Lee Meredith, had previous architectural experience with the design and construction of the Azurest South house. Until the time of its construction in 1939, the one acre Azurest South site was undeveloped land, located on the outskirts of the Virginia State University campus and of all the Syndicators, she was the most knowledgeable about the land development process. In a review of the Azurest North Private Collection and the Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, it can unequivocally be observed that her input was critical to the development, direction and eventual success of the Syndicate. Her official syndicate role was Recording Secretary, however as she did in her year round life, so too she did during the summer


\textsuperscript{105} Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 9, Folder 110, Item Letter from Amaza Lee Meredith to Maude Terry, dated June 30, 1953.
season, and Meredith’s display of multiple talents ensured that she was highly regarded by family, neighbors and peers in both New York and Virginia.  

One of only two men that were part of the Syndicate inner circle, and the only actual male Syndicator was James P. Smith, Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, Treasurer. Frequently referred to in Syndicate meeting minutes as Smitty, he held a significant role in overseeing real estate financing and sales transactions for Azurest. A professional civil engineer, Smith provided the Syndicate with infrastructural advice about roadways, sewers and an understanding about the importance of maintaining a buffer property boundary to ensure impenetrable borders. Meeting minutes attribute Smith as a leading advocate in raising the awareness of the group to the necessity for instituting preventive measures to avoid the *white noose* of encroachment and also for devising successful strategies to protect community sovereignty. 

Edna Meade Colson, College Professor and Iris Terry Richards, MD, were both investors and trusted advisors of the Azurest Syndicate, as well as family members of the co-founders, Maude K. Terry and Amaza Lee Meredith. On behalf of the seller, Daniel Gale, attorney and land sale administrator, was a leading advisor to his mother, Elsie Gale. Similar to Colson and Richards, Daniel Gales’ role was also advisory. A review of the actual sales contract lists the sole signatory as Elsie Gale, seller of the Haven’s Beach tract of land, which would later become known as Azurest. Regarding the ongoing negotiations on Long Island, in letters from Terry to Meredith in Virginia, mention was

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106 Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 9, Folder 110, Item Letter from Maude Terry to Amaza Lee Meredith, dated June 30, 1953

107 Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia,

108 Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, Series S, Item 1
made once again, this time by Daniel Gale, about the impressive legal counsel that was
being provided by Dorothy C. Spaulding.\textsuperscript{109}

An examination of the Syndicators allows us to grasp a greater understanding of
the meaning of these grassroots interpersonal relationships, that existed between the cen-
tral members of the Azurest Syndicate. This group was comprised of mutually benefiting
parties, who were able to establish an amicable working relationship that avoided the
mire of gender associated limitations and ethnic differences, prescribed by the prevailing
Jim Crow social constructs of mid twentieth century American society.

THE SYNDICATE AND H.O.A. RUMBA: WHO HOLDS THE DANCE CARD?

The most worrisome period of internal distress was evidenced during the first five years
of syndicate operation, from 1953 through 1958. At the time that Amaza Lee Meredith enters re-
tirement from her formal career as Art Professor at Virginia State University in 1958, she be-
comes an official member of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, and assumes the role of record-
ing secretary. In this role, Meredith’s tenure extends from 1958 through 1974, and these years
cover a period of intense activity. Leadership initiatives and directives appear consistently in
meeting minutes and discussions documented in the series, which cover the period from 1958
through 1962. Conversely developmental successes and the early fulfillment of the final mort-
gage payment in August 1962, are also documented.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{109} Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 9,
Folder 110, Item Letter from Maude Terry to Amaza Lee Meredith, dated June 30, 1953

\textsuperscript{110} Azurest North Private Collection,
In adherence to the original mission and statement of purpose, Azurest Syndicate represents a successful model of an independent land development real estate syndicate, in operation during the mid twentieth century. Through the ten year lifecycle of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, the executive board members worked diligently and strategically to employ diplomacy, as the preferred tactic and preventative measure, for solving the problems of internal dissension and sabotage that could disrupt the operational goals of the syndicate. Despite, contentious relations between the Azurest Syndicate and the Azurest Home Owners Association that threatened to compromise the philosophical direction intended by the development founders, that arose in the late of 1957, diplomacy was the chosen course of corrective action. Before her ascension to the office of Syndicate recording secretary, in a letter addressed to the current president of the then named Azurest Property Owners Association, in her role of property owner and development co-founder, Meredith uses tact and directness to reiterate what she trusted still remained as, “the majority philosophy” of what Azurest has been and not a “strivers”, “keeping up with the Jones” attitude but instead a practice of natural, simple principles.111 Again the themes of leisure and rest were communicated clearly whenever a threat to the upholding of these principles was detected. Hence whenever necessary, the abiding principles of Azurest were reintroduced and stressed accordingly.

JUANA NEGRA HOLDINGS, FINANCIAL SOLVENCY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BOSTON MARRIAGE

111 Azurest North Private Collection, Series Q, Items 9-11.
Real estate reigns supreme in New York State and within this context, women of African
descent have held a measure of relative prominence since the mid seventeenth century. Through
bonded labor, usufruct tenure, birthright, inheritance and the rewards of wages earned in free la-
bor, African-descended women hold an honored place in the local New York City and Long Is-
land history that is marked by steady gains in local real estate acquisitions. The application of
feminist agency exercised from the standpoint of property ownership is of particular interest to
our discourse.

The long legacy of landownership, provides an platform to explain how Africana Women
have nurtured a Black Feminist Identity. The intersection of citizenship and landholdings as
viewed through a Black feminist perspective, lays fertile ground for a thorough examination that
introduces and explores the concept of ‘Juana Negra’ Holdings. This is the idea that regardless
of the constraints of the established patriarchal political system, African Diaspora women have
demonstrated resourcefulness, talent, and the innate ability to wield intellectual capital as a tool
to exercise gender agency. It extrapolates further the idea that the byproduct derived from years
of blood and sweat labor, have over time transformed, to become the energy that inspires African
descended women to live, labor, love and strive to design uses and create opportunities to ex-
press, celebrate and showcase their intellectual property in commerce, education, the arts, com-
community building and philanthropy. Sorority organizations and women’s academic institutions are
two examples of entities founded on the principles of Juana Negra Holdings.

\[112\] Juana Negra aka Black Jane, comes from the Working Joe family. Since I am an Africana and this essay consid-
ers the experience of the African Diaspora women in the Atlantic World, I nor are they Plain Jane(s), but instead a
Black Jane(s), aka Juana Negra. Juana Negra Holdings are all familial, intellectual and real property ties and posses-
sions of African Diaspora women within the analysis and context of this essay. Another reference to the idea of
“Working Joe” can be heard in the lyrics to the Jethro Tull song, “Working John, Working Joe” released on the A
The application of the Juana Negra Holdings theory of resource distribution, represents an opportunity to consider the equal distribution of assets that are a characteristic feature of the “Boston marriage”. A descriptive term that was first used in New England in the decades spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “Boston marriage” was used to describe two women living together, independent of financial support from a man.\textsuperscript{113} An example can be found by analyzing the significance of the Meredith and Colson joint financial investment in Azurest North. In a letter to Meredith, her sister and Azurest co-founder Maude K. Terry outlines in no uncertain terms that the group relies heavily on Meredith’s architectural expertise. Dated June 1953, in addition to highlighting her professional credibility, this letter expressly illuminates that Terry has limited tangible assets to contribute to the initial down payment investment. The implication is clearly made that she hopes that Meredith and Colson are financially prepared to meet the financial obligation.\textsuperscript{114} Her lack of funding is despite her tenure as a public school teacher. Just as significant is the fact that both Amaza Lee Meredith and Edna Colson are college professors in rural Virginia, and thus all three women share the same profession and are of the same or similar salary grade.

Indicative of the limitations of gender equality in the mid twentieth century, the context of Terry’s letter provides the possibility to surmise the following analysis. Namely that perhaps unlike herself, a participant in a traditional heterosexual marriage, that as participants in a childless Boston marriage, Meredith and Colson had greater financial solvency and the corresponding monetary assets necessary to capitalize an initial


\textsuperscript{114} Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 9, Folder 110, Item Letter from Maude Terry to Amaza Lee Meredith, dated June 30, 1953
down payment investment that was substantial enough to cover their two shares, plus an additional one more for Terry.\textsuperscript{115}

Along the same line of thought, other examples of Juana Negra Holdings can be identified to include social capital, legal counsel and architectural expertise as the most important contributory elements responsible for the initiation of Azurest North. Maude Terry’s foresight and ability to create a viable and trusted association with Elsie Gale, were closely matched by the equally substantial professional abilities that were contributed by Dorothy C. Spaulding and Amaza Lee Meredith. When analyzed through the lens of the Juana Negra Holdings theory of resource distribution, the Azurest Syndicate and the pursuit of Black Power leisure identity, become an identifiable form of active resistance. Especially because all three represent either an entity or ideology, that intentionally defy the societal limitations of otherness that stigmatized gender, ethnicity and lifestyle choices that are founded and located beyond the boundary of patriarchy.

AZUREST SOUTH: THE RADICAL EMBRACE OF CHANGE

Azurest South also favors the application of leisure principles that were cited earlier and served as example in the discussion about the Hampton House. [plate 9] Azurest South, located in Ettrick Virginia is a small one story home, which was designed by Meredith for herself and Dr. Edna Meade Colson, who headed Virginia State University’s School of Education and was also Meredith’s lifelong companion. Sited in a lush dell at the western edge of campus, the house is a bold investigation of the International style and a salient example of this trend in residential de-

sign. Considered to be one of the first modern residences of its kind to be constructed in rural Virginia, Azurest South was begun in the mid-1930s, when Meredith was in her forties. It is thought to be Meredith’s best known and earliest documented architectural effort. Thoroughly immersed in the modernism architectural gestalt of this period, Meredith developed and implemented her ideas and communicated a total understanding of modern concepts onto the rural Virginia landscape, via the design and construction of Azurest South. [plate 10] The exterior has a smooth stucco finish with curved corners and industrial-type windows. Bands of glass block round the corners of the bedroom wing. The copings and rails that line the flat roof as well as the columns and carport roof are painted an eye-catching turquoise, that Meredith referred to as, Azurest Blue. The limited palette of exterior materials explodes on the interior with an unexpected mix of colors and finishes. The multicolor, metal fleck, vinyl tile; Carrara glass;
acoustic tile; mosaic tiles; and tile-board finishes specified by Meredith were the most current interior finishes available.¹¹⁶

In the scrapbook *Homes Sweet Homes*, which boasts a collection of photographs, Meredith clearly illustrates an allegiance for the aesthetic of leisure in the room labeled, *My Lady’s Boudoir*. [plate 11] The application of a bas relief frieze inset, created by Cecilia C. Scott, a Virginia State University graduate, class of 1940, is the structural highlight of the room. Placed prominently into the wall of the open lounge, the frieze compliments the minimal furnishings that include a chaste lounge with satin pillow, covered with alternating hued diagonal design that corresponds to the adjacent wall colors. As an example of the construction of a modern dwelling in the international style, Azurest South demonstrates a clear understanding of architectural theory and also extends the limits of the feminist articulation of architecture on the American landscape.

Furthermore by documenting her lifestyle choices on film, Meredith used photography as an empowering mode of representation. The gaze of photography provided her the opportunity to participate in the construction of self-images that recorded personal accomplishments, attitudes of self-respect and meaningful mo-

ments in time. It is through the documentation of significant family dwellings, that constituted a critical effort by Meredith, to consciously subvert and resist the prevalent negative representations of African American families by others.\textsuperscript{117} En total, the images captured in the *Homes Sweet Homes* scrapbook, situate Azurest South and the Azurest North enclave into the mainstream of the local middle class and elite visual culture.\textsuperscript{118} Hence feminist research becomes a political practice and herein lies the significance of identifying Azurest Syndicate Incorporated as a suitable example for feminist interpretation and historical class analysis.\textsuperscript{119}

**IT’S ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS**

Auzest Syndicate is a clear representation of the trend to create independent real estate financial ventures. African American real estate syndicates were established principally to challenge and circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing discrimination in New York State and throughout the nation, during the twentieth century.

In the immediately preceding period from 1910 to 1933, the federal government and the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) made a coordinated and concerted effort not just to encourage homeownership, but to give home buying more stature within mainstream society.\textsuperscript{120} After the financial collapse of 1929, community builders, mortgage lenders, property and title insurers, brokers and their allies sort a means to buoy their common interest and to en-

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force strict land planning standards, curb speculative subdividing and stabilize long term value for future development. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) underwriting standards and land planning policies were highly favorable to the community builders and resulted in larger market share supported by the financial feasibility and sales appeal of new, large scale residential subdivision developments, of single family detached houses. By 1940, FHA had fully established the land planning and development process and pattern, which a decade later captured media attention as post war suburbanization. For American citizens of African descent, creativity was necessary to secure any semblance of security in the underfunded African American real estate and mortgage financing market.

Excluded from conventional real estate markets and financing options, from 1953 through 1963, the Azurest Syndicate Incorporated operated an organizational structure that combined capital resources to provide investors with a level of buying leverage, financial security, and better tax benefits. Additionally, the operational functions of a syndicate are to combine the allocated capital with the managerial skills of a person or persons able to organize the syndicate, to find suitable property, negotiate for its acquisition and to manage it until it is sold. A sound real estate investment yielded equity increases, appreciation in value and hedged against any expected rates of inflation. Most importantly a syndicate allowed a group of investors to pool their funds to buy parcels of land, that many individual investors could not afford. Collectively, these factors promised investors a greater profit margin ratio per invested dollar.\footnote{Miller, Daniel A. \textit{How to Invest in Real Estate Syndicates}. Homewood, Dow Jones-Irwin, 1978 p.6}

Media coverage of legal suits that uncovered dubious associations and lenders would prove that real estate syndicate integrity was not always assured. By the 1960s the reputation of
real estate syndicates had tarnished. Increasingly they became associated with organized crime
groups and illicit real estate schemes devised to swindle unsuspecting and naïve investors.\textsuperscript{122}

Although real estate syndicates expose investors to a range of risks, which span from a
lack of control, information, and liquidity, to a host of unknown factors that can arise when in-
vesting with strangers. The level of risk was extremely high for investors at the time that the
property for the Azurest subdivision was purchased, specifically because it was an independent
land development project, with no tangible track record of success. A land development venture
of this magnitude required a great deal of confidence and foresight.\textsuperscript{123} Conversely, because of the
higher risks involved, the return on investment could be higher than the return on investment in
properties already generating income. Thus the greater the financial interest of the syndicator in
the property, the greater the incentive to the syndicator to select, negotiate and manage with in-
tegrity. A syndicate structure that holds syndicator investments assures mutuality of interest be-
tween the syndicator and investors.\textsuperscript{124}

Reliance on independent forms of lending to circumvent an inability to participate in
post-war government sponsored mortgage initiatives, marked the African American real estate
buying experience. Nevertheless with the specter of limited financing options, mid twentieth cen-
tury African American real estate investors relied on syndicates and community investment
funds, known as su-su, to fulfill mortgage financing needs. Without the formation of a financial

\textsuperscript{122} Berger, Curtis, J. \textit{Real Estate Syndication: Property, Promotion and the Need for Protection} \textit{Yale Law

\textsuperscript{123} Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Virginia State University, Special Collections and Archives, Petersburg, Virginia,
Box 9, Folder 110, Letter dated July 9, 1953.

\textsuperscript{124} Miller, Daniel A. \textit{How to Invest in Real Estate Syndicates}. Homewood, p. 19 & 181
organization such as Azurest Syndicate Incorporated, independently led African American speculative land development projects would cease to exist.

MARKETING OF THE MYTH

Federal housing policy collaborated with real estate industry leaders to further compound African Americans access to fair lending options, by the wholesale promotion of the market imperative theory of segregation.\textsuperscript{125} Under the auspices of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), the belief that any African American presence in a neighborhood was a source of substantial concern associated with the loss of aggregate land value. The perpetuation of this myth of a diminished land value ratio based on race, was maintained and duly noted on secret “Residential Security Maps” that were placed in city survey files. Largely responsible for the initiation and practice of redlining, HOLC applied valuations for ethnic and racial worth to real estate appraising and assigned one of four ratings to every block, in every American city.\textsuperscript{126} Aside from the restrictions of these discriminatory practices, what the market imperative theory of segregation did, through the collaborative use of federally funded credit and mortgage programs, was to popularize the idea that it was not racial difference or prejudice, but instead the impersonal forces of the market, that dictated racial segregation policy. Effectively what this government endorsement policy did by limiting access to the credit markets, was to validate and disseminate a relatively new economic theory about the relationship between ethnicity and property. By pro-

\textsuperscript{125} Freund, David, M.P. “Marketing the Free Market: State Intervention and the Politics of Prosperity in Metropolitan America” The New Suburban History, Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, ed. Chicago The University of Chicago Press, 2006, 20

claiming that the laws of the free markets required the racial segregation of residences, the state simultaneously assured consumers that its intervention was in no way distorting the natural market for housing.127

The marketing of the myth proves, that independent financial networks were a necessary response to the limited financing options that were made available to the African American real estate buying market. Attainment of the American dream far outweighed Jim Crow restrictions and housing discrimination for African Americans. This is clearly evidenced by the demand for second home real property ownership, which was substantial enough to assure the achievement of the financial goals for the Azurest Syndicate. The development of Azurest Syndicate Incorporated as an independent African American majority real estate syndicate, evolved out of the necessity to fill a void in the real estate market.128

Despite the language of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) mortgage legislation, it did not amount to much for American citizens unable to use the benefits of White privilege. Until 1948 the FHA Underwriting Manual warned that racial intermingling in housing was best discouraged and implied that not heeding this warning would lead to a lowering of property value. During this same time, home builders were also encouraged to incorporate race-restrictive covenants in sales contracts. Agency handbooks conveniently provided easy to duplicate samples in the appendix of each volume.129 Open housing advocates in the 1950s were appalled by the fas-

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cist racial policy that the FHA programs readily promoted. Nevertheless by the late 1950s, only two percent of the homes built with FHA support since 1945 were occupied by African Americans or other non-White ethnicities.\textsuperscript{130}

Nevertheless increasingly African American buying power was contingent on independent forms of lending to circumvent the inability to participate in post-war government sponsored real estate mortgage initiatives. Towards the end of World War II, several forces ended the doldrums which had characterized real estate investment throughout the 1930's and early 1940's. Individual savings accumulated during the war, sought sound investment outlets. Lending institutions were ready to disgorge, their depression-acquired foreclosed realty holdings, often at bargain basement values. Municipally-owned land, the product of depression tax foreclosures, became attractively available to developers. The governmental stimulus of insured or guaranteed mortgages, low interest rates, and easy-credit lending policies, including no-down-payment mortgages available to ex military service homebuyers, helped finance a construction upsurge.\textsuperscript{131}

The market imperative theory swiftly became conventional wisdom among White businesspeople and consumers, emboldening them to portray ethnic exclusion not as a byproduct of their ethnic preferences. Instead these ideas were viewed as an inexorable market imperative, one confirmed by the hard science of land use economics. Paradoxically, the government actively promoted the tale that it was not interfering with the free market for homes. Yet the creation and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Berger, Curtis, J. \textit{Real Estate Syndication: Property, Promotion and the Need for Protection} \textit{Yale Law Journal}, Vol. 69, No. 5, Apr. 1960, p. 725
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
operation of these new selective credit programs decidedly helped to change Whites’ thinking about the correlation between ethnicity and property.¹³²

There is a significant story to be told about the creativity and variety of speculative homebuilding, which happened during the mid twentieth century. Led by an independent group of African Americans, the Azurest Syndicate was one of those accounts, which transformed the abstract desire for a non-stigmatized space to pursue leisure, into a tangible and commercially viable real estate reality.¹³³ Unlike other neighboring real estate land development syndicates, which were formed primarily for speculative purposes. The Azurest community, particularly because it provided African Americans with a rare opportunity to participate in the second home real estate buying market, was of critical importance in determining future residential housing patterns.¹³⁴ Additionally, unlike primary residence lending, mortgage financing for Azurest was established specifically for the construction of resort housing, and therein lays the most significant distinction of the Azurest Syndicate.

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

Countering the limits of African American mortgage options in the era of Jim Crow and the federally established practice of community redlining, African American real estate syndicates did challenge and were able to successfully circumvent the practices of Jim Crow housing


discrimination in New York State and throughout the nation. In the wake of the post World War II real estate boom and expansion of housing beyond urban centers, the Azurest Syndicate follows the trend to create an independently financed suburban real estate venture.

The Syndicate’s ability to extend mortgage finance options and participate in informal grapevines and word of mouth advertisement networks were the preferable channels to identify and attract suitable investor homeowners. This was thought to be the best recruiting method as opposed to a reliance on the unregulated precincts of the classified sections of newspapers. The real estate agents that were given the opportunity to participate in the sale of Azurest lots, were vetted carefully and required a personal reference from a Syndicate member. Academic, fraternal and professional affiliations appear to be an important factor in the identification of prospective land owners. Although the ability to maintain the mortgage schedule was important to the success of the community, none of the monthly payments exceeded $50.00 The reasonable cost and low interest rates were due in part to the fact that the Azurest Syndicate underwrote and secured the mortgages. This style of hands-on land development influenced the sense of attachment to place and commitment to success. This high level of dedication can be observed by the copious amounts of hand written and typed syndicate meeting minutes, financial reports, hand drawn infrastructure planning maps, property sales binders, mortgage accounting records and other relevant ephemera that is present in the archival record.

136 Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, Series E, Item 1
137 Dollar Times values $1000.00 to be $8,027.84 in 2010, annual inflation over this period was 3.79% $1000 was highest lot price available during the initial offering. http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm
138 Amaza Lee Meredith Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA, Box 9, Folder 110 and Azurest North Private Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, Series A, B, C, E, G, H, M, U, V
THEY MAY BE OUR PEOPLE, BUT THEY ARE NOT OUR KIND

Harnessing the power of intellectual capital while avoiding the class limitations of prevailing bourgeoisie sensibilities among the African American professional class and adequately factoring individual taste and education; is the quagmire faced in dispelling the illusion of a monolithic Black community. Included in all notions of class, pedigree, and the mire of elitism that skim the surface of discussions about Black Power leisure identity in an African American summer enclave, looming in the background as an implied indictment is the haunting question: Is it Black enough? Is participation in a summer resort community, authentic to the Black experience?

What is really at stake here is not ethnic identity, but instead class affiliation. Blackness is not measured in strength or by degree or an attachment to an external force. Nor is it feasible that the stigmatization of Blackness can magically become less of a factor in life, within the context of desire, knowledge, power or the possession of economic means. Affluence and education can provide access to economic means for citizens of the African Diaspora. However in the absence of an empowered identity, at best, affluence is a counteractant buffer to Eurocentric stigma targeting Africa and all things dark and black. Yet in reality, affluence is not a remedy or a strong enough contender to sufficiently erase biases in a racialized American society.\(^\text{139}\)

DEEDED TO HER: GENDER, LEISURE AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Azurest Syndicate is distinctive because of its singularity as an African American resort community development project, independently defined and developed by women, under a regime that oppressed women, people of African, Asian, Native and to some extent ethnic White lineages. The formation of the Syndicate is a tangible illustration of the feminist articulation of architectural expression on the American landscape.

The Azurest Syndicate Incorporate was significant on several levels. First the Azurest community was a planning and land development milestone for professional women. Secondly the successful financial administration of the corporation was a marker of the amount of progress that was made against the constraints of mid twentieth century housing discrimination practices on Long Island. Four of the five pivotal members of the Azurest Syndicate Incorporate planning committee were women, whose roles ranged from architectural and conceptual planning, to legal counsel and sales management. Working in tandem Azurest represents the degendering of space and spatial institutions, and the divisions in labor, education and leisure. Finally, the use of history as an agent of resistance, in the quest to document the significance of women’s contributions in history, is a powerful methodology, which as a result of these research findings, will no longer be ignored.

[END]
5 Conclusions: The Role of Historical Activism: Reconciling Yesterday and Today

In the *Tropic of Discourse* Hayden White attempts to fortify the foundation of historical inquiry and extend the reach of historiography, when he both warns and declares: “The burden of the [modern and postmodern] historian is to reestablish the dignity of historical studies on a basis that will make them consonant with the aims and purposes of the intellectual community at large, [thereby] to transform historical studies in such a way as to allow the historian to participate positively in the liberation of the present from the burden of history.”\(^{140}\) White proposes that language and linguistic protocols fundamentally shape the writing of history.

Choice can therefore be executed in two ways a) via theoretical concepts and narrative structures used by historians to analyze and explain historical events, and b) through the linguistic paradigm by which historians preconceive their field of interest and what he observes as the metahistorical element found in all historical writing. I suggest that White’s declaration in fact ushers in poststructuralist theory and applications into the consciousness of historians and therefore extends the reach of historical inquiry, as well as the content of historiography.

As stated in the Introduction, this research study was predicated on my receipt of the Azurest North Private Collection as a de facto holiday gift from a former employer familiar with my combined interests in architecture, African Diaspora resort communities, and material culture. The primary inquiry was to determine what could be learned, discerned and understood from the distance of time, and in this way I have ambitiously accepted White’s challenge. The significance

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of archival collections, as a historical marker in the documentation of American history has proved especially important within the context of documenting the experiential and material cultural contributions of the under represented classes and women. This is especially relevant particularly within the context of what can and has been learned from various twentieth century archival collections, which have documented history and material culture of the African American experience.\footnote{Gold, Susanna, W. Recovering Identity: Nineteenth Century African American Portraiture, American Quarterly, Volume 58, Number 4, December 2006, p. 1168}

In the case of the Amaza Lee Meredith Collection, scrapbooks, sketches, and photographs were invaluable, as they collectively are a physical testament that are able to communicate the artistic intentions of Ms. Meredith. The visual record was particularly important, in the absence of any remaining physical evidence. In the case of architectural integrity, Azurest South has incurred a number of design losses since the death of Meredith and Colsen, in the 1980s. Yet the material culture that remains in the various archival collections, bear witness to the imagination and grandeur of the original design.

As a historian with interests in archival processing and architectural history, the use of a wide variety of methodological approaches was necessary to adequately address and integrate archival processing procedures, with the investigative tenets necessary to prepare and document an engaging and informative historical analysis of the built environment. Gender analysis, cultural studies and the linguistic turn have all been used in some form or another, to best illustrate how social resistance movements, quests for leisure, identity and the acquisition of property ownership are articulated on the American landscape. However the most useful and novel means to interpret these research findings, were the world traveling methodology and the postmodernist
feminist theory. World traveling methodology is helpful because it allows for studying “the other” as a familiar resonance, an echo of oneself. Similarly the employment of a postmodernist feminist theoretical methodology, places the contributions of women, and specifically the Azur-est Syndicate, at the center of this historical inquiry. In this way, feminist research can rightly be perceived as a political practice that presents the possibility of discovering unexpected political associations, in unexpected places.142

In conclusion, the most paramount purpose of this essay, --to share the research findings and explore how the intersections of leisure, identity, and property ownership support the hypothesis. Thus the proposed topic, the use of independent financing options to build community and secure Black Power leisure identity, to effectively circumvent the restrictions and constraints inherent within the federally legislated system of Jim Crow petit apartheid and White supremacy in American society, has been adequately addressed and properly served.

6 Bibliography

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Directories


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Film


Nomination Forms

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SECONDARY SOURCES

Books


**JOURNAL ARTICLES**


Seiler, Cotten, “So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By”: African American Automobility and Cold-War Liberalism” *American Quarterly*, 58 (Dec. 2006).
Sweet, James, H. “Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, Volume LIV, Number 1, (January 1997).


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Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, Full report of Jim Crow origination in New York, http://brennan.3cdn.net/50080b21f7f0197339_z7m6i20ud.pdf and related website  http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/jimcrown


Morrill Land Grant Acts were first established in 1862 and again later in 1890 a second act was enacted to include the former Confederate states.  
http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Morrill.html

North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Durham North Carolina,  
http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/myfuture/bio.html
7 APPENDICES

Appendix A

BUILDING LIST
AMAZA LEE MEREDITH (1895 - 1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>Gillfield Baptist Church Education Bldg.</td>
<td>209 Perry St.</td>
<td>Petersburg</td>
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<td>Johnson, Dr. James H.</td>
<td>3rd Ave.</td>
<td>Ettrick</td>
<td>VA</td>
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<td>Meredith, Amaza L “Azurest South”</td>
<td>2900 Boisseau St.</td>
<td>Ettrick</td>
<td>VA</td>
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<td>Richards, Dr. F.F. “Hillside”</td>
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<td>Terry Dr.</td>
<td>Sag Harbor</td>
<td>NY</td>
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Appendix B

Email received 3/26/11, regarding a property that first sold for $1,200 in 1957 when it was first offered by Azurest Syndicate Incorporated. The land value appreciation margin is significant and attests to the business acumen and foresight of the original community planners: Maude Kenney Terry, Amaza Lee Meredith, Dorothy Spaulding and James Smith.

Hi Grace It was so nice chatting with you the other day. I just wanted to send the listing along with my contact information so that you can contact me the next time you are in the area. My cell is (631)678-8690. Take care, Julie

<table>
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<th>Rental IN#</th>
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<td>38685</td>
<td>55668</td>
<td>60565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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All Photos
Major reduction of $200,000 and poised to sell...This is a fabulous offering on a beautiful, sandy stretch of Sag Harbor Village waterfront. The charming beach cottage is crisply updated with country kitchen, full bathroom, large dining/sun porch, living room with fireplace, and 2 bedrooms. In addition there is a walk out lower level, outdoor shower, and great deck. A private staircase leads down to one of the best beaches on the bay, perfect for swimming, kayaking, or quiet relaxation. Plans are in place and being permitted for a large scale addition/renovation and also a small pool/spa. Reduced, $1,795,000.

### 47 TERRY DRIVE, Sag Harbor

- **Sag Harbor Village**
- **$1,795,000**

- **House**
  - Beach Cottage
  - 1 Story
  - 1000 Sq. Ft.
  - OHW Heat
  - A/C: Wall Units

- **Rooms**
  - 2 Bedrooms
  - 1.5 Baths
  - Finished Bsmt
  - 1 Fireplace(s)

- **Property**
  - 0.13 acres
  - Room For Pool
  - Taxes: 2682
  - Bayfront

---

**Julie Masson**  
*Licensed Sales Associate*

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BRIDGEHAMPTON - SAG HARBOR

*All information provided is deemed reliable but is not guaranteed and should be independently verified.*