



# LOUISVILLE DOWNTOWN

## *Civil Rights Trail*



*Designed by Ed Hamilton, nationally recognized sculptor and artist*



## Sit-In Demonstration Sites Markers Project

The Sit-in Demonstration Sites Markers Project preserves an important part of Louisville's history. Designed by nationally recognized sculptor Ed Hamilton, each marker bears a logo depicting student protesters to symbolize the civil rights movement in Louisville, the South and the nation in the 1960s.

Fourth Street was Louisville's primary corridor of restaurants, department stores and theaters. Through the 1950s, most white-owned establishments downtown excluded African Americans or treated them differently as customers - for example, denying them the opportunity to try on clothes, to sit at lunch counters and to enter movie theaters. By winter 1961, small-scale demonstrations and efforts to secure legislation opening all such facilities had failed.

The stirrings of protest activity that swept the South in the 1960s inspired African American teenagers who became the "foot soldiers" of the struggle against discrimination in public accommodations in Louisville. Mass demonstrations in spring 1961, a voter registration drive and a campaign to unseat an unsympathetic mayor and elect a new board of aldermen ultimately led to the passage of the public accommodations ordinance - the first such law in the South.

Today, many of the businesses where demonstrations were held are gone, have relocated or been torn down. In the absence of a physical presence, these markers will preserve the history of the civil rights movement and tell the little known story of one of Louisville's greatest achievements.

### Marker Locations

Walgreens Drugstore, 526 South Fourth Street  
Stewart's Dry Goods, 510 South Fourth Street  
Kaufman-Straus, 427 South Fourth Street  
Blue Boar Cafeterias, 410 West Walnut Street, 644 South Fourth Street  
Kentucky Theater, 651 South Fourth Street  
Mary Anderson Theater, 610 South Fourth Street  
Ohio Theater, 655 South Fourth Street  
Penthouse/United Artist Theater, 625 South Fourth Street  
Rialto Theater, 616 South Fourth Street  
Brown Hotel, 335 West Broadway  
Brown Theater, 315 West Broadway

*"The average citizen can...bring change in his community by peaceful demonstrations and political action." - Anne Braden letter to the editor, The Courier-Journal, May 30, 1963*

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (September 8, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
September 30, 2013

Sponsored by the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences, Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights



Sit-in Demonstration Sites

Sit-in Demonstration Site  
Kaufman-Straus  
427 South Fourth Street

Kaufman-Straus Department Store was located at this site. Kaufman's was one of two large department stores targeted for demonstrations due to its discrimination policy. In early 1960 student members of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), headed by Reverend M. M. D. Perdue, protested in front of the store and were later joined by Bishop C. Eubank Tucker, members of AME Zion Church, NAACP Youth Council and a biracial coalition of individuals.

Demonstrations or "stand-ins" during the lunch hour disrupted business as white patrons were forced to walk by demonstrators who were cordoned off by a chain placed by the store's private policemen. In response, the manager was forced to close the Charl-Mont Tea Room. As the demonstrations continued, in a united show of support, three black civic organizations - Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, The Louisville Chapter of The Links, Incorporated and the Independent Improvement Association - along with individual customers boycotted the store and cancelled their credit cards. In a letter to the store's general manager, Lyman T. Johnson, president of the Alpha Lambda Chapter, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, wrote, *"We as self-respecting Negro citizens wish to register our protest against this policy of yours"*.

The demonstrations continued throughout the year and in conjunction with the "Nothing New for Easter" boycott. It was not until the public accommodations ordinance passed in 1963 that blacks were finally served in the store's restaurants.

*"We shall overcome, We shall overcome, We shall overcome some day"*

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (September 8, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
September, 2013

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences,  
The Louisville (KY) Chapter, The Links, Incorporated, Louisville Metro Council,  
Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Alpha Lambda Chapter,  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, 4th Street Live

Sit-in Demonstration Sites



### Sit-in Demonstration Site Stewart's Dry Goods 501 South Fourth Street

Stewart's Dry Goods, the largest and most prestigious department store in Louisville, was located at this site. In the 1950s, a trip to Stewart's was a special occasion, requiring a hat and gloves for ladies doing a day of shopping or eating lunch at its elegant Orchid Tea Room. But African Americans were excluded from this experience by policies that denied them the right to try on clothes, use the washrooms or eat in the restaurants.

On February 9, 1961, young people from CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and the NAACP Youth Council chose Stewart's as their first target for demonstrations. Their arrest during their first sit-in triggered a mass demonstration campaign that spread throughout the downtown, provoked the "Nothing New for Easter" boycott and lasted through the spring. Large numbers of protesters were arrested and subjected to acts of violence by store employees.

By April 27, 1961, more protesters in Louisville had been incarcerated (685 total) during demonstrations than anywhere in the nation to that point. But, Stewart's earned its reputation, referred to by civil rights leaders as the "bulwark of segregation" in Louisville. It was not until the passage of the Public Accommodations Ordinance in 1963 that black customers were served in Stewart's restaurants. The store was purchased by L.S. Ayers in 1985 and later closed.

*"Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round, turn me 'round,  
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round, I'm gonna keep on walkin',  
keep on talkin', marchin' to freedom land"*

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (September 8, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
May, 2014

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences and Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, The Louisville (KY) Chapter, The Links Incorporated



Sit-in Demonstration Sites

Sit-in Demonstration Site  
Blue Boar Cafeteria  
644 South Fourth Street  
410 West Muhammad Ali Blvd.  
(formerly Walnut Street)

One of two Blue Boar Cafeterias was located at this site. Blue Boar was part of a regional chain that primarily operated in the South. Known for their "home-style" cooked fare, the restaurants were popular with downtown workers and shoppers for their reasonable prices and good food.

Demonstrations were conducted in front of the Blue Boar and other restaurants along Fourth Street from Broadway to Chestnut Street and other locations downtown. The Louisville Defender reported that 332 students and adults were arrested while conducting sit-ins and squat-ins at Kupies Double Burger on Fifth Street near Muhammad Ali (formerly Walnut Street).

The Blue Boar Cafeterias were the sites of escalated violence by merchant policemen and customers against protesters. As students protested in front of the restaurants, some white patrons trampled over students using their knees and elbows to make their way.

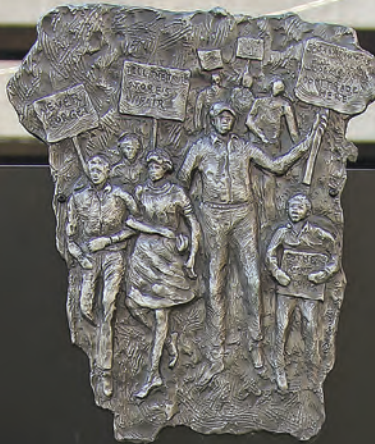
Prior to the demonstrations only 10 of 135 restaurants located downtown were desegregated. In the wake of the protests 24 more opened their doors. The rest remained closed to African Americans until the passage of the public accommodations law in 1963. Blue Boar and other cafeteria-styled restaurants went into a decline in the late 1960s and by the 1980s were largely absent, having been eclipsed by fast food restaurants.

*"Freedom, Everybody Wants Freedom"*  
(sung by high school student protestors as they were led off to jail)

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (September 8, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
September 30, 2013

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences, Office of International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

Sit-in Demonstration Sites



Sit-in Demonstration Sites

### Civil Rights Movement Overview Fourth Street Sit-In Demonstration Sites

In Spring 1960, sit-in demonstrations spread throughout the South, as young African Americans demanded an end to second-class treatment in restaurants, department stores, and movie theaters. In Louisville, the sit-in campaign for an ordinance against discrimination in such accommodations centered on the shopping and dining corridor along Fourth Street in the heart of downtown. Earlier demonstrations set the precedent for the campaign, including NAACP Youth Council sit-ins at Walgreens in 1956, demonstrations at the Brown Theater in 1959, and CORE protests at Kaufman-Straus in 1960. Then, in February 1961, African American high school students sat-in at the lunch counter at Stewart's department store, triggering a mass protest movement that lasted through the Spring. The students and their adult supporters met nightly at nearby Quinn Chapel and the Church of Our Merciful Savior to strategize and take a pledge to remain nonviolent before marching to their downtown targets, including the popular Blue Boar Cafeteria and Fourth Street theaters. Despite the mass arrests of sit-in participants, the movement grew and adopted new tactics. By March, civil rights leaders launched the "Nothing New for Easter" campaign, a boycott to pressure department stores to change their policies. In the summer the movement focused on the upcoming city elections for a new mayor and aldermen. In November, 1961, the black community went to the polls and successfully "cleaned house", voting to remove all the aldermen who had opposed a civil rights ordinance. The new board did not act immediately, but in May 1963, after renewed demonstrations and pressure from civil rights leaders, the city adopted the first public accommodations ordinance in the South.

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*"The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line"*  
W.E.B. Du Bois

Dedicated to the Memory of Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (September 8, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (2005 - 2012)

Text by Dr. Tracy E. K'Meyer  
Sponsored by the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences, Louisville Metro Council,  
Downtown Development Corporation and Office of the Mayor  
May 14, 2013

Sit-in Demonstration Sites

Sit-in Demonstration Sites



### Sit-in Demonstration Site Walgreens 526 South Fourth Street

Walgreens Drugstore was located at this site prior to its move in early 2000. On November 27, 1958, a delegation of representatives accompanying Mrs. Iris King, Mayor of Kingston, Jamaica stopped here briefly to have a cup of coffee following a tour of the downtown business district. The store management refused to serve her and black members of the delegation.

As news of the incident spread, angry black leaders and citizens proposed a boycott of all downtown stores. Meanwhile, Central High School students, led by educator Lyman T. Johnson, protested in front of the store. It was the first public demonstration against a store policy toward serving blacks.

One week later, Frank Stanley, editor of the *Louisville Defender*, reported he was served at Walgreens without incident. Stanley complimented the store's management for changing its policy in a December 11, 1958, editorial. But he used the occasion to urge passage of a city ordinance to rectify the segregation policy, thus launching the long political and direct action campaign to achieve that goal.

Walgreens became one of the first stores on Fourth Street to serve blacks before the passage of the Public Accommodations Ordinance.

*".....the one thing we did right was the day we started to fight,  
keep your eye on the prize hold on....."*

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September, 2013

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences and Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Alpha Lambda Chapter, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, KentuckyOne Health

Sit-in Demonstration Sites





Sit-in Demonstration Sites

### Sit-In Demonstration Site Penthouse/United Artists Theater 625 South Fourth Street

The Louisville Palace Theater originally opened as the Loew's Theater in 1928, and is the former site of the Penthouse/United Artists Theater. The historic landmark opened in 1928 and was designed by architect John Eberson.

Elegant and ornate, the theater exhibits a Spanish Baroque motif with arcades, balconies, and turrets. Cobalt blue, bursts of red and gold indirectly light all of the niches, coves and entrances. Above is a curved, vaulted ceiling with 139 sculptures of the faces of historical figures. The theater room inside *The Palace* is heavily ornamented and displays an imitation nighttime sky on the ceiling.

The theater was one of six local theaters identified by the NAACP for demonstrations because of their refusal to admit African Americans. As images of arrests appeared in local newspapers, the number of demonstrators and demonstrations increased outside the theater. Over 170 students and 10 adults were arrested during one of the largest demonstrations held.

Following the passage of the public accommodations ordinance, the theater continued to prosper through the '70s as a first-run movie palace.

In the early '90s investors undertook a multimillion-dollar restoration of the theater. Today, the Louisville Palace theater is owned by Live Nation Entertainment and hosts Broadway touring shows and diverse performances of well-known artists.

*"We shall all be free, We shall all be free,  
We shall all be free someday, Oh-o, deep in my heart.  
I do believe. We shall overcome someday"*  
(Lyrics derived from Charles Tindley's gospel song "I'll Overcome Some Day" (1900))

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Sit-in Demonstration Sites



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Sit-in Demonstration Site  
Ohio Theatre, 655 South Fourth Street  
Kentucky Theatre, 651 South Fourth Street

The Art Deco style Ohio Theatre, which opened in 1941 and seated approximately 900 people was located next to the larger Kentucky Theatre, a theatre and performing arts center built in 1921. Both theatres were targeted by the NAACP and civil rights organizations because of their discriminatory policies.

The 1961 "Nothing New for Easter" boycott of downtown stores and businesses proved an effective strategy to desegregate businesses. It was not until the passage of Louisville's Public Accommodations Ordinance in 1963 that many of them opened their doors to African Americans.

The Ohio closed as a motion picture venue in 1965 and the Kentucky closed in 1986. All that remains of the Ohio today are the storefront portion of the theatre building, marquee and large "Ohio" vertical sign. The renovated Kentucky Theatre building was reopened for business in 2000 by a group of investors.

*"I was fighting (as a UofL protester) for something that was a little bit more important than my own education. .... I still think the action we took, the ultimate goal we hope to achieve, justified the risk involved. ...." Excerpts from a Courier-Journal interview, May 1969, Dr. J. Blaine Hudson*

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May, 2014

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences and Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor, Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, Commonwealth for the Humanities, University of Louisville Department of Pan-African Studies



Sit-in Demonstration Site  
The Brown Hotel  
335 West Broadway

Built in 1923 by Louisville businessman James Graham Brown, the Brown Hotel has anchored the 'Magic Corner' of Fourth and Broadway for decades. Over the years the hotel has hosted an array of dignitaries, actors, and presidents, as well as weddings and civic events.

Since its opening, The Brown has served as an iconic Louisville establishment. During the 1961 'Nothing New for Easter' boycott, Civil Rights demonstrators targeted many businesses, including The Brown, in the downtown area to encourage local government officials to pass the Public Accommodations Ordinance.

Today, the Brown Hotel continues its long tradition of being a downtown Louisville cornerstone and remains committed to providing all of its patrons with excellent service.

*"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute"*  
Thurgood Marshall

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May, 2014

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Sit-in Demonstration Sites

Sit-in Demonstration Sites

ART



Sit-in Demonstration Sites

### Sit-in Demonstration Site Brown Theatre 315 West Broadway

Constructed in 1925 as a live performance venue, the Brown Theatre was soon converted into a movie theatre in 1930 to respond to the changing economic realities of the Great Depression. Through the 1950s, the Brown served as a first-run movie theatre; however, like the other half-dozen theatres located along Fourth Street, it did not admit African Americans.

Advocating for an open accommodations law, the NAACP Youth Council, joined by the adult NAACP and white members of the Unitarians for Social Action, picketed in front of the Brown Theatre during a 1959 screening of the film *Porgy and Bess*. Later, the Brown was one of the theatres on Fourth Street targeted for demonstrations during the "Nothing New for Easter" business Boycott of 1961. Like all of its neighboring business establishments, the Brown Theatre fully integrated upon passage of the Public Accommodations Ordinance of 1963.

Today the Brown Theatre hosts diverse performances and regional audiences. Representative of the change that has occurred in Louisville since 1963, the Brown hosted a ceremony in 2013 commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Public Accommodations Ordinance.

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. J. Blake Hudson (September 5, 1949 - January 5, 2013)  
May, 2014

Sponsored by the University of Louisville: College of Arts and Sciences and Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs, Owles Brown Charitable Foundation, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville Downtown Partnership, Office of the Mayor

Sit-in Demonstration Sites



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