



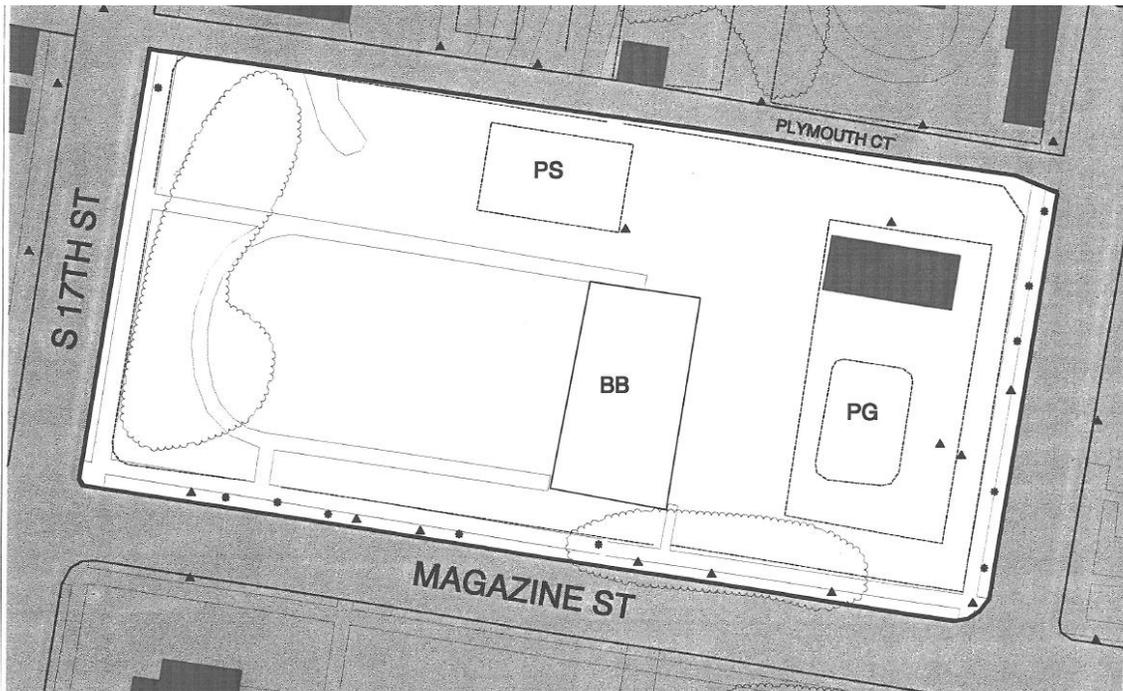
Sheppard Park

Sheppard Park is located at 1601 Magazine Street in Louisville's Russell Neighborhood. The park is listed at 1.93 acres, and was acquired in 1925. Sheppard Park was named for Rev. William Henry Sheppard, a Presbyterian Minister of Grace Hope Presbyterian Church in the Smoketown Neighborhood. Sheppard is renowned for his Human Rights work in the Congo in the late 1800's/early 1900's.

Sheppard Square Public Housing Development was also named in honor of Rev. Sheppard. Sheppard's Square was located in the historic Smoketown neighborhood. The site was comprised of 16.5 acres and is bordered by Finzer, Clay, Lampton and Preston Streets. Construction of the original Sheppard Square buildings was completed in 1942. At the time of grant award, the site included 326 apartments. The rich history of the Sheppard Square site and the surrounding Smoketown neighborhood is featured in [***More than Bricks and Mortar: the Sheppard Square Story***](#), a documentary by local filmmaker Lavel White.

In 2011, it was announced that Sheppard's Square would become Louisville's third HOPE VI project. The program used a \$22 million federal grant to leverage \$74.5 million in additional investment and resources to replace the aging public housing unit with mixed-use, affordable housing developments.

Sheppard Park was acquired in 1925, three years before Rev. Sheppard's death. This is one year following the segregation of city parks. Sheppard Park was one of the first three parks opened to African Americans, which also included Chickasaw Park and Seminole Park (a victim of Airport Relocation). Mayor Wilson W. Wyatt was on hand to dedicate the new Sheppard Park, which offered a playground, swimming pool, tennis courts, a restroom and ball fields and courts for residents in the surrounding African American neighborhood.



17th and Magazine Streets
2.18 Acres

Legend

- ▲ Parking Lots and Foot Paths
- Buildings
- ▤ Other Built Features
- Trees
- Park Grounds

BF Ball Field BB Basketball
 BH Bath House SC Soccer
 TC Tennis Court PS Plonic Shelter
 PK Parking PG Playground
 RR Restroom SP Spray Pool
 HS Horseshoe Pit VB Volley Ball
 SW Swimming Pool

0 40 80 Feet

Scale
1" = 40'

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LOUISVILLE & EFFERSON COUNTY
PARKS DEPARTMENT
CREATED JULY 1999

SHEPPARD PARK DEEDS
(Grantee: Board of Park Commissioners)

METRO PARKS#	BPC DEED	DATE	BLOCK & LOT	GRANTOR & GRANTEE	DEED	ACREAGE	PRICE
1	222	1-15-1925 (1-17-1925)	13F-102 (pt)	Mary Molle, widow	1131x11	0.241	4000.00
2	221	1-27-1925 (s)	"	E. G. & Rachel D. Harris	1131x142	0.241+0.241 =0.482	3600.00
3	227	1-15-1925 (1-16-1925)	"	J. Etta & James T. Taylor	1132x10	0.241	6250.00
4	224	1-15-1925 (1-16-1925)	"	Charles & Genevieve McDonald	1132x14	0.140	3650.00
5	223	1-20-1925 (1-22-1925)	"	William Dawson, unmarried	1132x104	0.101	4000.00
6	226	1-21-1925 (s)	"	Anna R. & Elmer Brown	1133x62	0.121	3000.00
7	225	1-21-1925 (s)	"	C. H. Brayboy, unmarried	1133x67	0.121	650.00
8	233	4-19-1928 (4-23-1928)	"	Joseph H. & Mayme H. Matthews	1323x513	0.030	2600.00
9	228	4-18-1928 (s)	"	George & Estella Hayden	1325x431	0.121	2600.00
10	235	4-18-1928 (s)	"	John & Anna Wright	1325x434	0.030	2600.00
11	231	4-16-1928 (4-21-1928)	"	Abe & Ray Brownstein	1325x458	0.030	2500.00
12	229	4-16-1928 (4-17-1928)	"	Leo F. & Nellie C. Brown	1327x470	0.121	2150.00
13	236	4-17-1928 (4-20-1928)	"	Lizzie (Woodson) & James W. Mitchell	1327x506	0.030	2750.00
14	237	4-17-1928 (s)	"	Ellen McDonald McShane, widow	1328x410	0.030	2500.00
15	234	4-17-1928 (s)	"	E. M. & Rosita E. Swift	1329x219	0.024	1750.00
16	230	4-16-1928 (4-17-1928)	13F-102 (pt)	Metropolitan Realty Company (Inc.), and The Louisville Trust Company (Inc.)	1329x229	0.036	5500.00
17	232	4-14-1928 (4-17-1928)	"	Blema Muskovitz (or Muscovitz), widow	1331x143	0.030	3750.00

William Henry Sheppard

Congo's African-American Livingstone

Born March 8, 1865 in Waynesboro, Virginia, William Henry Sheppard, a black man, was never a slave. His mother was of mixed-race background, which status made him a free black. His father was an employee of the local all-white Presbyterian Church, serving as janitor. Growing up, he was enrolled in the local school for blacks. Showing great resolve, he next enrolled at the Hampton Institute in 1880 in Hampton, Virginia, where Booker T. Washington was one of his instructors. Then graduating from Hampton in 1883, he moved on to the Tuscaloosa Theological Seminary (now Stillman College). After graduation in 1886, he became an ordained Presbyterian minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States.



Dr. William H. & Lucy G. Sheppard.

Charcoal portrait by Greg MacNair, 2005. Used by permission.
[This portrait hangs just outside the reading room of the PCA Historical Center.]

Becoming a pastor at Zion Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Georgia, Shepherd found himself restless and applied with the PCUS Mission board to go to the Congo as a missionary. When several applications received only vague rejections, Rev. Sheppard finally traveled to the headquarters and applied in person. Prejudices died hard in the former Confederacy, and this was evident by their initial refusal and final acceptance. He could go to the Congo as a foreign missionary, but only if a white missionary would supervise him. To his surprise, a young white minister by the name of Samuel Lapsley, volunteered to go with him in that position. They sailed to the Congo on **February 25, 1890**. Despite what the mission board stated at home, these two missionaries soon were treating each other as equals. Arriving at what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they set about founding a mission in a village known as Luebo. Despite contracting malaria numerous times, Shepherd managed to adapt to the African climate and setting far better than did Lapsley, who died of a fever after only two years on the field, in 1892.

Of Lapsley's death, Rev. Shepherd wrote,

Before this time you will have learned of the Mission's loss. My friend and brother left Luebo, Jan. 6th, 1892, for the Lower Congo to attend to some business about the transport, and our land. He thought also a change would be beneficial to him, expected to return by the next steamer. I went forth with the people to do some building that our home might be more comfortable. For those two years we have labored as one. We have loved and cared for each other as though we were brothers. We have never been separated only this once, and it grieves my heart that I was so far from him. Oh! that I could have kneeled by his side to catch the last whisper before he slept. [The Missionary, 25.10 (Oct. 1902): 415].

Shepherd learned the language of the natives, which in turn enabled him to discover parts of the Congo where no outsiders had visited. He even found himself in a village of King Luckenga, which presence was in itself equivalent to a death sentence. However, Shepherd's fluency in the language persuaded the king's family that he was a reincarnation of one of their dead relatives.

In 1893, Sheppard left Africa to travel to London, England. He met Queen Victoria and was inducted into England's Royal Geographic Society. Back in the United States, he lectured all over the States. Marrying Lucy Gantt, whom he had met just after he had graduated from the theological institute, they started a family. Expanding the first mission, they started a second Congo mission. When two of their children succumbed in disease, Lucy in 1898 took their third baby back to the United States, where they remained for two years.

In the next year, there was a new challenge. Shepherd began to notice the exploitation of the black tribes under the colonial ruler, Belgium, and specifically King Leopold II of Belgium. In essence, it was slavery in all of its terrible forms, with atrocities right and left. Specifically, Belgium rubber companies were exploiting the land and its people, Sheppard recounted incredible violence including murder and mutilation. The Presbyterian Church had a spiritual interest in that part of the world, but it also was concerned with these human rights issues. In 1908, Sheppard brought the national colonial government to task, with pressure through the media. Sheppard's victory secured his status as an international human rights advocate.

Sheppard returned to the United States and he and his family moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1912 where he had been recruited by Louisville's Grace Hope Presbyterian Church to become their next pastor. He was officially installed as the church pastor on September 15, 1912. He pastored Grace Hope for 27 years. According to the Encyclopedia of Louisville, Sheppard's presence as a well-known and respected black minister brought new life to the church and the Smoketown community. Not only Smoketown, but Sheppard led Grace Hope to become the center for black Presbyterian leadership in Kentucky. Sheppard spoke around the city raising money for the church's mission work in the black community.

In 1924, three years before his death, Sheppard Park in the Russell Neighborhood was opened and named in his honor. This is the same year that city officials officially segregated parks. Sheppard Park was one of three parks opened to African Americans which also included Chickasaw Park. Mayor Wilson W. Wyatt was on hand to dedicate the new Sheppard Park, which offered a playground, swimming pool, and green space for residents in the surrounding African American neighborhood.

Along the way Sheppard wrote a book titled "Black Livingstone," which recounts the explorer's difficult return to the United States, a racially divided world where even his white colleagues, who knew of his impressive accomplishments, considered him inferior. It states: "Sheppard found it necessary to repackage himself as a humble Sunday school teacher."

Sheppard was also known for his appreciation for African Art. Several of the pieces he collected are housed in the J.B. Speed Art Museum and at the Hampton Institute in Hampton, VA.

Sheppard died in on November 25, 1927. More than 1,000 people attended his funeral. He was eulogized by both black and white clergy alike. Fifteen years later, when the \$1.4 million Sheppard Square (named in his honor) was completed and dedicated with great fanfare, one of Sheppard's colleagues at the church wrote in a memo: "May his name be a constant inspiration to the occupants of these homes."

In an LEO article in 2011 following the announcement of a \$22 million HUD HOPE VI Revitalization grant to demolish Sheppard's Square, Dr. J. Blaine Hudson, who's studied Rev. Sheppard extensively, offered this comment,

"I don't think Sheppard would've been pleased with the project becoming more of a dead end to people rather than a launching pad for people to go on to other, better things."

Primary sources:

William Henry Sheppard collection, 1971-1978, at Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, AL

Abstract: Materials consist mostly of biographical material on William Henry Sheppard, graduate of Tuscaloosa Institute and co-founder of the Presbyterian Congo Mission, and his wife, Lucy J. Gantt Sheppard. Also includes correspondence pertaining to the development of the Sheppard collection (1978), photos of the construction of Sheppard Library, correspondence and programs pertaining to the Sheppard Lecture Series (1971-1973), and list of materials in the college archives pertaining to Sheppard. Correspondents include A.R. Ware, Jr., Sheppard's nephew, and Max W. Sheppard, Sheppard's son.

William H. Sheppard papers, 1875-1933, 0.75 cubic feet (5 boxes), at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Abstract: Collection consists primarily of photograph albums and photographs. Photographs document mission stations and churches at Luebo and Ibanche; the Sheppard family; other Presbyterian Church in the U.S. missionaries; and native people of the Bateke, Baluba, Bakuba, Zappo Zap, and other tribes. The collection includes a small number of papers, including correspondence; Sheppard's reminiscences of his time at the Stillman Institute in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; a pamphlet entitled "How Sheppard Made His Way into Lukenga's Kingdom"; printed materials about the Congo and King Leopold; hymnbooks in Tshiluba and an unidentified language; and glass and nitrate negatives.

See also reports of the African mission published in *The Missionary* [Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson], vol. 23, no 2 (February 1890) and following. Copies of this periodical are available in the PCA Historical Center, St. Louis, MO.

Secondary sources:

• Kennedy, Pagan, *Black Livingstone : A True Tale of Adventure in the Nineteenth-century Congo*. New York: Viking, 2002. ISBN: 0670030368

• Phipps, William E., *The Sheppards and Lapsley : Pioneer Presbyterians in the Congo*. Louisville, KY: The Presbyterian Church (USA), 1991.

• Phipps, William E., *William Sheppard : Congo's African American Livingstone*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2002. ISBN: 0664502032 (pbk.)

• Sheppard, William H. and S.H. Chester, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo*. Richmond, VA. : Published by Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917. Note(s): In 1890, the Southern Presbyterian Church appointed William Sheppard, an Afro-American from Waynesboro, Va., and Samuel N. Lapsley, a white man from Anniston, Ala., as missionary companions to the Belgian Congo. Rev. Lapsley died of a "bilious hematuric fever" on March 26, 1892. This is Sheppard's account of the mission, both before and after Lapsley's death.

[Reprinted as *Pioneers in Congo : An Autobiography*. Wilmore, Ky.: Wood Hills Books, 2006. ISBN: 097716361X]

See also:

Lapsley, James W., *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley : Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa*. [Anniston, Ala. : First Presbyterian Church], 1965.

Dissertations and Theses:

• Roth, Donald Franklin, "Grace Not Race" : *Southern Negro Church Leaders, Black Identity, and Missions to West Africa, 1865-1919*. Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 1976. Masters Thesis, xv, 402 p.

• Dworkin, Ira, *American Hearts : African American Writing on the Congo, 1890-1915*. New York: City University of New York, 2003. Ph.D. dissertation, viii, 243 p. Includes the chapter, "In the country of my forefathers": William Henry Sheppard and African American missionaries in the Congo.

• Short, Wallace V., *William Henry Sheppard : Pioneer African-American Presbyterian Missionary, Human Rights Defender, and Collector of African Art, 1865-1927*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 2006. Ph.D. dissertation, xxi, 544 p.

• Smith, Alonzo Nelson, *The 1909 Trial of William H. Sheppard : Human Rights, International Diplomacy, and African American Concerns in the Belgian Congo*. [Washington, DC : s.n.], 1996.