

Meet "The Avenue"

Due to segregation, many retail and entertainment establishments in Baltimore were not open to Black people. However, Pennsylvania Avenue, or "The Avenue" was a mecca for Black culture and was home to several historic entertainment and retail establishments.

West Baltimoreans prioritized where they would spend their money, and time because they understood that the support of these establishments meant supporting Black owned businesses in this closely knit community. Additionally, this smaller field of competition amongst artisans provided patrons with a closer relationship to said businesses, and created an expectation of quality that was more personal and communicable.

The Royal Theatre

West Baltimore was anchored by the Royal Theatre. Racially integrated crowds filled the audiences of the Royal theatre to see stars such as Blanche Calloway, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Red Foxx, Duke Ellington and many other Black entertainers that came to Baltimore. The Royal Theatre was established in 1922 and was demolished in 1971.

Historic Institutions

The Arch Social Club, established in 1913, is one of the oldest men's social clubs for Black people in the country. The Arch Social Club was, and is, a safe haven for Black men to share fellowship and develop solutions to past and present systemic inequities within the city of Baltimore.

Established in 1888 St. Peter Claver's is considered the daughter church of St. Francis Xavier on the east side, and is one of the oldest Black Catholic churches in the country. In 1891 the St. Peter Claver's School was developed and was taught by nuns of the parish until 1998.

Pride as Protest

There was a general sense of pride in the West Baltimore community that was evident in the way people presented themselves. Regardless of the location, time, place or setting, West Baltimoreans consistently challenged the reality of what it looked like to be Black and successful in America by putting their best foot forward. This act of uplifting oneself in the midst of continuous racism served as a simple, but profound act of protest that screamed: No matter what

Black people are told about our communities, we deserve to adorn ourselves, and present what is ours in a way that affirms the beauty that is our existence.