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## New Signage Honoring Plum Prairie's History and Reverend Barney Stone Installed in Noblesville

Historical signage celebrating the history of the Plum Prairie neighborhood and Reverend Barney Stone has been installed as part of the Reimagine Pleasant Street project.

Local leaders are celebrating the rich history and character of Noblesville and Hamilton County throughout the Pleasant Street corridor. This historic signage will inform and highlight the importance of the Plum Prairie neighborhood and the legacy of Reverend Barney Stone, who was the longtime pastor of the First Baptist Church and one of the first formerly enslaved persons to settle in Noblesville.

“Recognizing our past while celebrating our future is at the heart of the Reimagine Pleasant Street project and our city,” said Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen. “This signage pays homage to Reverend Stone and is a tribute to the Plum Prairie neighborhood and what it means to our community. We’re thrilled to see this project come to life as we continue to highlight the character of Noblesville.”

The Plum Prairie neighborhood, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was home to a growing African American community in Noblesville. The area was once home to several industries, including the American Strawboard Company, Rupp & Son Bucket Factory, and Standard Canning Company.

Barney Stone served in the Union Army and later pursued an education and became a minister. He moved to Noblesville with his family in the 1890s and pastored the First Baptist Church at Fifth and Cherry Streets. He also served as a circuit court bailiff and chaplain for the Grand Army of the Republic.

“I am so grateful for Mayor Jensen's unwavering commitment to an inclusive history of Noblesville. By honoring the invaluable contributions of Reverend Barney Stone and the Plum Prairie neighborhood, you have helped ensure that every story is told, every voice is heard, and every legacy is honored,” said Noblesville Diversity Coalition Advisory Board President Dana Randall. “Looking back and sharing our diverse heritage is one way to create a more inclusive and welcoming community where everyone belongs.”

The first phase of the project, which is the segment from River Road to 11th Street, is open to traffic. Construction for Phases 2 and 3 has begun.

*Photos are attached.*

**# # #**

*Reimagine Pleasant Street is a transformative project for the city of Noblesville to improve future mobility and complement the growth of the city. When complete, the project will create a safe, vibrant corridor for residents to drive, walk, or bike to downtown Noblesville while alleviating traffic congestion along SR 32.*

# PLUM PRAIRIE

SOUTHWEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD



It may be difficult to imagine this area before industries and homes transformed its landscape. Situated on the east banks of the White River, the Delaware Indians, welcomed to the region by the Miami, traveled, settled, and moved along the forks of the nearby waterway. The Miami relinquished claims to this area as part of the New Purchase Treaty, in 1818. Then in 1822 William Corcor and Joseph Polk purchased most of this land from the federal government.

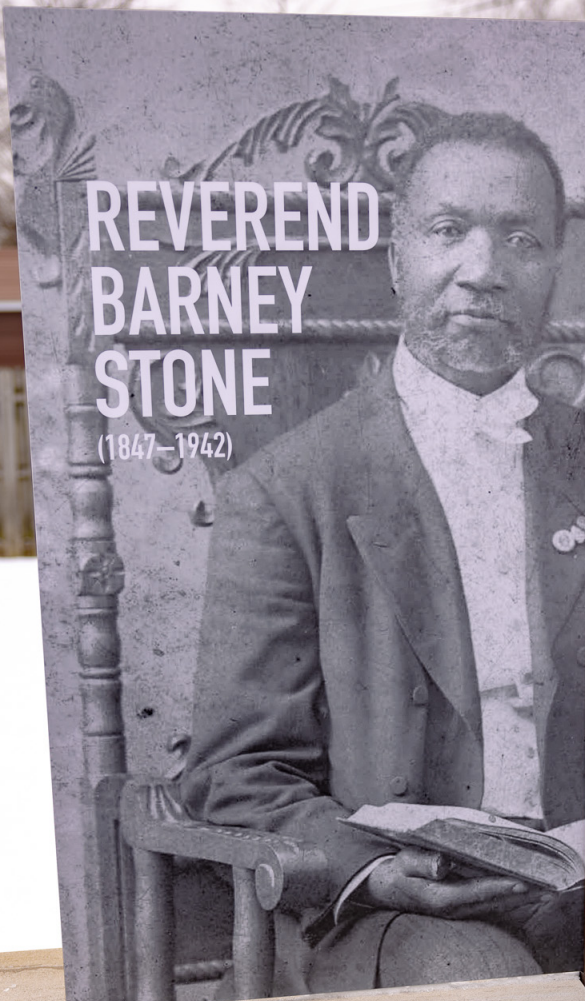
Locals called the area "Plum Prairie" for its plentiful deer, strawberries and, of course, plums. In the 1870s, entrepreneur Leonard Wild purchased the land, which he dubbed "Prairie Farm," and constructed a grand Italianate home at Pleasant and Sixth Streets.

This southwest side neighborhood also became home to a growing African American community. By 1880, the African American community in Noblesville Township represented approximately 4 percent of the population (higher than the 2 percent statewide population). Some residents arrived from nearby rural areas, such as the Roberts Settlement in Jackson Township, while others came from different counties and states. In this area, developers subdivided Wild's farm to construct frame homes while industries, including the American Strawboard Company, Hugo & Son Bucket Factory, and Standard Carving Company, built factories near the river. In 1913, a major flood left much of the community under water (pictured), but businesses and residents remained. The prairie had become a neighborhood.

 NOBLESVILLE  
INDIANA







# REVEREND BARNEY STONE

(1847–1942)

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Plum Prairie Historic District was part of a larger African American community on the city's southwest side. One of the best-known residents of Plum Prairie was Reverend Barney Stone (pictured).

Born around 1847, Stone spent the first years of his life enslaved on a Kentucky plantation before escaping during the Civil War while still a teenager. He joined the Union Army and served until the war's end, even guarding Confederate prisoners he had once known. Stone later told the *Indianapolis Recorder*: "While I was born in slavery, I never intended to die in slavery."

After the war, Stone pursued an education and became a minister, moving to Noblesville in the 1890s with his family. Stone eventually purchased and lived in the home at 394 West Pleasant Street and pastored the First Baptist Church at Fifth and Cherry Streets. He also served as a circuit court bailiff and chaplain for the Grand Army of the Republic and was involved in many organizations.

Upon Stone's death at age ninety-five in 1942, a large crowd filled the First Baptist Church to pay tribute. The three-hour service was described by the *Noblesville Ledger* as "perhaps the most remarkable ceremony even for a soldier or preacher ever witnessed in Noblesville" and was a testament to the impact Reverend Stone made during his long life.

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# REVEREND BARNEY STONE

(1847-1962)

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Plum Prairie Historic District was part of a larger African American community on the city's southwest side. One of the best known residents of Plum Prairie was Reverend Barney Stone (pictured).

Born around 1847, Stone spent the first years of his life enslaved on Kentucky plantations before escaping during the Civil War while still a teenager. He joined the Union Army and served until the war's end, even guarding Confederate prisoners in 1865 after Appomattox. Stone later told the Indianapolis Recorder "While I was born in slavery, I never intended to live in slavery."

After the war, Stone pursued an education and became a realtor, moving to Noblesville in the 1890s with his family. Stone eventually purchased and lived in the home at 316 West Pleasant Street and founded the First Baptist Church at 316 and Cherry Street. He also served as a circuit court bailiff and chairman of the Board of the Board of the Board and was involved in many organizations.

Upon Stone's death at age ninety-four in 1962, a large crowd gathered for his funeral service at the church. The funeral service was attended by the Noblesville Ledger of "perhaps the most respectable crowd for a soldier or preacher ever seen. Reverend Stone made during his life."

THE  
Noblesville



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Locals called the area "Plum Prairie" for its plentiful deer, strawberries and, of course, plums. In the 1870s, entrepreneur Leonard Wild purchased the land, which he dubbed "Prairie Farm," and constructed a grand Italianate home at Pleasant and Sixth Streets.

This southwest side neighborhood also became home to a growing African American community. By 1880, the African American community in Noblesville Township represented approximately 6 percent of the population (higher than the 2 percent statewide population). Some residents arrived from nearby rural areas, such as the Roberts Settlement in Jackson Township, while others came from different counties and states. In this era, developers subdivided Wild's farm to construct frame homes while industries, including the American Strawboard Company, Rupp & Son Bucket Factory, and Standard Canning Company, built factories near the river. In 1913, a major flood left much of the community under water (pictured), but businesses and residents remained. The prairie had become a neighborhood.

**IN** NOBLESVILLE  
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