

MASJID AL HAQQ

514 Islamic Way

City of Baltimore Historic Landmark Designation Report
Prepared for the Baltimore City Commission For
Historical and Architectural Preservation Hearing
August 13, 2002



By Kenneth K. Lam — Evening Sun Staff

From Evening Sun 1/22/1991 Mustafa Sharief, front, an assistant imam, or prayer leader

Baltimore City Historical Landmark Standards of Designation

The Masjid Al Haqq located at 514 Islamic Way in the Upton neighborhood is eligible as a Baltimore City Historic Landmark by meeting Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation Standards for Designation **one, and five:**

1. Dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore;
5. Contributes information of historical, cultural, or social importance relating to the heritage of the community.

The Masjid Al Haqq located at 514 Islamic Way is the City's oldest continually used Islamic place of worship in Baltimore City. The Islamic Community has been a part of Baltimore's history since 1943, but most likely much earlier. 514 Islamic Way has been a mosque since 1959, and in 1975 began converting to Orthodox Sunni Islam. It is the Center of the Islamic Community in West Baltimore.

The Masjid Al Haqq meets criteria one by exemplifying the history and development of the Islamic faith in Baltimore. It illustrates the transformation from the Nation of Islam movement to Orthodox Sunni Islam. This history corresponds to the nation's history of Civil rights especially exemplified by Malcolm X. **The Masjid Al Haqq meets criteria 5** by being the center of Islam in Baltimore.



Front façade facing Islamic Way

Contextual History

The Islamic Faith has been part of U.S. History for over four hundred years. It has always been part of African American history. By the 20th Century, the Faith was embraced by several different organizations most notably the Moorish Science Temple and subsequently the Nation of Islam. By 1975, many Nation of Islam Muslims embraced orthodox Sunni Islam.

The first known Moslem in the Americas was a Moroccan Guide named Estaphan who participated in the exploration of Arizona and New Mexico in 1539! The arrival of the first group of Muslims came from the western shores of Africa through the slave trade. The first documented Muslim slave was in 1717ⁱ. In fact, some scholars estimate that at least 10% of imported slaves were Muslim. The Muslim slaves were considered troublesome and as Ajile Aisha Amatullah-Rahman states:

In fact, at one point during the African Holocaust, importation of bondsmen from certain nations and areas of Africa that were predominantly Muslim became prohibited. According to Dr. Sulayman Nyang of Howard University, some of the nations banned were the Jalofs, Biafras, Mandingos, and Hausa-Fullah. An estimated 25,000 Mandingos, 45,000 Fullah, 15,000 Hausa and 5,000 Muslims from others communities were brought to America between 1726 and 1806.

Islam is part of slave history and recent research is uncovering its role and significanceⁱⁱ.

One interesting story of a Muslim slave is that of Omar Ibn Sayyid (ca. 1770-1864)ⁱⁱⁱ. Omar was born in Western Africa in the Muslim State of Futa Toro (on the south bank of the Senegal River in present-day Senegal. He was a Muslim scholar and trader who became enslaved. He arrived in South Carolina around 1807. Around 1811 he was sold to James Owens of North Carolina. In 1819 Owen wrote to Francis Scott Key requesting an Arabic translation of the Bible for Omar Ibn Sayyid. Francis Scott Key apparently sent it, and today Omar Ibn Sayyid's Arabic Bible is at the library of Davidson College in North Carolina. There are many of Omar's notations praising Allah in the bible, which suggests Omar's unwavering Islamic faith. Omar's bible is irrefutable evidence of Islam in Antebellum United States.



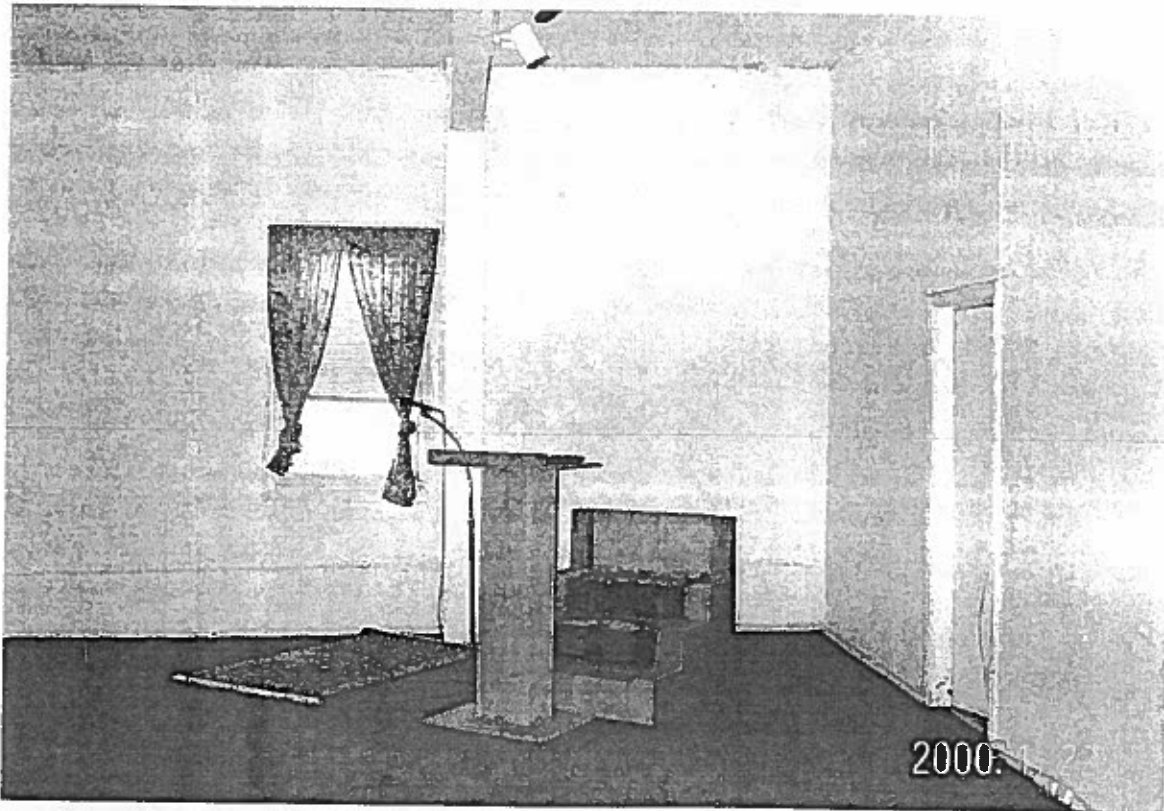
Window in Front Facade

Immigrants throughout the world brought their religion to the United States. Between 1880s and the mid 1920s a large wave of emigrants from Syria, Jordan and Lebanon came to America. Many were disenchanted and eventually returned, others established small Islamic communities in such places as Cedar Rapids Iowa, and Ross, Dakota. In 1924 the "Asian Exclusion Act" and the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act virtually stopped Arab immigration.

By the 1910s Islam in America was found only in small pockets of Arab-American immigrants. Any known continuation of Islam in the African-American population is not known. However, in 1913 Noble Drew Ali founded The Moorish Science Organization. Born in 1886 in North Carolina, Timothy Drew moved to Newark, New Jersey and worked as a train expressman^{iv}. Timothy changed his name to Noble Drew Ali and began spreading his doctrine in Newark New Jersey. Noble Drew Ali advocated that individuals must know themselves and their nationality before they can know Allah. He believed that African Americans were Moors from Morocco and descendents of the Moabites. Noble Drew Ali published his doctrine in his 64-page pamphlet consisting of principles from the Islamic Quran, the Holy Bible and Marcus Garvey's African nationalist ideas^v. In 1929 Noble Drew Ali died and the Moorish Science Temple of America continued. In Baltimore as late as 1978, the Moorish Science Temple renamed "Moorish Science Temple, the Divine and National Movement of North America, Inc. No 13 was located at 519 N. Howard Street. The 1956 City Directory identified the location of the Moorish Temple at 1406 Laurens Street.

From the Moorish Temple Society, Master Fard Muhammad started the Nation of Islam in 1930. Between 1930-1933 Master Fard Muhammad recruited 8,000 followers in Detroit. Meanwhile in 1932, one of Fard's Disciples, Elijah Muhammad moved to Chicago and started Temple number two. Shortly thereafter 1933 Master Fard Muhammad disappeared and Elijah Muhammad moved the central headquarters to Chicago and took control of the Nation of Islam.

It was with Elijah Muhammad that the Nation of Islam began to spread throughout the country. In Baltimore, the Nation of Islam's first minister was Isiah Karriem Edwards. Edwards became a Muslim in the early 1940s and served a jail term for refusing to register for the military draft^{vi}. In the 1956 City directory Muhammed's Temple of Islam is located at 1000 Pennsylvania Avenue the same address as Arundel Delicatessen. In 1959 the Temple moved to 514 Wilson Street. From 1959 to around 1975 514 Wilson Street was Temple Number 6.



Prayer room

On February 25, 1975 the Honorable Elijah Muhammad died and his son Wallace D. Muhammad took over as leader of the Nation of Islam. Wallace D. Muhammad studied orthodox Sunni Islam and since the mid 1960s had many ideological and theological differences with the Nation of Islam. Furthermore, Wallace D. Muhammad was also a friend and confidant of Malcolm X who in 1964 during his Hajj to Mecca embraced Orthodox Islam. By 1974 with the blessing of Elijah Muhammad, Wallace D. Muhammad became a minister of the Nation of Islam but still held to his Orthodox Sunni Islam ideals. In 1975 Wallace D. Muhammad was announced Leader of the Nation of Islam. Consequently, quick and comprehensive changes occurred.

Imam Wallace D. Muhammad changed the name of the Nation of Islam to World Community Al-Islam in the West and brought the organization in line with Orthodox Sunni Islam. The Islamic Community also embraced this change by offering scholarships to Islam University as well as invitations for Western Muslims to travel in the Middle East. In 1978, Imam Warith D. Muhammad resigned as leader of the World Community Al-Islam in the West to become an "ambassador at large". A council of six-elected Imam's throughout the United States governs the organization.

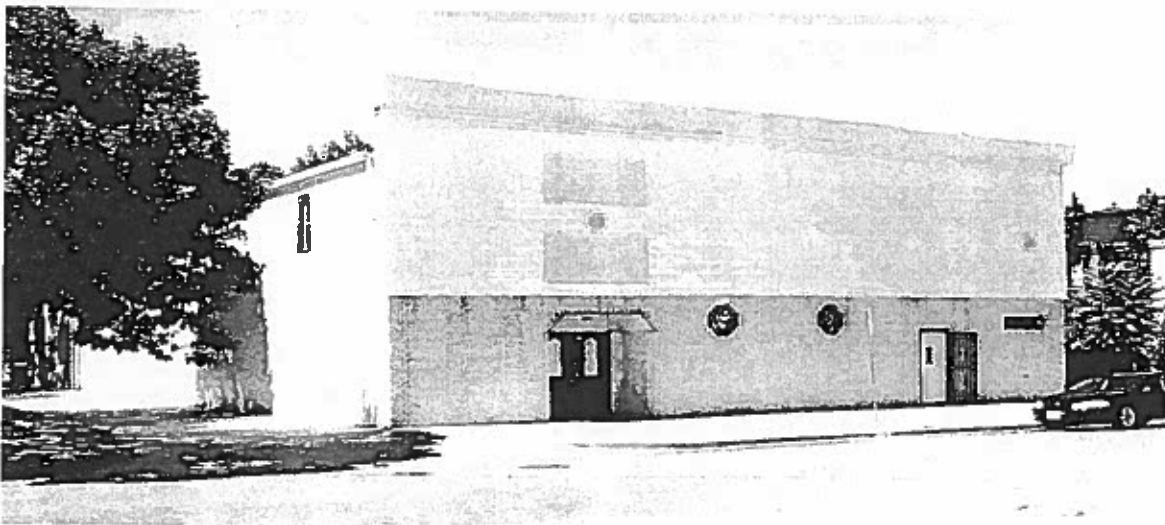
In Baltimore, the changes for the Temple occurred between 1975 and 1978. A Sun article of July 16, 1978 speaks to the changes that occurred. The services are now conducted in Arabic. Dr. Mohamed Z. Awad, a Baltimore Physician who came from

Egypt 10 years ago stated that the services had no difference than the services conducted in Cairo or any other Masjid. Islam is in Baltimore.

The services of the Islamic Community created a school, redeveloped houses, set up a soup kitchen. They have contributed moral and ethical spirit to the community and surrounding neighborhoods. In 1980 Muhammad Ali and Imam Wallace D. Muhammad came to the Masjid to further the efforts of World Community Al-Islam in the West to bring racial harmony as well as individual uplift. In 1989 Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke presented a proclaiming May 7, 1989 "Islamic Community Day" as well as renamed the street Islamic Way.

Building Description and History

The Masjid Al Haqq is a two-story square structure with a stone facing on the first floor. It is a large structure taking up one-half of a block. The building was first constructed as the Keystone livery stable around 1880-1881. In 1882 to 1921 it was the P. Bradley and Son Livery stables. In 1924 the property was used as a garage. In 1956 Aluminum manufactures occupied the building until around 1959 when it was converted into Muhammad's Temple #6.



Front Facade

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam has had a significant impact upon the History of the United States as well as Western Culture. Moreover, Islamic thought has played a significant role in Black Nationalism, Civil Rights, and the uplifting of thousands of Americans. The history of Islam in Baltimore has played the significant role in its history and culture especially in the latter half of the 20th Century. The culmination of this history is the Masjid Al Haqq at 514 Islamic Way.

Islam will continue to have an impact upon the Culture of Baltimore and the U.S. Currently, Islam is considered as a non-mainstream religion in the U.S., but at its current rate, by 2015 Islam will be the second largest religion in the U.S. second to Christianity. Today, there are more Muslims than Lutherans, Episcopalians and by 2010 Methodists. There are currently 5 to 8 million Muslims in the United States, in which 9000 serve in some capacity in the Armed Forces. There are more than a 1000 mosques in the United States as compared to 600 in 1980, 230 in 1960 and 19 in 1930^{vii}. Worldwide there are approximately 1,000,000,000 Muslims. Baltimore is fortunate to have such an active Islamic Community.



Prayer Room

ⁱ Zepp Ira Jr. A Muslim Primer, University of Arkansas Press, 2000 page 202.

ⁱⁱ Siddiqui, Elisabeth. A Brief History of Islam in the United States, on www.islamamerica.org/history.cfm

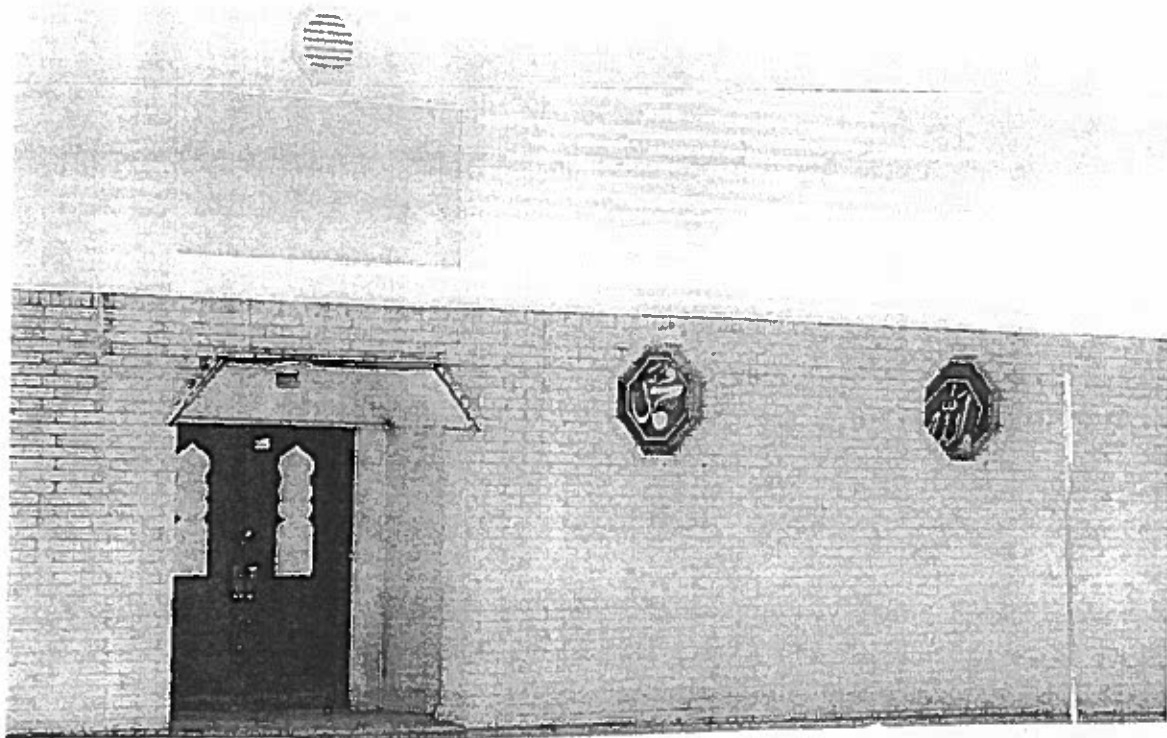
ⁱⁱⁱ Tweed, Thomas A. Islam in America: From African Slaves to Malcolm X, located at National Humanities Council website www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/tserve/twenty/tkeyinfo/islam.htm

^{iv} Marsh Clifton E., The Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America, The Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham MD, 2000, page 29.

^v Clifton, page 31.

^{vi} Clifton page 54

^{vii} Siddiqui, Elisabeth.



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