

Cab Calloway

We have received two formal requests, from Peter Brooks, grandson of Cab Calloway, and Steven Lee, Commissioner on the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture, to temporarily designate 2216 Druid Hill Ave. to prevent demolition while they build a coalition to save it.

This address is slated to be demolished following a robust public process with over 200 meetings. We understand that the demolition was originally requested by the surrounding neighbors, including the Druid Heights CDC and the proposal to demolish this block has been in the Planning Department's Green Network Plan.

Approximately two months ago, resident Marti Pitrelli discovered that Cab Calloway lived at 2216 Druid Hill Ave, and is spearheading an effort to save the house and block at large.

Cab lived in several places in Baltimore; 2 of which are confirmed as still existing.

1912/1913 - ca.1914 - Cab lived at 1017 Druid Hill Ave. with his parents and paternal grandparents, in what had been his paternal grandparents home since the late 1800s. This building has been demolished.

ca. 1914 - 1915 - Following the death of his father, Cab, his mother and siblings lived at his maternal grandparents house (Reed), which according to the biography was a short distance away. I have not confirmed their address.

1916 - 1921 - Cab's mother married John Nelson Fortune circa 1915; he is not listed in the 1915 directory. According to the Polk City Directory, he lived at 2216 Druid Hill Ave. in 1916 through 1921. This is the building slated to be demolished.

ca. 1921 - 1922 - Cab lived at the Downingtown Industrial School in Pennsylvania, which was run by his uncle.

1922 - 1925 - The family moves to Wilson Park. Cab's autobiography states that Cab only lived here for a year and a half, public records show that the family lived here longer. The 1922, 1923 and 1925 Baltimore City Directories shows that John Fortune and his wife Eulalia (Cab's mom) lived at 1001 Arlington Ave., now 1001 W. 43rd St. This house is still standing.

1925 - 1926 - The biography states that the family moved to 1306 Madison St. in the summer of 1924, which is possible but I haven't traced it yet. This building has been demolished. The 1925-1926 edition of the First Colored Professional, Clerical, and Business Directory of Baltimore City shows J N Fortune listed at 1129 Druid Hill Ave. This building is not extant.

1927 - According to the biography, Cab joins a musical in New York City and that starts his career.

