



The Negro Travelers' Green Book

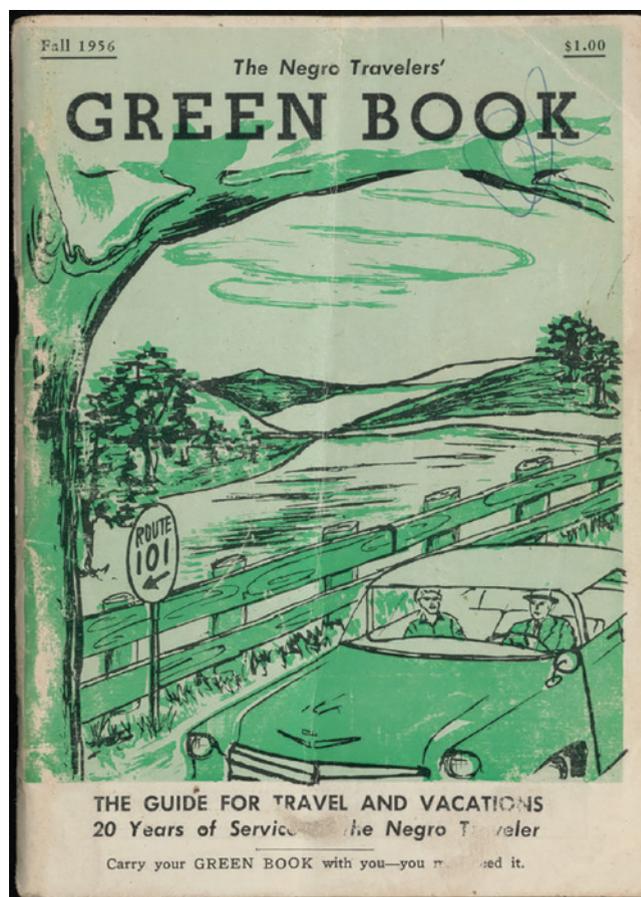
Diane L. Richard examines an essential 20th-century travel book for those of color

SOMETIMES, OUR GENEALOGICAL JOURNEY IS ABOUT understanding our ancestors' lives versus accessing and researching documents in which they might appear. Such is the case with the Green Books.

The Green Books were an invaluable tool for African Americans traveling in the United States 1936-1966. African American travelers used this publication to figure out where they would be welcome when traveling in the mid-20th century; many establishments were not welcoming to the people of color who traveled at the time. Because of Jim Crow laws, sundown laws, and other restrictive legislation, along with the possibility of physical danger, in 1936, Victor Green began publishing a guide to help African American travelers. He identified "safe" places where African American travelers could have a meal, spend the night, get their automobile serviced or take advantage of other services. A Wikipedia page on the Green Book (actually named The Negro Motorist Green Book, though typically referred to by the shorter moniker) provides additional information on Mr. Green and travel restrictions and risks, <https://tinyurl.com/29as7y5n>.

A 2016 Washington Post article, *The forgotten way African Americans stayed safe in a racist America*, <https://tinyurl.com/2vbx96tm>, discusses the history of this book and gives some fascinating insight into the period. It also introduces us to the wonderful digital archive and tool created by the New York Public Library to explore this series of books. In honor of Black History Month (2021), USA Today published "A look inside the Green Book, which guided Black travelers through a segregated and hostile America," George Petras and Janet Loehrke (2021), <https://tinyurl.com/zaknk68e>.

The New York Public Library (NYPL) has made available an online collection of 21 volumes of The Green Book covering from 1937-1964, <https://tinyurl.com/93mmc3wx>. As part of a related project, the NYPL Labs created an interactive map where you can navigate a trip using The Green Book travel guide content, <http://publicdomain.nypl.org/greenbook-map>.



Cover of *The Negro Travelers' Green Book: Fall 1956* Retrieved from Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. (1956), <https://tinyurl.com/4mmcwtd>.

