

LIFESTYLES

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New tour takes a look at Charlotte's black history

By Cassandra Wynn
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A 2 1/2 hour tour covering 16 miles has been designed to acquaint folks with Charlotte's black heritage.

The first motorized tour covering Charlotte's black community is being offered by Trend Magazine. It promises to be comprehensive with facts about achievements of blacks from 1850 to contemporary times.

The tour covers seven major sites: McDonald's Cafeteria, Johnson C. Smith University, Clinton Chapel AME Zion Church, Good Samaritan Hospital, now the site of the Carolinas Stadium yet to be built. The

Charlotte Post Newspaper, the Martin Luther King Jr. statue/Marshall Park, Old Brooklyn and Afro-American Cultural Center.

In the planning stages since April, tour officials gave the first official tour last week. With Beatties Ford Road, on the agenda the tour will cover areas well known to black Charlotteans, including the Excelsior Club and Biddleville. Contemporary sites such as NationsBank Tower, Spirit Square and Discovery Place will be included. The tour will end at the Afro-American Cultural Center.

"It's needed," said Juan Whipple, one of the tour organizers. "Most major cities have black heritage tours.

People are moving here, asking for tours. The timing is right with the NFL team and the new convention center."

Not just for tourists, the tour will serve other purposes. "We needed an African American entity that would serve as an educational tool for those here in the city 35 and under and as a way to remember for those 35 and up," said Sylvia Grier of Black Heritage Tours. The tour will address achievements black Charlotteans have made in business, health and the social and cultural arena.

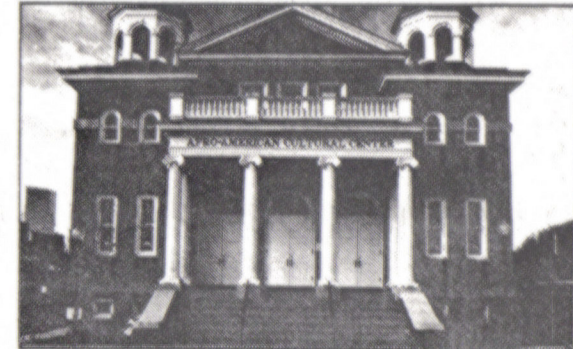
Community efforts that have crossed racial lines will be talked about by tour guides. "We think its the kind of tour that all people would

like to go on," Grier said.

Whipple said that information about the old Good Samaritan Hospital should prove one of the highlights of the tour. Established in 1893, it was the first privately-run hospital exclusively for blacks in the United States. Having closed its doors several years ago and now demolished, it is now the site of the Carolinas Stadium, which will be the home of the new National Football League team, the Carolina Panthers.

Another highlight will be the Afro Center, where Little Rock AME Zion Church was once located, said Whipple.

The cost of the tour is \$20, with discount rates offered for groups, children and sen-



Charlotte Afro American Cultural Center is one of the stops on the Black Heritage Tour.

ior citizens. In addition, the tour will be offered in packages so participants can pick part or all of the offering. Reservations should be made three weeks in advance. For information, call (704) 391-7446.

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