

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## DRAFT

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name The George and Theodora Bragg House

other names/site number 611 Jay Street

name of related multiple property listing N/A

### Location

street & number 611 Jay Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Elmira ☐ vicinity

state NY code 36 county Chemung code 015 zip code 14901

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national      statewide x local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

     entered in the National Register      determined eligible for the National Register

     determined not eligible for the National Register      removed from the National Register

     other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

n/a

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic – single dwelling: house

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic – single dwelling: house

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian

Queen Anne

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone ashlar

walls: Wood

roof: Asphalt

other:

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

The George and Theodora Bragg House in Elmira, New York, is a two-story, cross-gable, frame residence built in 1890. The façade of this sparsely adorned Queen Anne building features a front gable wing with cornice returns and a three-sided section on the first floor with wide, one-over-one windows on each face. The second story of the front gable wing is a rectangular block overhanging the first-floor polygonal section at the corners. The second-floor façade wing features a single central window matching those below and a smaller one-over-one window above in the gable. An entrance porch covered by a minimal slope pent roof fills the space between the front gable wing and the cross gable. The porch roof is supported by narrow iron columns joined in pairs by decorative scrolling. An attached iron railing runs between the columns and down both sides of the concrete stairs leading up to the porch. The railing is further decorated at intervals with scrolling.

The house was purchased by George and Theodora Bragg in the 1950s and is little changed from the period of significance when George and Theodora Bragg, along with daughter Vera Bragg, granddaughter Roxana (Bragg) Duarte, and great-granddaughter Michelle Bragg occupied the residence. Ownership of the George and Theodora Bragg house remains in the family to this day.

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### Narrative Description

#### *Location and Setting*

The George and Theodora Bragg House is located at 611 Jay Street in the eastside section of the City of Elmira. The house is about one mile west of the 1-86 highway and a half-mile north of the Chemung River. It is situated parallel to Oak Street to the east and High Street to the west, on a level 9,642 square foot residential lot. The neighborhood in which the property is sited consists primarily of private residences, typically modest late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century vernacular homes on smaller lots. The area, however, is not entirely residential, and some mixed-use development exists. Corning Community College operates an Elmira campus on Madison Avenue, just a few blocks south of the Bragg House. Trayer Industries operates a small manufacturing plant to the north of the Bragg House on Clinton Street. Riverview I public housing is also near Trayer Industries. The neighborhood is traditionally considered part of the "east side" of Elmira and has the city's densest population of minorities.

The George and Theodora Bragg house is serviced by a long driveway on the west side of the property leading to a two-bay, single-story, hipped-roof garage. The lot is mostly open lawn with a large pine tree in front of the house and a mixture of small to large bushes around the perimeter. A series of bushes demarcating the property line runs along the east side of the house, and a low chain link and wire fence marks the western and northern boundary. In the 1970s, a brick grill was cemented in the backyard.

#### *House: Exterior Description*

The house is a wood-frame residence that was formerly clad with wood clapboard and fish-scale wood shingles in the gables. White vinyl siding in a weatherboard pattern covered the original cladding sometime in the 1970s, but closely matches the appearance of the original wood clapboard. The historic appearance is further aided by the retention of non-functional black shutters and decorative wood brackets under the second-story overhangs

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on the eastern façade and cross sections. The house rests on a rusticated ashlar foundation and has an unfinished cellar with brick and dirt floor surface. The house retains its original appearance to a high degree.

### *Façade*

The façade consists of two bays. The eastern bay is comprised of a gable wing with cornice returns and a rectangular block section on the second story above a three-sided polygonal section on the first floor. The second story of the front gable wing overhangs the first-floor polygonal section. The second-floor eastern overhang features decorative scroll brackets. The second-floor façade wing has a single central window matching those below and a smaller one-over-one attic window in the gable. The western bay of the façade consists of an entrance porch covered by a minimal slope pent roof, filling the space between the front gable wing and the cross gable. The main entrance is a wood frame door with a paneled lower section and a single light in the upper half. The porch roof is supported by narrow iron columns joined in pairs by decorative scrolling, and an attached iron railing running between the columns. The iron railing runs down both sides of the concrete stairs leading up to the porch. The railing is further decorated at intervals with scrolling. The iron columns and railing replace original wood Tuscan columns and wood railing and date to within the period of significance.

### *West Elevation*

The west elevation consists of three bays and a gable end with uneven cornice returns. The central bay features a three-sided bay with one-over-one windows on the first floor. On the second floor, the central bay has a one-over-one window with decorative black shutters, a single light bathroom window, and a one-over-one attic window in the gable. The northern bay is one story and has a one-over-one window with decorative black shutters.

### *Rear (north) Elevation*

The two-bay rear elevation consist of a single gable end with eave returns and a four-light window in the attic. The first floor includes a small enclosed, shed-roofed porch on the eastern bay and an adjacent angled cellar door at ground level. The enclosed porch features a single sliding window and a wood entry door on the rear elevation and a single sliding window on the porch's east elevation. The west bay has a single, one-over-one window with decorative black shutters. The second floor has a similar one-over-one window in the east bay and a smaller one-over-one window in the west bay. Both second-floor windows have black decorative shutters.

### *East Elevation*

The east elevation consists of three bays and a gable end with even cornice returns. The northern bay is a single story and has a one-over-one window with decorative black shutters. The gable end comprises the central bay and extends a short distance from the main block of the house. The first floor of the central bay holds a wide one-over-one window with decorative black shutters and a second one-over-one window in a recessed angled section on the southern side of the bay. The window recess features undulating brackets and matches the polygonal section on the façade. The second story of the central bay has a one-over-one window with decorative black shutters and a one-over-one attic window in the gable.

### *Secondary Building*

A detached two-car garage was added to the property in 1924 (Photo 0004) and is a contributing resource. It is a single-story wood frame building with a hipped roof and a single wood casement window on the east

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elevation and a matching casement window on the west elevation. The wood clapboard siding is original and painted white to match the house. The current roll-up garage doors consist of horizontal panels of wood-framed glass lights in two side-by-side rows. These replaced the original wood doors at an unknown date and are the only significant change to the building.

*Interior*

On the interior, the house is divided into a basement, two floors, and an attic. The original circulation pattern and spatial arrangement of the resource remain intact. No significant interior changes have been made since the building was the home of George and Theodora Bragg and much of their furnishings remain extant and in use.

The first floor includes a small vestibule, sitting room with a large bay window and chestnut sitting bench, a large front living room, a dining room and kitchen. Doors, staircase railing, baseboards and molding throughout the rooms of the house are uniformly of original chestnut wood. Most of the original windows were replaced in the nineteen seventies, but the remaining original windows are located in the middle, front and dining rooms. The original heating registers feature ornate iron covers. Throughout, the house retains original wood floors, painted plaster walls, doors, baseboards, and window and door trim.

The George and Theodora Bragg House includes a small rear, covered porch added at an unknown date prior to the Bragg's purchasing the home. Entering the house from the rear porch leads to the kitchen and small den. Access to the cellar is through the kitchen and an outside angled door in the back of the house.

The stairs to the second floor rise from the middle room and den and feature original wood railing and rectangular newel. These stairs lead to a narrow hall on the second floor. All four bedrooms and one bathroom are located on this level. Each bedroom features chestnut wood doors, baseboards and molding identical to that of the first floor. The second bedroom on the west side of the house contains a staircase leading to the attic.

Hurricane Agnes hit the City of Elmira in the summer of 1972, causing major flooding across the city and the Bragg House was not spared. The basement and first floor were flooded, as marked by a Chemung County Historical Society Flood Marker placed on a cased opening (Photos 0008 and 009). The marker indicates a depth of six feet of flood water on the first floor. No structural repair was necessary other than the replacement of windows in the den and kitchen. The first-floor walls were re-papered and carpets removed and replaced. In the basement, the furnace and water heater were replaced and support beams were added to reinforce the building. Renovations to repair flood damage were therefore minimal, resulting in no significant changes to the house, which remains much the same to date.

*Integrity*

The exterior of the George and Theodora Bragg House is unchanged since the passing of George Bragg in 1979 and retains a high level of integrity to the period of significance. On the interior, the building remains in use as a part-time residence for the Bragg family retaining original layout, historic fabric and decorative treatment. Items of furniture and wall decor also remain. The contributing two-bay, one story garage has also not been altered in any way from its appearance, materials and function during the period of significance.

The neighborhood setting of the Bragg House likewise has seen only minor changes in appearance and feel from the period of significance. The house has a very high degree of historic integrity to the period of significance from ca. 1955 to 1979.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Ethnic Heritage: Black

### Period of Significance

ca. 1955 - 1979

### Significant Dates

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

George E. Bragg; Theodora Bragg

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins ca. 1955 when the Braggs acquired the house and ends with George's death in 1979. This is the period when both George and Theodora Bragg were most active in contributing to their community.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The George and Theodora Bragg House is significant under Criterion B in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage - Black for its association with George E. Bragg (1915-1979) and Theodora Bragg (1909-2008) outstanding community leaders and prominent voices advocating for civil rights and improved living conditions for African American men and women in the Southern Tier city of Elmira. From their small single-family home on Elmira's east side, the Braggs each provided a lifetime of service to the people of Elmira in the mid to late twentieth century. The modest Queen Anne house at 611 Jay Street served as the Braggs' home for nearly a quarter century. Here they provided a home for their daughter Vera, and granddaughter Roxanne and often welcomed members of local public and civic organizations to discuss matters of housing and employment for the African American community of Elmira [Figure 004]. Theodora was a founding member of the Elmira chapter of the Nannie Burroughs Club, a long-serving member of the St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary, a president of the Arnot Ogden Medical Center Auxiliary, a president of the Immaculate Heart of Mary organization, a president of The Chemung County chapter of the Ladies of Charity, and the sole proprietor of a catering business operating out of the 611 Jay Street home that frequently provided meals for the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branch and the Chemung County Democratic Women's Club. George Bragg was an active UAW union member, president of the local NAACP, housing and employment advocate, chairman of the Elmira Housing Authority, and the first and, to date, only African American mayoral candidate in the City of Elmira.

The house at 611 Jay Street is the resource most closely associated with George and Theodora Bragg for the longest period and the place most closely associated with their work involving the local African American community. The period of significance begins ca. 1955 when the Braggs acquired the house and ends with George's death in 1979. Theodora Bragg continued to live here until her death in 2008.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The George and Theodora Bragg House was built in 1890 as a single-family residence. Located on Elmira's east side, the exterior and interior of the house retain a high degree of integrity to the period when the Braggs occupied the home. The couple purchased the house in the mid-1950s at a time when homeownership among African Americans was low nationally and remains in the Bragg family today.<sup>1</sup> African American

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau. (2018, Nov 13). *Historical Census of Housing Tables*  
*Ownership Rates*. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historical/ownership.html>.

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homeownership continues to lag behind that of whites nationally.<sup>2</sup> Homeownership rates for African Americans in Elmira also continue to be low: 22.4 percent compared to 71.7 percent for whites.<sup>3</sup>

The property is located on the east side of Elmira which had become a predominantly Black neighborhood at the time the Braggs purchased the house. By the post-World War II period, many whites of Irish, Italian and Eastern European descent abandoned the area as their finances improved. From the time the Braggs purchased the house up to the present, the Black residents living in this neighborhood have had lower incomes than those living elsewhere in the city. The George and Theodora Bragg House became significant to the local community through the couple's life-long civic engagement, which included events and activities centered at the home. The Braggs were very visibly active in community and business affairs for decades.

### *The early lives of George and Theodora*

Born in November 1915 in New York City, George Eccles Bragg was the youngest of three children. George's mother passed away in his early childhood, and he and his two sisters, Emily and Francis, were raised by their father until he too passed away when George was thirteen. Little is known about George's mother, Corinne, and his father, Richard, other than he was a carriage driver and fireman in the Bronx. After Richard died, George and Francis were taken in by Martin and Elvira Eldridge.<sup>4</sup> It is unclear how Elvira may have been related to George, though he is listed as her nephew on the 1940 census and she is listed as his family contact along with his sister Francis on all the CCC paperwork. Given their age – Martin Eldridge was born in 1859 and Elvira in 1865 - Elvira appears to have been a great aunt or more distant relative.

George Bragg began working at whatever jobs he could find locally in the Bronx, but at the age of twenty, he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in 1933, it was the height of the Great Depression. Unemployment was at 25%, crops were failing, and millions of families were going hungry. To combat rampant unemployment among young men, President Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in his first year in office to perform public works projects.

George Bragg enrolled in the CCC in January of 1935. He, along with many enrollees from all over the state of New York, was sent to Camp Dix, New Jersey initially. Upon arrival, enrollees were assigned to a 200-man company. These CCC companies were segregated per official policy at the insistence of CCC Director Robert

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<sup>2</sup> Janna Herron, "Black, Hispanic homeownership rates remain stuck below whites," *USA Today*, November 13, 2018, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/11/13/housing-market-black-hispanic-homeownership-rates-below-whites/1917973002/>.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Stebbins and Evan Comen, "These are the 15 worst cities for Black Americans," *USA Today*, November 16, 2018. [b.n.J2s://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/11/16/racial-disparity-cities-worst-metro-areas-black-americans/38460961/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2018/11/16/racial-disparity-cities-worst-metro-areas-black-americans/38460961/).

<sup>4</sup> New York; State Population Census Schedules, 1925; Election District: 42; Assembly District: 06; City: New York; County: Bronx; Page: 25



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Fechner.<sup>5</sup> George was in Camp Dix for only a few days before being sent to Yaphank, New York to work as part of “Colored” Company 238-6.

George’s term of service finished in October, but he decided to re-enroll in 1936 and was sent with the men of Company 246-c to the Orange County town of Wawayanda, New York where they were worked on the Wallkill Flood Control Project, a ten-mile-long canal designed to change the direction of the river and stem seasonal flooding. Subsequently, George served with companies 1287, 247, 3211, and S-117, usually as a truck driver, until 1939.<sup>6</sup> In addition to Yaphank and Wawayanda, he also served at Birdsall, and Monterey, New York.

It was during his tenure with the CCC that George met his future wife, Theodora Davis. Theodora was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1909.<sup>7</sup> Theodora’s father, Charles Davis, was an elevator operator, while her mother was a homemaker. Charles was an avid hunter and gardener, growing all the vegetables for the family. Charles’s family had been enslaved on the Lord Calvert plantation in Calvert County, Maryland. The family practiced Catholicism, as the Calverts were Catholic. Theodora’s mother, Elizabeth, was from Culpeper, Virginia. Against her mother’s wishes, Elizabeth moved to LeRoy, New York, to work as a cook for a family there. It is unclear how she met Charles, but their story reflects that of many southern African Americans in the early twentieth century who relocated north in search of a better life.

Theodora’s family lived in Pavilion and LeRoy in western New York for a time, but moved to Elmira’s east side when she was about ten years old. As the oldest of ten children, she often had to help care for her siblings. Theodora left school in the eighth grade to help with the family finances, going to work with one of her aunts at a local hotel where she learned to cook, an experience she developed into a love of cooking and baking. Theodora and most of her siblings continued living on the east side of Elmira as adults, along with many extended family members.

Theodora met George at a restaurant owned by her brother, Robert Davis, where she worked as a chef. George's CCC group had stopped in for a meal. The two began dating and continued to date after George was discharged from CCC service in 1939, even though he had returned to live with his aunt Elvira Eldridge, now living in Brooklyn. The couple were married in June of 1940 in New York City, and at first, that is where the newlyweds lived.

George’s 1940 draft card [Figure 002] indicates he had taken full-time employment with the National Youth Administration program.<sup>8</sup> The National Youth Administration (NYA) was established on June 26, 1935, by

<sup>5</sup> Lavada Nahon, [A Legacy of Strength | New York State Parks and Historic Sites Blog](#) 2020

<sup>6</sup> National Archives at St. Louis, National Personnel Records Center. Civilian Conservation Corps. 2019.

<sup>7</sup> “Theodora Bragg” obituary, *Star-Gazette*, Jan. 27, 28, 29, 30, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; WWII Draft Registration Cards For New York City, 10/16/1940 - 03/31/1947; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147.

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President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the New Deal, much as the CCC had been two years earlier. Under the leadership of social activist Aubrey W. Williams, the NYA focused on the education and training of young men and women aged sixteen to twenty-five, including African Americans through its Division of Negro Affairs under the leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune. The agency created training centers and camps and offered part-time jobs to students to assist with their education.

George was employed at Pier 5, Fleeman Avenue and C Street, in Brooklyn. This area, known as Wallabout Market, was on the east side of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. However, with the growing threat that World War II would soon draw in the United States, the federal government undertook an expansion of the shipyard, demolishing and redesigning the entire Wallabout Market area such that Fleeman Avenue soon no longer existed. It is unclear if George served as an instructor or in some other capacity for the NYA, or if he continued to work there through the expansion of the Navy Yard in 1941-42 as the NYA did continue to offer some training programs at that location.

### ***Establishing a Home in Elmira after WWII***

By 1943 George, Theodora, and their daughter Vera had relocated from New York City to Elmira to move into Theodora's parents' house at 516 Dewitt Avenue on the east side. The house was quite crowded already as six of Theodora's siblings were still living there. This situation however was all too familiar to African Americans at the time. Later that same year, George was called to fight in World War II.<sup>9</sup> He served the Army in the Pacific Theater for three years and was honorably discharged in late 1945 or early 1946.<sup>10</sup> Upon returning from the war, he found that Theodora had saved enough money to purchase the couple's first house, located at 412 DeWitt Avenue, also on Elmira's east side. The couple shared this small, one-bedroom residence with their daughter, Vera. In 1949, they also welcomed granddaughter Roxanna Bragg to the home. The housing shortage the Bragg family faced was a commonly shared story among the African American residents on the east side of Elmira and would be a recurring theme in the lives of George and Theodora.

### ***UAW Union and NAACP Leadership***

After being discharged from the Army, George began work as a machinist at the Bendix Corporation's Eclipse Plant in Elmira; he continued to work at Bendix until retirement thirty years later. Bendix was an engineering company that made automotive brake shoes and pads, electric power systems, and aircraft brakes. Elmira's manufacturing sector was one area in which African American workers found job opportunities both during and after the war. Blacks moved to the city from the south and Jamaica and Barbados for these job opportunities. Although they found jobs, "Black workers were consistently paid less than Whites and often excluded from the more social aspects of factory life. The war workers flooding the city caused a serious housing shortage and no

<sup>9</sup> 1940 Federal Census

<sup>10</sup> "Service Notes," *Star-Gazette*, January 29, 1946, 14.

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one was willing to rent to Blacks outside of the city's pre-existing neighborhood on Elmira's east side."<sup>11</sup> Having a growing interest in these problems, George became a member of the United Auto Workers Union (Local 604) in 1947 soon after taking the job at Bendix, and began to take an active role in union affairs. He served as the recording secretary before moving on to the executive board.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout their lives, George and Theodora exhibited a strong commitment to civic involvement and engagement. Even while working at Bendix's and participating in the UAW, George also became an active member of the Elmira chapter of the NAACP. The National Association for the Advancement Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909, in response to a deadly race riot the year before in Springfield, Illinois, and is "the nation's foremost, largest and most widely recognized civil rights organization."<sup>13</sup> The organization's mission is to "secure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons."<sup>14</sup> The Elmira chapter was chartered in 1919, but by 1928, it had become inactive.<sup>15</sup> "In 1942, in response to systematic discrimination against Black women seeking jobs at the Bendix-Eclipse Corporation, the local chapter was re-established by the membership of the Negro Women's Progressive Club of Elmira."<sup>16</sup> The work of the NAACP and the Negro Women's Progressive Club helped secure not only jobs at Bendix during the war for African American women, but helped ensure that African American men, such as George would be able to continue to find employment there when they returned home at the war's end.

George's involvement in the local chapter of the NAACP grew steadily after returning from the war, and he was soon asked to serve on the Employment Committee, helping to secure many jobs for unemployed African Americans. In 1949, George was selected by the Elmira chapter to travel to the national headquarters of the NAACP in Washington, DC as their delegate to attend a leadership training institute.<sup>17</sup>

This period in George and Theodora's life was one of an ever-growing public presence and influence. In October of 1950 a Committee on Human Relations was announced by Mayor Strachen, and George Bragg was appointed as one of the founding members. The committee's objective was "to make sure that the rights of citizens of Elmira, as guaranteed by the democratic form of government, be made more effective without regard

<sup>11</sup> Rachel Dworkin, "The River Runs North: African Americans and the Great Migration," Chemung County Historical Society blogspot, February 3, 2014, <https://chemungcountyhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-river-runs-north-african-americans.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Blacks take on community leadership roles in Elmira," *Star-Gazette*, Feb. 9, 1986, 4.

<sup>13</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, "Nation's Premiere Civil Rights Organization," n.d., <https://www.naACP.org/nations-premier-civil-rights-organization/>.

<sup>14</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, "About Us," n.d., <https://www.naACP.org/about-us/>

<sup>15</sup> Chemung County Historical Society, *The Color of Change: A History of the NAACP Elmira-Corning Branch*, May 16, 2019, <https://cchsonlineexhibits.wixsite.com/naACP>.

<sup>16</sup> Chemung County Historical Society, *The Color of Change: A History of the NAACP Elmira-Corning Branch*.

<sup>17</sup> "Attends Institute," *Star-Gazette*, April 2, 1949, 12.

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to race, creed, or national origin, and to take all possible steps to insure better intergroup relations among Elmirans through education, fact finding and assistance....”<sup>18</sup>

George Bragg’s work with the Elmira Chapter of the NAACP grew beyond the Employment Committee when, in 1951, he served as president for a one-year term.<sup>19</sup> During this time, African Americans in Elmira were deeply concerned about overcrowding and the lack of affordable housing – a problem George and Theodora faced firsthand. Many community leaders, including George, saw public housing as a means to greatly improve the housing shortage. The John W. Jones Court (NR listed 2017) public housing project in Elmira’s east central neighborhood, known as Slabtown, was a long-standing proposal for public housing in Elmira that took years to come to fruition. The Elmira Housing Authority (EHA) formed in 1942 to address the need for new and affordable housing. The city began planning Jones Court in 1942 to alleviate the wartime housing shortage, but did not begin construction until 1951.

African American leaders and residents from the community questioned the long delay of the Jones Court project during the war, many feeling that their needs were being ignored by the state and the local housing authorities. Wartime migration nearly doubled the population in Slabtown to over 1,300 from its pre-war population of 850, creating intense internal pressures on the community. As president of the local NAACP, George Bragg pushed hard for the additional state funding needed to build Jones Court. The Elmira chapter of the NAACP under George’s leadership relentlessly prodded the City Council and the EHA to get Jones Court built so that the many African Americans enduring overcrowded housing and displacement could be provided with housing.<sup>20</sup> The Elmira chapter of the NAACP held a public forum over which George Bragg presided to increase public understanding and support for the project.<sup>21</sup> The combination of public outreach and civic engagement by the NAACP under George’s leadership culminated in the completion of John W. Jones Court in 1952. Designed by the locally notable architectural firm of Haskell, Considine, and Haskell, Jones Court served as public housing until 1999.

Although the project was eventually completed and built in the heart of the Slabtown community, the city condemned houses, businesses, and the city’s oldest black church to build it.<sup>22</sup> The Jones Court project resulted in the destruction of two churches and thirty-five other buildings. It has been said that “The African-American community was both literally and figuratively gutted by the project” due to the loss of existing building stock, collective identity, and displacement.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> “Mayor Names Committee on Human Rights,” *Star-Gazette*, October 25, 1950, 13.

<sup>19</sup> “Bragg Elected President of NAACP Chapter,” *Star-Gazette*, December 18, 1950, 10.

<sup>20</sup> “NAACP Asks Action on Housing Job,” *Star-Gazette*, June 25, 1951, 8.

<sup>21</sup> “NAACP to Hold Housing Forum,” *Star-Gazette*, June 21, 1951, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Thrush, *Jones Court*. National Register of Historic Places nomination, December 2017. State Historic Preservation Office, Albany NY.

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Dworkin, “The Persistent Problem of Housing Discrimination,” Chemung County Historical Society blog, June 23, 2014, <https://chemungcountyhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2014/06/the-persistent-problem-of-housing.html>.

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Financially, George and Theodora had achieved a measure of success in Elmira by the mid-1950s and sought to better their own overcrowded living conditions. The Braggs first hoped to purchase a house they had located in a west side neighborhood of Elmira, a historically White area. The Braggs' attempt to purchase the home was denied. The 1938 "Residential Security Map," of Elmira illustrates neighborhood redlining, [Figure 017] the practice wherein banks and federal institutions denied mortgages to non-whites and minorities was well established in Elmira at the time.<sup>24</sup>

Neighborhoods were graded and color-coded Green: First Grade; Blue: Second Grade; Yellow: Third Grade; Red: Fourth Grade. First and second grades, shown as green and blue respectively on the map, represent all White areas considered to be the most desirable properties, while fourth grade – red on the map - was considered and least desirable and not co-incidentally had the highest percentage of Black residents.

The Braggs were able to purchase a larger home at 611 Jay Street around 1955, leaving their Dewitt Avenue home of around nine years to what would become their lifelong residence for their final twenty four years together and the subject resource of this nomination. This location falls within the "Red: Grade three" designation of the "Residential Security Map". The overall experience of their crowded circumstance at the Dewitt Avenue residence and the difficulties they faced as an African American couple searching for better housing, further impressed upon the Braggs the need for reform.

### ***Commissioner of the Elmira Housing Authority***

Previously, in June of 1951, a prophetic letter drafted by the NAACP and signed by George Bragg questioning the delays faced in the construction of Jones Court, also questioned the composition of the authority itself, requesting "That representation from working people be added to the authority."<sup>25</sup> Six years later in 1957, as recognition for his leadership and commitment to affordable housing for the African American community in Elmira, George Bragg was appointed to the Elmira Housing Authority, where he served as a commissioner for twelve years<sup>26</sup>. Bragg became chair of the EHA in 1969, a position he held until his death in 1979.<sup>27</sup> As chair, George worked tirelessly to secure funding from the Housing and Urban Development Agency (HUD), and considered his signature achievements to be the building and completion of public housing. "Close to 400 public housing units were opened during his tenure with the housing authority."<sup>28</sup>

George also worked closely with the Elmira Urban Renewal Agency - a public benefit corporation that was formed in 1966 as a community planning organization and project initiator. The first project undertaken by the Agency was Dewittsburg Housing on East Water Street and George was selected to be the manager.<sup>29</sup> He

<sup>24</sup> "What is Redlining", n.d., <https://chemungcountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10311/Redlining-presentation>

<sup>25</sup> "Acceptable New Bid To Bring Immediate Start on Jones Court," 1951, *Star-Gazette*, June 26, 1951, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Elmira Housing Authority, *Housing Authority Commissioners, Corporation Counselors, and Executive Directors*, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> Elmira Housing Authority.

<sup>28</sup> "Blacks take on community leadership roles in Elmira," *Star-Gazette*, Feb. 9, 1986, 4.

<sup>29</sup> "Blacks take on community leadership roles in Elmira," *Star Gazette*.

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continued in that role until 1975 when health concerns led George to reduce the amount of work he was undertaking.<sup>30</sup>

George Bragg's efforts resulted in the design and construction of two large-scale affordable housing projects: Newtown Towers in 1969 and Edward Flannery Towers in 1977.<sup>31</sup> [Figures 013 & 014] Both buildings are still in use. In 1966, EHA received funding from HUD to complete Newtown Towers, which sits on property near St. Joseph's Hospital given to EHA by the City of Elmira. Newtown Towers has approximately 126 one-bedroom units. On June 1, 1972, the EHA Board agreed to seek funding for Flannery Towers. Hurricane Agnes struck the very next day. In 1974, EHA secured federal funding to build Flannery Towers, which has 208 one-bedroom units.<sup>32</sup>

In the 1970s, George envisioned the creation of a new multi-use neighborhood civic center to include youth and after-school programs and community outreach to replace the old Neighborhood House, a turn-of-the-century institution with a similar function but which also included technical training classes and a kindergarten. In the 1920s, the Neighborhood House occupied the block of East Fifth Street from Dickinson to Baldwin Streets. In the 1960s, the Neighborhood House took on a more active role in advocating for social justice. The organization moved to a new building at East Fifth and Lake Streets in 1971.

George felt there was a need for a new community facility under the EHA with more programs to offer and direct municipal support. In 1975, he secured a \$2.9 million grant to build the Ernie Davis Center. The plan was to demolish the Neighborhood House buildings on East Fifth Street and build the new center at that location. In 1987, the Neighborhood House Group went bankrupt, and the plans fell through. However, new plans were developed in the 1990s as several groups merged and formed the Equal Opportunity Program, which raised the funds needed. The Ernie Davis Center was built in 2002 on the lot just north of Jones Court – directly across East Fifth Street from the location George Bragg had originally planned.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Hurricane Agnes***

In June 1972, Hurricane Agnes caused major flooding in Elmira. George Bragg was chair of EHA at the time and was focused on securing funding for a public housing building for the elderly and disabled. However, Bragg offered EHA land for the placement of temporary mobile houses for displaced residents.<sup>34</sup>

George, Theodora and family were themselves displaced due to the flood. They had to leave their house before the flood waters engulfed the neighborhood. The family went to a public shelter and while they were away, the Bragg House was broken into and items such as jewelry, toys, a television, luggage and clothes were stolen.

<sup>30</sup> "George Bragg is Dead at 64," *Star-Gazette*, September 10, 1979, 10.

<sup>31</sup> James Mirando, Executive Director of the Elmira Housing Authority, personal communication. Oct 9, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Elmira Housing Authority, n.d., <https://www.Elmirahousing.org>.

<sup>33</sup> Doane, Erin, "The Neighborhood House and EOP" Chemung County Historical Society, February 15, 2021, <https://chemungcountyhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2021/02/the-neighborhood-house-and-eop.html>

<sup>34</sup> James Mirando, Executive Director of the Elmira Housing Authority, personal communication. Oct 9, 2018.

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Many historic family photographs were destroyed due to the flood, along with furniture. Friends and family rallied to help clean up the mud and debris left in the house. The Bragg family remembers this as a very hard time, yet throughout the period, George continued to work tirelessly to see to the housing needs of others and Theodora worked directly with Catholic charity organizations assisting with recovery.

### ***A Mayoral Campaign***

In March 1973, George Bragg was endorsed by the Democratic city committee to run for mayor of Elmira.<sup>35</sup> He was regarded as a candidate with strong convictions, but the issue of race did arise. George was the first African American to run for the position in the City of Elmira and faced an uphill challenge against incumbent Mayor Richard Loll.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Bragg ran a campaign that attempted to appeal to all Elmirans, regardless of race. His campaign flyer listed seven items he supported:

1. Free parking in downtown Elmira
2. A committee of government created to especially help industries and businesses stay in Elmira, and to help those industries and businesses expand. Also every effort should be made to find businesses and industries to locate in Elmira
3. In the process of building a new Elmira, the committed government funds should attract at least three times as many dollars from outside sources as committed by government, which should provide countless job opportunities.
4. The Chemung River should be dredged within the city limits. The dikes should be repaired.
5. The Chemung River, and where possible (creeks, ponds and Eldridge Lake) should be more heavily stocked with game fish.
6. Section 235 as a subsidy for individual single family home ownership and any other possible appropriate program to enhance home ownership.
7. I will attempt to act as a funnel source of information between agencies of government and the people of the community.<sup>37</sup>

While he did not win the mayoral race, his run was significant historically, and Bragg's competitive candidacy provided many Elmirans with a strong sense of pride in their first African American candidate.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Community Commemoration of George's Legacy***

George Bragg passed away unexpectedly in September 1979.<sup>39</sup> Efforts began almost immediately, led by the new EHA chair and former mayor of Elmira Edward T. Lagonegro, to rename Newtown Towers after Bragg. In June 1980, Newtown Towers was renamed the George E. Bragg Newtown Towers.<sup>40</sup> Due to George Bragg's service and dedication to housing issues, the Elmira Housing Authority Resolution #88.07 made the official

<sup>35</sup> "City Demos Endorse Bragg for Mayor," *Star-Gazette*, March 30, 1973, 10.

<sup>36</sup> "City Demos Endorse Bragg for Mayor," *Star-Gazette*.

<sup>37</sup> "George Bragg for Mayor" Campaign Flyer, 1972

<sup>38</sup> Peg, Gallagher, "There Weren't All Tears at Democratic Headquarters," *Star-Gazette*, November 7, 1973, 15.

<sup>39</sup> "George Bragg is Dead at 64," *Star-Gazette*, September 10, 1979, 10.

<sup>40</sup> "Newtown Towers to be Dedicated to George Bragg," *Star-Gazette*, May 28, 1980, 13.

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name of the senior housing facility (NY030002) the George E. Bragg Towers. This resolution was adopted in February 1988.

Other efforts were made to remember George Bragg and his legacy after his passing. In 1981, the Eastside Action Network – a forerunner organization to the Equal Opportunity Program, the City of Elmira, and the Elmira City School District, dedicated a memorial playground at Beecher Elementary School in honor of George E. Bragg [Figure 015]. Both Bragg Towers and Beecher Elementary School are blocks away (less than one mile each) from the George and Theodora Bragg House.

### ***Theodora Bragg's Contributions to the Community***

Theodora Bragg also served important and prominent roles in the community. Theodora was a communicant at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Elmira for decades—into her 80s. She also served as the president of the Immaculate Heart Society several times over the course of her long-standing membership in Saints Peter and Paul Church<sup>41</sup>. She also served as president of the Chemung County association of the Ladies of Charity of the United States of America [Figure 009].

Theodora Bragg was a founding member of the local chapter of the Nannie Burroughs Club, which was named after the African-American educator and suffrage advocate, Nannie Helen Burroughs. This Black women's club began in 1924, with the core goal of eliminating racism and providing service to the community.<sup>42</sup> The Nannie Burroughs Club held fundraisers for the local YWCA and played a key role in integrating the YWCA board of directors and committees.<sup>43</sup> The club was also active in promoting women's voting and fighting discrimination issues, including Bendix Corporation's resistance to hiring women.

One of a limited number of Black entrepreneurs in Elmira, Theodora operated her own catering business, Bragg's Catering Service, out of the Bragg house from 1959 until the mid-1970s. The business was successful, and family research uncovered hundreds of "Thank You" letters to Theodora for her catering efforts. [Figure 007] In addition to private individuals, some of the letters came from organizations such as Saints Peter and Paul Church, Saint Joseph's Auxiliary, the local NAACP branch, and the Chemung County Democratic Women's Club. At some point after retiring from catering, Theodora began volunteering with the Elmira Community Kitchen, where she provided her famous baked goods and helped prepare food for the needy.<sup>44</sup> In 2000, Theodora received recognition for all of her efforts in the community and was honored as the Black Woman of the Year by the local YWCA.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> "Officers are Elected," *Star-Gazette*, June 16, 1976, 9; "Society Elects Officers," *Star-Gazette*, July 29, 1966, 5.

<sup>42</sup> "Nannie Burroughs Club Marks 75 Years," *Star-Gazette*, April 25, 1999, 14.

<sup>43</sup> "Nannie Burroughs Club Marks 75 Years," *Star-Gazette*.

<sup>44</sup> "CELEBRATIONS," *Star-Gazette*, February 1, 2007, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Kati Philips, YWCA Honors Women for Making a Difference," *Star-Gazette*, February 1, 2000, 23.



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Bragg's Catering Service always operated out of the Bragg House. There were no employees, and Theodora managed the day-to-day business operations on her own. Business was steady enough to support the catering operation for nearly twenty years. Theodora had a flair for baking and decorating wedding cakes. [Figure 008] This aspect of the business had a steady clientele. While running her business, she would also prepare dinners for the clergy at Saints Peter and Paul Church. Theodora also frequently donated baked goods for the church's bake sales.

When not fulfilling an order for her catering business, Theodora continued to give much of her time and energy to serving others. She served in the national Ladies of Charity including several years as president of the LoC Chemung County association while also volunteering her time with the Chemung County Health Center Infirmary for six years, beginning in 1973. She served the Saint Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary beginning in 1977 and up until a week before her death in 2008. According to the September 2001 edition of the auxiliary newsletter, in 1997, Theodora received the Saint Joseph's Spirit Award. By 2001, she had dedicated nearly 6,000 volunteer hours and was awarded the "Golden Leaf Award" by Saint Joseph's. Theodora Bragg became a member of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program in 1983 and received transportation to Saint Joseph's Hospital for over twenty years.

A strong believer in the right to vote, Theodora volunteered with the Board of Elections, working the voting polls, for decades. She also served as an elections supervisor for many years.

### ***Conclusion***

Theodora and George Bragg were both committed to civic engagement and the struggle for affordable housing, equality of opportunity, and social justice for the African American community and all residents of Elmira. Together, they were long-standing members of the local NAACP chapter. The Braggs loved and supported one another in their respective endeavors and served their community in many different ways over the course of their lives. Both made a difference in Elmira, and each has been honored in meaningful ways to celebrate their respective contributions to the community. The George and Theodora Bragg House stands as a tangible reminder of their lives and the meaningful contributions they made.

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Year: 1950; US Census Place: Elmira, Chemung, New York; Roll: 4184; Page: 14; Enumeration District: 8-28

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.23

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.095614 | Longitude: -76.798122 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the historic parcel boundary.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Michelle Bragg PhD. and Daniel H. Boggs, NY SHPO

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 2025

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

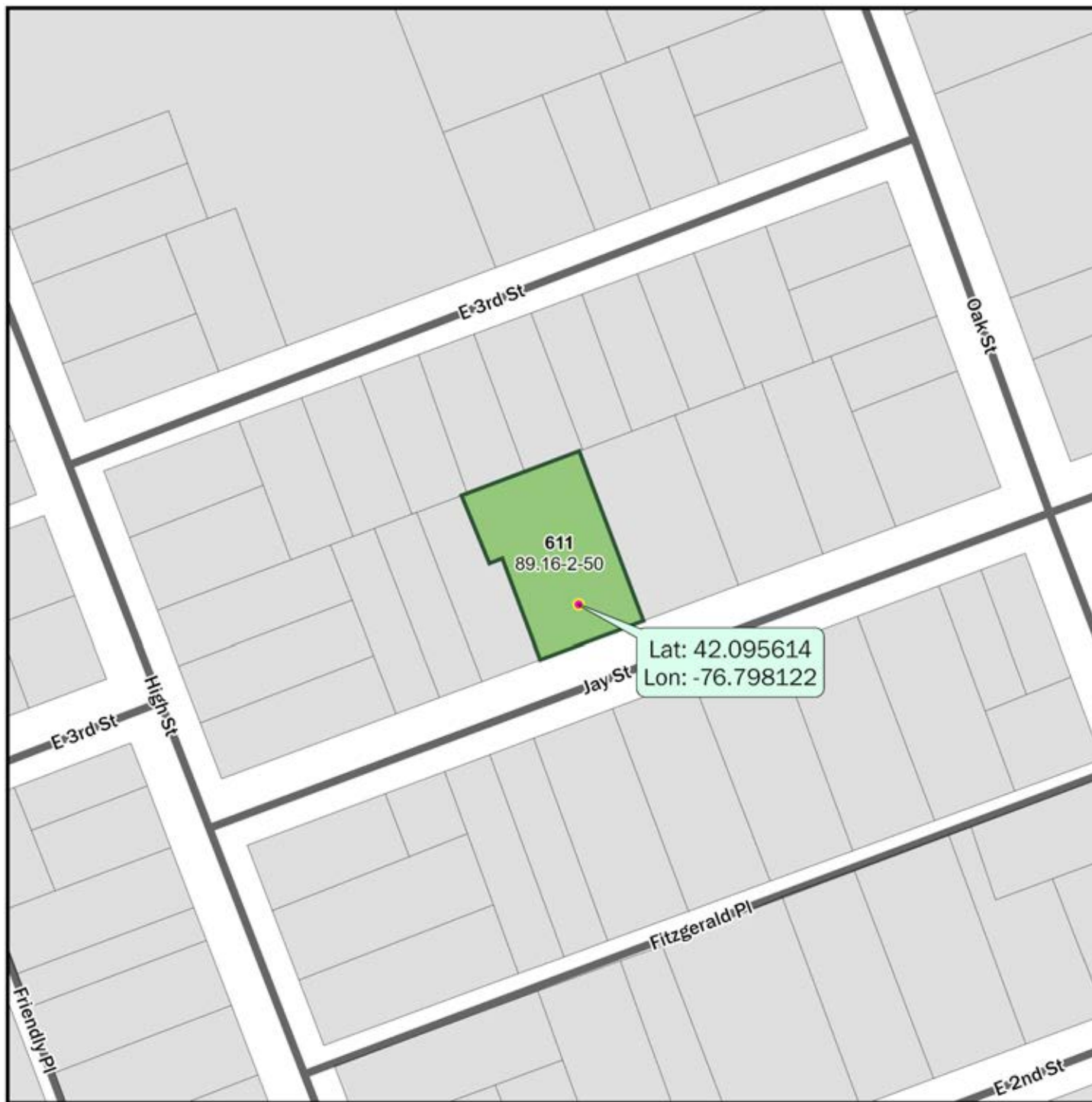
The George and Theodora Bragg House

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1:1,200



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N



Nomination Boundary (0.23 ac)



Tax Parcels



New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation

Chemung County Parcel Year: 2024

Mapped 07/08/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



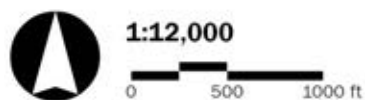
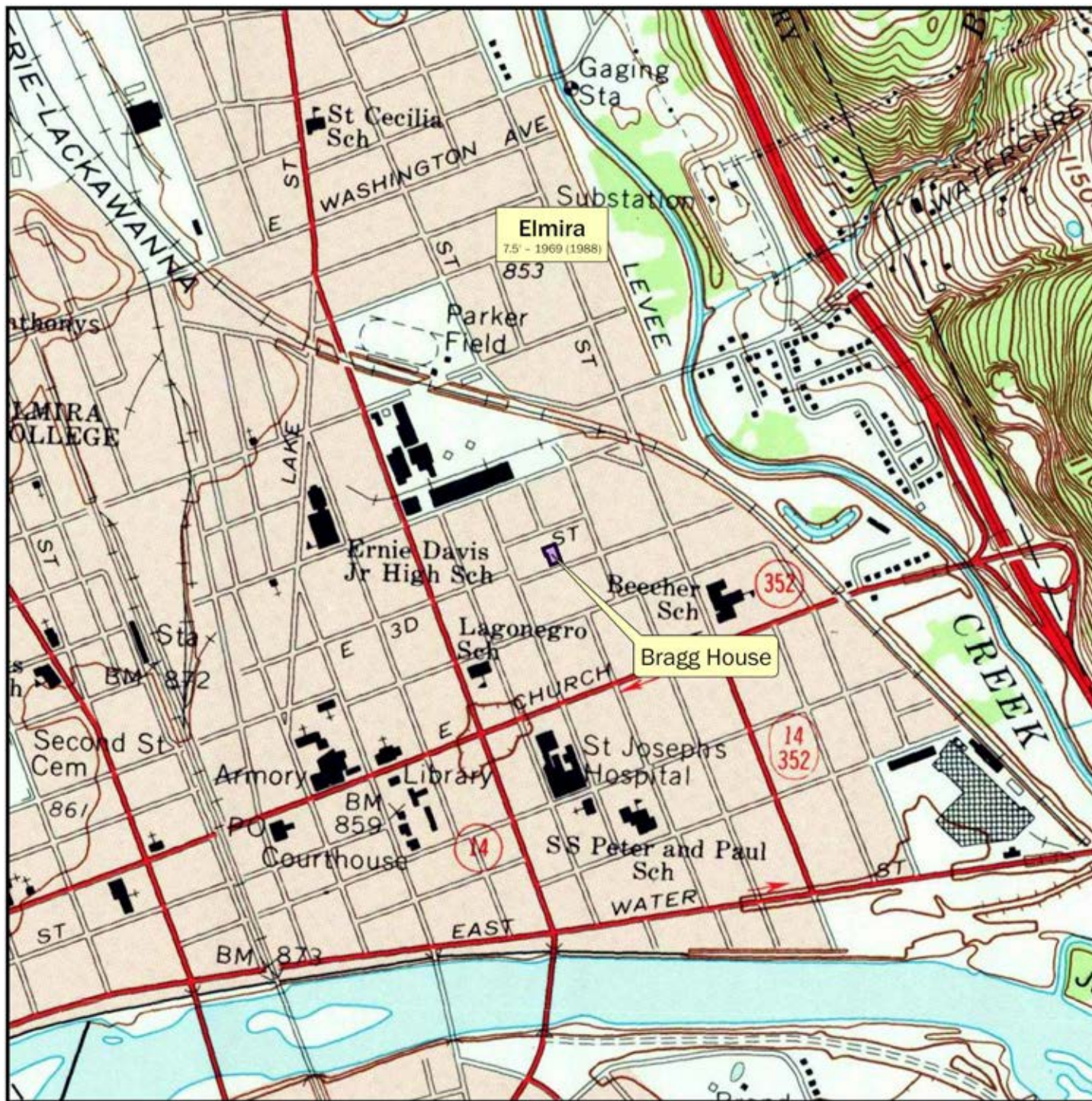
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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 07/08/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



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1:1,200

0 50 100 ft



Nomination Boundary (0.23 ac)



New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2022

Mapped 07/08/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



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**Honorable Discharge**  
from the  
**Civilian Conservation Corps**



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify That\* **GEORGE BRAGG**  
a member of the CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS, who was enrolled  
May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1936 at Wayanda, N. Y., is hereby  
HONORABLY DISCHARGED therefrom, by reason of\*\*  
Expiration of Term of Service  
Said George Bragg was born in New York  
in the State of New York When enrolled he was 20 years  
of age and by occupation a Truck Driver He had Brown eyes,  
Brown hair, Brown complexion, and was five feet  
ten inches in height. His color was Colored  
Given under my hand at Deer Park, N. Y. this thirty first day  
of March, one thousand nine hundred and thirty nine.

Lundy J. James  
(Name) (Title)  
Lundy J. James, 1st Lieut., Coast Artillery  
Anti Aircraft, Reserve,  
Commanding.

\* Insert name, as "John J. Doe."  
\*\* Give reason for discharge.

C. C. C. Form No. 2  
April 5, 1937

Figure 001: George Bragg CCC discharge

The George and Theodora Bragg House

Chemung County, New York

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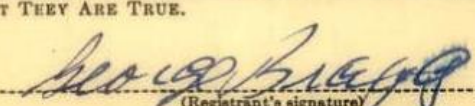
<b>SERIAL NUMBER</b> 1258		<b>1. NAME (Print)</b> George Eccles Bragg (First) (Middle) (Last)		<b>ORDER NUMBER</b> 3102	
<b>2. ADDRESS (Print)</b> 516 Dewitt Ave. Elmira, N. Y. <del>228 West 134 St.</del> New York, New York, New York (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)					
<b>3. TELEPHONE</b> None (Exchange) (Number)		<b>4. AGE IN YEARS</b> 24 DATE OF BIRTH 11-26-1915 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)		<b>5. PLACE OF BIRTH</b> New York City (Town or county) New York (State or country)	
<b>6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP</b> United States					
<b>7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS</b> Mrs. Theodora Bragg (Mr., Mrs., Miss) (First) (Middle) (Last)				<b>8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON</b> Wife	
<b>9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON</b> 228 West 134 St. New York, New York, New York (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)					
<b>10. EMPLOYER'S NAME</b> New War Dept. Building Wash. D.C. <del>National Youth Administration</del> (full-time employee)					
<b>11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS</b> Pier 5, Fleeman Ave. and C St., Brooklyn, King, New York (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)					
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.					
<b>REGISTRATION CARD</b> D. S. S. Form 1 (over)		10-17105		 (Registrant's signature)	

Figure 002: George Bragg Draft Registration Card 1940, showing later revisions



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Figure 003: George and Theodora Bragg 1959

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Figure 004: Mayor and former chairman of the Elmira Housing Authority Edward Lagonegro (center) at a gathering in the Bragg House.



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Figure 005: George Bragg, Flannery Groundbreaking, 1975

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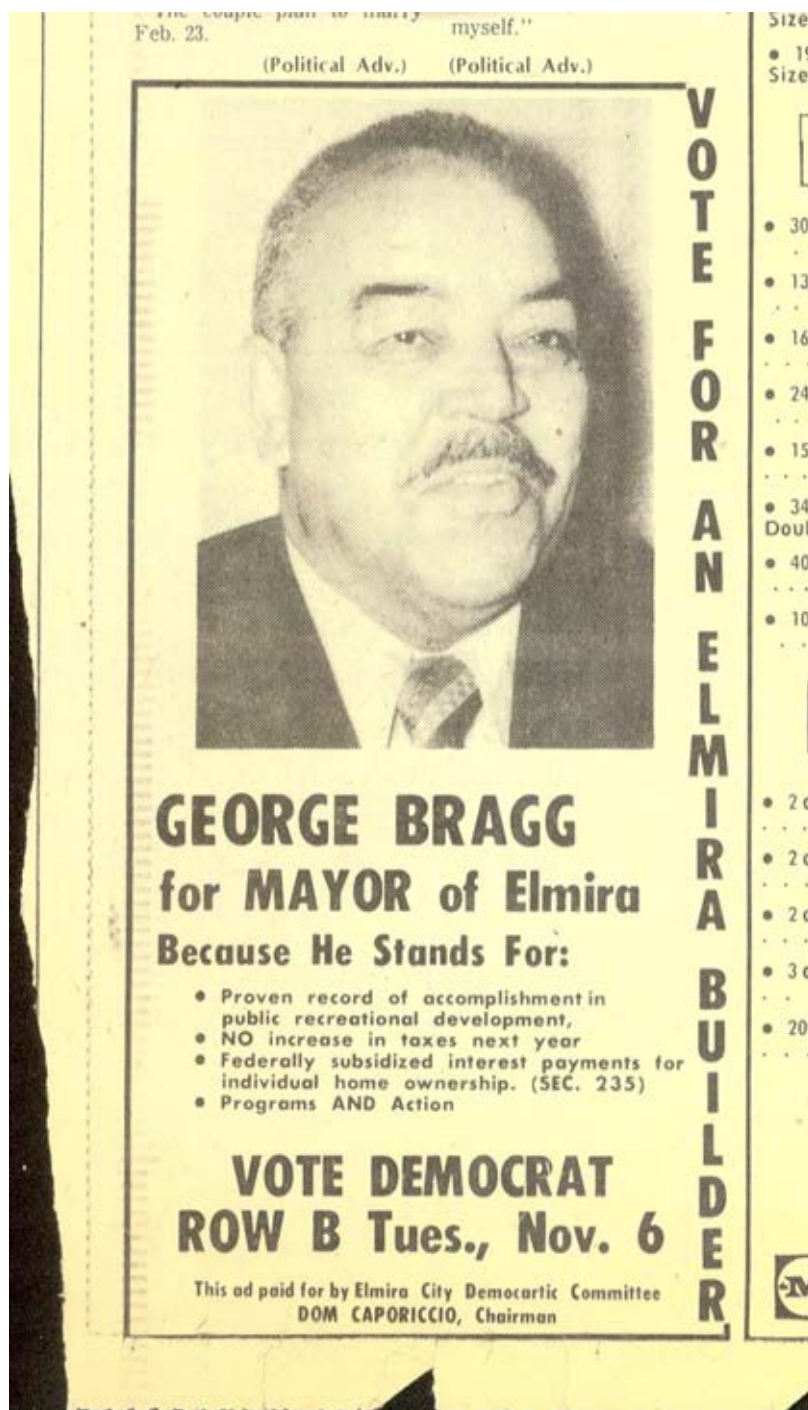


Figure 006: George Bragg mayoral campaign advertisement

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"The Mother Church of Elmira"  
St. Peter and St. Paul  
161 High Street  
Elmira, N. Y. 14901

Sunday  
April 29, 1979

Dear Theo,

What can I say? You have done it again, the dinner was just great. Thank you for all the time and energy, that went into the beautiful meal that we all enjoyed. Theo you and George have given so much of yourself in so many ways for St. Peter and Paul parish and I want you to know how much I appreciate all you have done and the kindness you both have for me. May the good Lord continue to bless you both and your family. Thank you.

Peace, Joy, Love  
Sister Joanne

Figure 007: Theodora Bragg Catering thank you note



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Figure 008: Theodora completes a wedding cake at 611 Jay Street.



The Ladies of Charity of Chemung County, New York raised \$750 at their recent Charity Ball. Mrs. George Bragg (center) is President of the Association. Mrs. Anthony Bellizia, Vice President (left) is seen presenting a check in that amount to Mr. Stanley J. Douglas, Director of Community Relations and Fund Development of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, New York for the Burn Center at the Hospital.

Figure 009: Theodora Bragg – Ladies of Charity, *Servicette* Newsletter May 1977.

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**BRAGG HONORED** — George E. Bragg and his wife, Theodora, admire a plaque presented to him Saturday night at Green Pastures Restaurant for service to the Elmira community.

## Citizens pay Bragg tribute for service to community

A man who has been "concerned about housing since I first knew what a house was" was honored Saturday night.

About 50 people were on hand at the Green Pastures Restaurant to pay tribute to George E. Bragg.

Bragg has been on the Elmira Housing Authority since 1960 and has been chairman for the last ten years.

"He's a real gentleman and a great Elmiran," City Councilman and acting mayor J. William O'Brien said as he presented Bragg with a plaque last night.

O'Brien lauded Bragg for "his great service to the community."

Bragg's wife, Theodora, was at his side as O'Brien termed Bragg "someone who has done a great deal for our city."

Since he was first appointed to the authority, nearly 400 units of public

housing have been opened in the city.

"When I first took office," Bragg said Saturday night, "there was no elderly housing in the city."

He recalls he made the motion at an authority meeting that led to construction of Newtown Towers.

And he pointed with pride to the creation of the Elmira Housing Corp., a unit formed by the housing authority, that will build apartment complexes at Madison Ave. and Third St., and on S. Main St.

Ground should be broken at both sites this month, he said.

Before being appointed to the authority, he was chairman of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

A native New York City resident,

Bragg has lived in Elmira for 41 years.

He is a retired worker of the Bendix Corporation, and was a member of the executive board of the United Auto Workers Local 604 for more than two decades.

"I guess I've always been concerned about housing ever since I first knew what a house was," he smiled.

He would like to see the re-activation of programs that allow people with low and moderate incomes to purchase their own homes.

He would like people to be able to buy older homes that could be rehabilitated through low-interest loans and grants.

Bragg said he was proud of the housing authority for the last 18 years, but quickly added, "There's a lot left to be done."

Figure 010: Service award article



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#### REGION 9 NEWS

## UAW MAN HONORED FOR HOUSING EFFORTS

George E. Bragg dedicated much of his adult life to the pursuit of quality housing for Elmira, New York. On June 8, the town of Elmira reciprocated by dedicating a senior citizens' housing project to the memory of the deceased member of Local 604 UAW.

The Newtown Towers, a 146-unit senior citizen project which came to fruition under Bragg's chairmanship of the Elmira Housing Authority, was renamed the George E. Bragg-Newtown Towers in a ceremony in the building's meeting room.

A portrait of Bragg will hang in the lobby of the building as a memorial to his work.

Keith Osborne, President of Local 1752 UAW and Vice President of the Central New York UAW-CAP Council, represented Region 9 Director Ed Gray at the dedication. Gray, in a letter, called the renaming of project after Bragg "a tribute richly deserved. The opportunity to work with someone like George Bragg in the effort to improve the quality of our life in the plant and in the community is a source of great pleasure and comfort."

Bragg, who retired after 32 years from Bendix-Facet Motor Components in Elmira Heights, N. Y., served as recording secretary for Local 604 for 10 years. His work in the union stimulated his interest and concern in his community and in 1960 Bragg was appointed to the Elmira Housing Authority. He was elected chairperson of the board in 1968, a post he held until his death in September, 1979.

Bragg, who was a member of the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations for Elmira, was the Democratic candidate and the first black to run for the office of mayor of Elmira in 1973.

Among the UAW members present at the dedication were: Milton Thomas, President of 604; Julius Kurkoba, Financial Secretary; William Stone, Chairperson of Retired Workers Chapter 604, and Bob Lintz, Past President of Local 604.



Family and friends flank the portrait of the late George E. Bragg, former recording secretary of Local 604 UAW, Elmira, N. Y., which will be hung in the newly renamed George E. Bragg-Newtown Towers Senior Citizens Housing Project. From left, Keith Osborne, President, Local 1752 UAW; Rachel Phinney, Secretary, Elmira Housing Authority; Mrs. Theodora Bragg, Bragg's widow; and Edward Lagonegro, Chairperson, Elmira Housing Authority.

## Summer School Sign-Up

A new format and additional workshops will highlight the 1980 Region 9 Summer Institute at Cornell University in Ithaca, N. Y. The week-long session is scheduled for August 3-8.

Education Director Carl Thul announced that this year's program will feature mock local union standing committees in which delegates will examine selected resolutions and discuss how to implement them into action. The process will help develop an understanding of how UAW resolutions relate to union programs and policies.

This year's workshops include: Collective Bargaining, led by Francis "Cokey" Smith; Grievance Handlers Workshop, led by Jim Donohue; GM Grievance Handling

Figure 011: UAW 1980 Newsletter

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# Catholic Courier

News

Faith & Family

Viewpoints

Regional Life

Special Sections

Multimedia

Entert



Theodora Bragg is seen June 21, 1992. (Courier file photo)



## Parish committee places focus on Elmira's Black history

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier | 02.26.2024

Figure 012: Theodora Bragg celebrated in 2024 Catholic Courier article.



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Figure 013: Flannery Towers

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Figure 014: George E Bragg – Newman Towers



Figure 015: Playground dedication sign

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Figure 016: 611 Jay Street Historic Photo – date unknown



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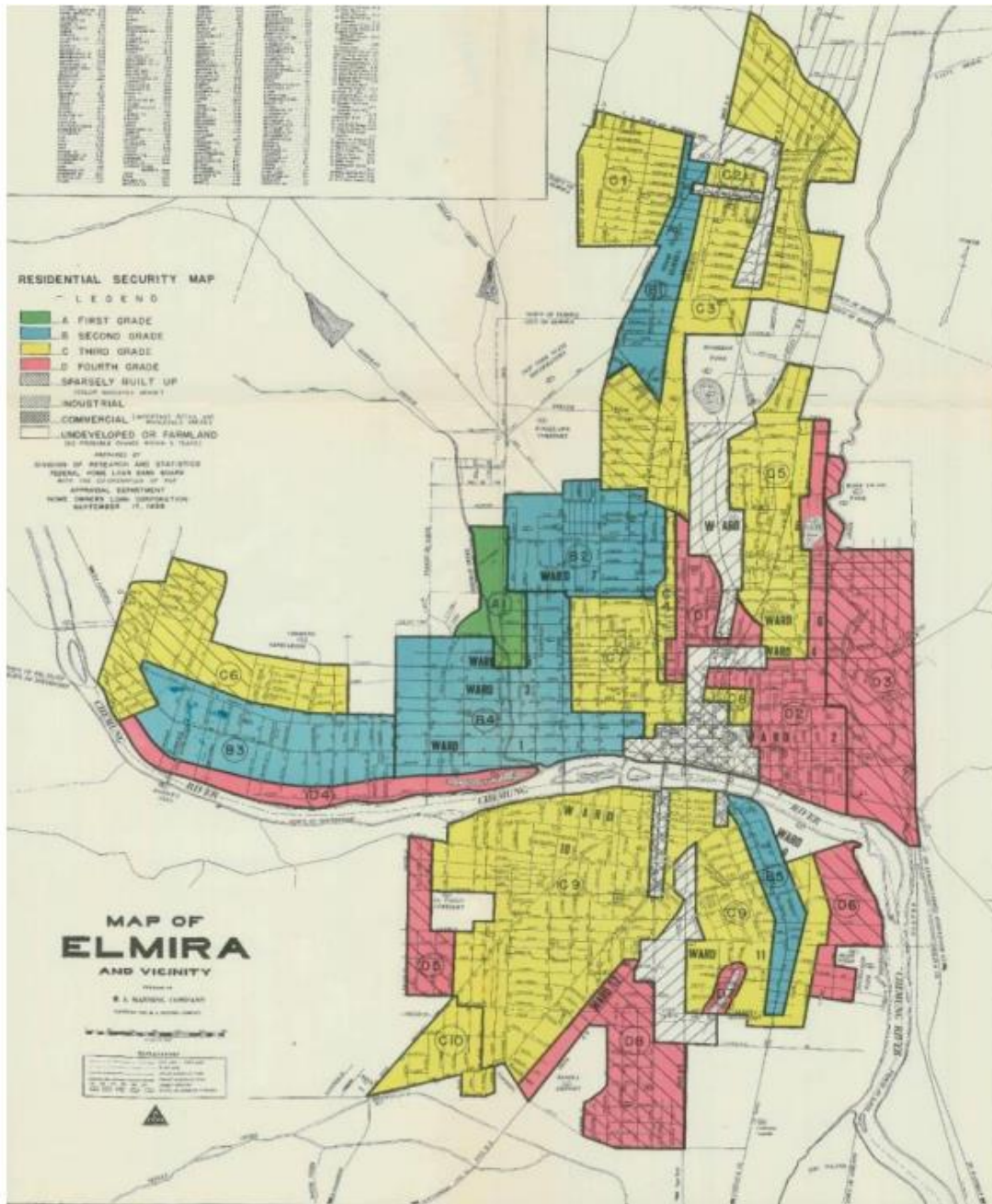


Figure 017: 1938 Residential Securities Map. Jay and Dewitt streets are in section D2.



The George and Theodora Bragg House

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: The Bragg House

City or Vicinity: Elmira

County: Chemung

State: New York

Photographer: Michelle Bragg

Date Photographed: 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001 of 0012: Façade, view North
- 0002 of 0012: West elevation, view east
- 0003 of 0012: Rear elevation, view south
- 0004 of 0012: East elevation, view west with garage
- 0005 of 0012: Garage façade, view north
- 0006 of 0012: Dining room
- 0007 of 0012: Interior door and trim
- 0008 of 0012: Flood Marker
- 0009 of 0012: 1972 flood marker on cased opening trim
- 0010 of 0012: Living room showing front entry and stair
- 0011 of 0012: Stairway and woodwork
- 0012 of 0012: Second floor bedroom and hall

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0001: Façade, view North

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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0002: West elevation, view east



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0003: Rear elevation, view south

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0004: East elevation, view west with garage



The George and Theodora Bragg House

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0005: Garage façade, view north

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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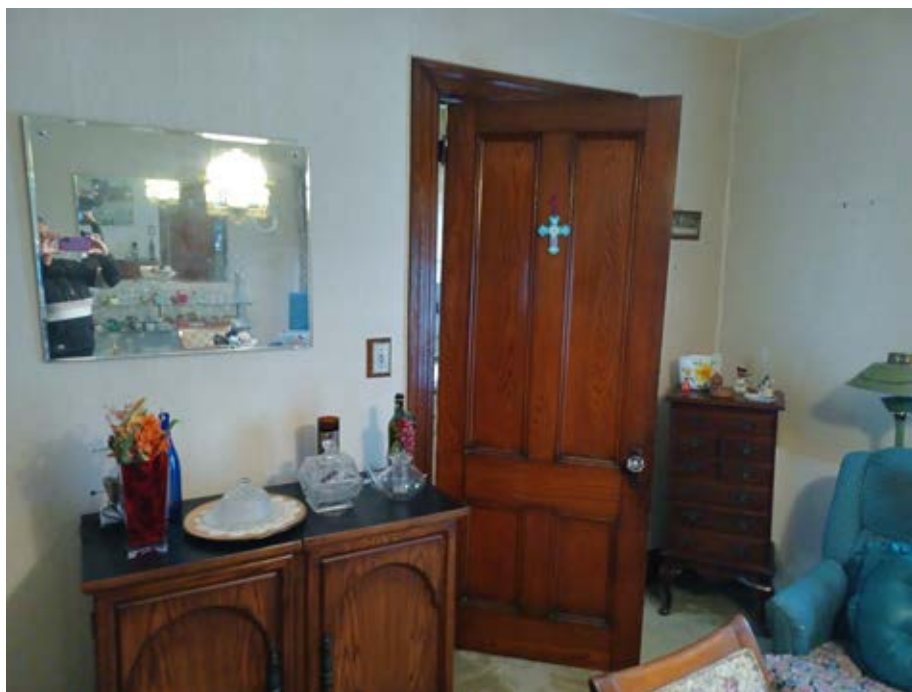
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0006: Dining room



0007: Interior door and trim



The George and Theodora Bragg House

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0008: Flood Marker



0009: 1972 flood marker on cased opening trim

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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0010: Living room showing front entry and stair



0011: Stairway and woodwork

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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0012: Second floor bedroom and hall

The George and Theodora Bragg House

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County and State

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.