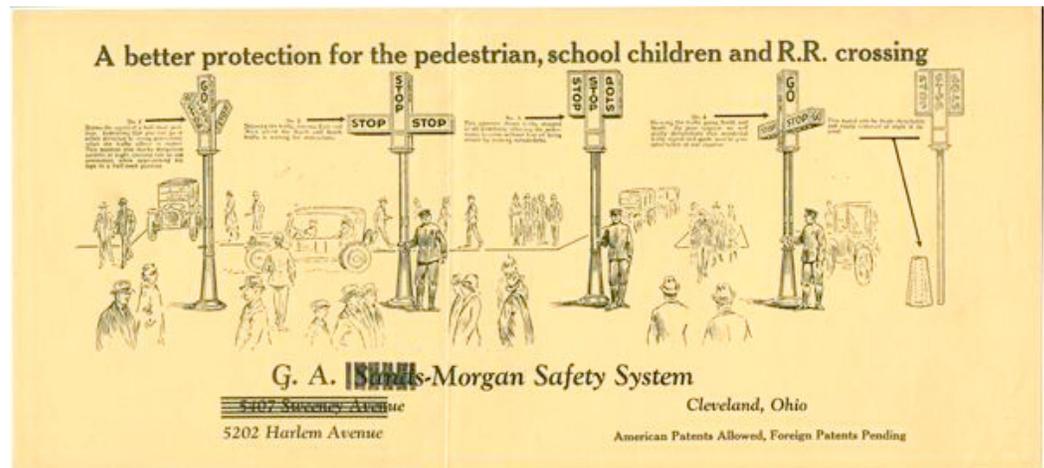


Garrett Morgan: Traffic Signal



Garrett Morgan was an important inventor and businessman active in the affairs of Cleveland's black community. Among his most notable inventions were an early gas mask and a traffic light. Morgan was born in Paris, KY to Sydney, a former slave and son of Confederate Col. John H. Morgan, and Eliza Reed, also a former slave. He received 6 years of education before leaving home at age 14. He came to Cleveland on 17 June 1895. After various positions as a sewing-machine adjuster for clothing manufacturers, Morgan went into business for himself in 1907, establishing a shop on W. 6th St. to repair and sell sewing machines. In 1909 he opened a tailoring shop. With 32 employees, he manufactured suits, dresses, and coats. In 1913 he organized the G. A. Morgan Hair Refining Co. to market a hair-straightening solution he had discovered by accident in 1905. This company soon offered a complete line of hair-care products.

Morgan invented a safety helmet to protect the wearer from smoke and ammonia, introducing his "Breathing Device" in 1912. It was patented in 1914. He then used it to descend into the gas-filled tunnel beneath Lake Erie to rescue workers after the Cleveland Waterworks explosion on 25 July 1916. Morgan established the National Safety Device Co. in 1914. His other major invention, a traffic light (1923), was important in that it used a third, cautionary signal between "stop" and "go." Morgan sold his traffic light to General Electric Co. for \$40,000 in 1923.

Morgan in 1908 helped found the Cleveland Association of Colored Men and in 1920 founded the Cleveland Call, a weekly newspaper. In 1923 he bought a farm near Wakeman, Ohio, establishing the black Wakeman Country Club.

Morgan married Madge Nelson in 1896; they were divorced in 1898. In 1908 he married Mary Hasek. He had three children, John P., Garrett A., Jr., and Cosmo H. Morgan died in Cleveland and was buried in Lake View Cemetery.

For Kids!

Draw Morgan's traffic signal: