

SCHOOL



IR: I think that [Beech Street School] was the oldest, and then Union Street. I may be wrong about that. But we went through fifth grade and the startling thing was that in fifth grade the Monroe Street School burned, so all those people had to come over to our school. And it was quite a come-down for them; the elite of west side Ridgewood had to come to our school. [laughter] So our sixth grade, we went to Beech Street and we did that. And I remember this school [Union Street] with great affection. Today it would not be considered very good but [then it was]. This was second grade. Every teacher had a piano and every teacher played. And we sang....



IN: ... Was there any discipline—anybody that you can remember being disciplined for anything?

CC: Oh, yes.

IN: Like what?

CC: They—sent to the office, had this—

IN: For doing what? What was a bad thing to do in junior high or high school when you were young? [chuckles]

CC: This is—spitballs. Spitballs.

IN: [chuckles] What were they like?

CC: They'd take a piece of paper and chew it up and then roll it in their hand and then throw it toward—to somebody who wasn't looking, and passing notes. Not terrible.

IN: No. [laughs]

CC: That terrible, passing a note? But we were disciplined for it.



1994

Ellarae Saunders was founder of the Order of the Lamp.

ERS: And I began to meet a lot of people and I liked the town so very much. I liked what it looked like because it reminded me of the country town. I came from Rock Hill, South Carolina. Very floral, very beautiful and all, except it didn't have the colleges that town had. So I thought, 'It's where I would like to live.' And having a young daughter and I wanted her to grow up in this kind of atmosphere, plus go to school here. But when I began to talk to a lot of people through the church community, I found that all of the high school graduate, like young people, were just graduating, going out for cooks or [unclear] construction work or whatnot, I thought, oh, no, no. That would never do for my children. So I talked to a few people in the church and I—as I met people, I talked to them about their forming an organization to help our black young people here in town, because I noticed they wasn't going to college. And having come from this college town in Rock Hill, South Carolina where all of the black people who could afford was going to college and was coming out teaching and doing other things, I just couldn't see my child at that time—I only had one daughter. So I met this lady, Mrs. Harriet Beets, who is deceased now, who used to always keep the people's children who was working in domestic. And she had also kept two young men and they both worked out in Long Island. And the moment they graduated from high school, one went into a plant and one went into some construction. And I asked her if this is what all the young people do when they graduate from high school. "Yes," she said. "Well, so far, they don't have money enough to go away to college and they don't seem to be inspired. There's no one, you know, [unclear] kind of movement." So I asked her, could—if I get a number of people together, could I have a meeting at her house for this purpose and she said yes. And this was 50 Green Street, Glen Rock, New Jersey. So on January 30th I had 12 people I had talked with. They said, oh, this would be a good idea. We met and we discussed the feasibility of organizing some kind of organization whereby we could raise some funds. We would help and even appeal to the public and help to send these young people that graduated from high school to college. So we did and we first called it the Educational Aid Group. And Reverend Carl Allen Thomas, who was the pastor of the Metropolitan AME Zion Church—at that time, we told him about it. Oh, he thought it was the finest idea because he was always interested in something like that. So he came in and said, oh, he would like to join and we had a second meeting at the parsonage up on South Broad Street, at his home. So he named the group. He said he wanted to name it [unclear] of the Order of the Lamp, because that was a Greek order, wherein people with a little [unclear] searched even though they were slaves to try to read and write, so seeking education would be a

continuous search. And that's why it was named the Order of the Lamp. And so from that on, each year we would give an annual affair. And we would solicit appeals of the community and contributions from the merchants, et cetera. And they have always been very, very good about that, even when we first started 44 years ago.