

Thompson-Hunter Neighborhood Association

Dinner & A Dose of History

Meeting Notes // January 30, 2012

Lindsay Jordan, board chair, began the business portion of our meeting by reading the THNA mission statement: "Thompson-Hunter Neighborhood Association is dedicated to improving the quality of life, sense of community, and pride in our urban neighborhood by having neighborhood clean-ups, get-togethers, meetings such as this, etc.

We then had a time of group introductions and took turns sharing our names, where we live and how long we've lived in the neighborhood. Neighborhood residence in attendance spanned from 6 months to 82 years!

Lindsay then passed out sheets to help identify skills people have to share with others in the neighborhood and ballots to vote for ways we'd like to use the matching grant money we plan to receive from the City of Raleigh (up to \$1,000 for one project).

History Portion of the Evening

Memories From Arthur Graham

After the Christmas Eve service at a church by Bojangles (St. Monica's?) they would come home and bring all the lights from downstairs to upstairs. Then at 6 AM all the kids would meet out in the street and they would have a parade down Hargett St. "We'd beat our drums and everything," Arthur recounted. There were lots of large families in the neighborhood. Roller skating was the thing to do on the street, and everybody did it. They had a recreation center where the current DMV is located. (The confederate soldiers used to be buried there.) All the boys wanted to play Little League baseball on the field. There were 7 boys in his family.

Memories From Clementine Weaver (79)

Clementine was born on Hargett Street. Her mom moved there in 1929. Clementine was the youngest of 7 children -- 2 boys and 5 girls. Her sister, Mary, lives with her now. She's 89. All the kids had skates and scooters when she was a kid. Everyone knew each other too because there were only a few schools and everyone went to the same schools (Lucille Hunter, Crosby-Garfield and Washington). There were no buses, everyone walked. Clementine and her siblings attended the Catholic school, which was only \$0.10/week to attend. Many kids went to Catholic school because of the low cost. There were teachers all around, and police officers, city nurses, and a judge. Every house had 5-10 children. "Everyone loved Hargett Street -- they didn't want to leave. They all come back at some time or another," Clementine chuckled. "We need more children!"

Memories From Louise Johnson (81)

Louise's mother thought she was the Pied Piper of all the children in the neighborhood. They lived across the street from Crosby-Garfield School. All the kids walked to school in the rain, sleet and snow. (The school actually burned down later because it was an all wooden school, and was rebuilt when Louise was in 3rd grade.) There was no phone at the school, so anyone

who needed to make a phone call went across the street to Louise's house to use the phone. (Louise still knows her phone number 1079J (the party line)). Her mother was also the "school cafeteria" of sorts. Her mom stayed up late to make soup, soda crackers and peanut butter, and johnny cakes for the kids. All the kids knew how to jump rope, do flips over the bars, and skate backward and forward down the hill on Lenoir. (Louise was amazed to meet folks later who didn't know how to skate!) Pee Wee Moore was her brother and he was an amazing saxophone player, who used to play at Irregardless Cafe and can be researched on wikipedia. Louise married Coach Johnson (85). Her husband believes in a beautiful yard. He even put in a sprinkler system for a small area! They have two boys: One an entrepreneur and the second a doctor in physics. "You can come out of the ghetto and still be good," she said. Hugh Morrison School was for the poor white kids, Mary Broughton was for the "uppity" white kids, as they called them, and other kids went to St. Monica (Catholic) School. Louise worked at the NC School for the Blind for 18 years. There was an actual Rock Quarry until 1949.

Arthur added, "Did you know all the guys at church had a crush on you?" :)

Question: "What happened in the 70's and 80's?"

Mr. Exum: To be honest, it had to do with Jim Crowe and racial isolation/segregation. The schools were segregated. Black doctors, lawyers, everyone was 'sequestered' into S.E. Raleigh. "We were self-sufficient." We had neighborhood grills with fish sandwiches, hot dogs, chicken in a box, neighborhood stores, theatres (Lincoln Theatre), etc. There was Poor Boys Market on Bloodworth. After integration, they all began to close. Yet, we weren't welcome outside the neighborhood, so we didn't leave. We did OK by segregation. Camden to Fayetteville Street were zoned for white people. There were clear, rigid color lines. Everyone knew where the lines were. The area was inhabited by a lot of teachers, preachers, and parents... who cared. You couldn't do anything wrong without your parents knowing by the time you got home. There was pride in the community.

Clementine: Previous home owners died, the houses went up for rent and/or became boarding house.

Donnis Dunn noted that it was like the "Jesse Helms System." Folks came in, purchased the homes from the owners' kids for very little (the kids were just anxious to get the money). These owners didn't care who lived in the properties or what kind of conditions they were in.

Larry (Arthur's Cousin): One major difference that affected the neighborhood was that parents kept the neighborhood together and watched out for each other and each others' kids. They instilled a [healthy] sense of pride for community and care for one another in the neighborhood and their kids. We need to revive that feeling again. We'll never have the old community again, but that's ok. We can revive that sense of pride though and live with it today. "There is tradition on Hargett Street. Pray that the sense of community will continue and be established."

Closing Remarks

Lindsay closed the meeting; thanked everyone for attending and for the fantastic discussion. Some folks mentioned how neat it would be to bring pictures of what the neighborhood used to

be like to our next meeting on February 20.