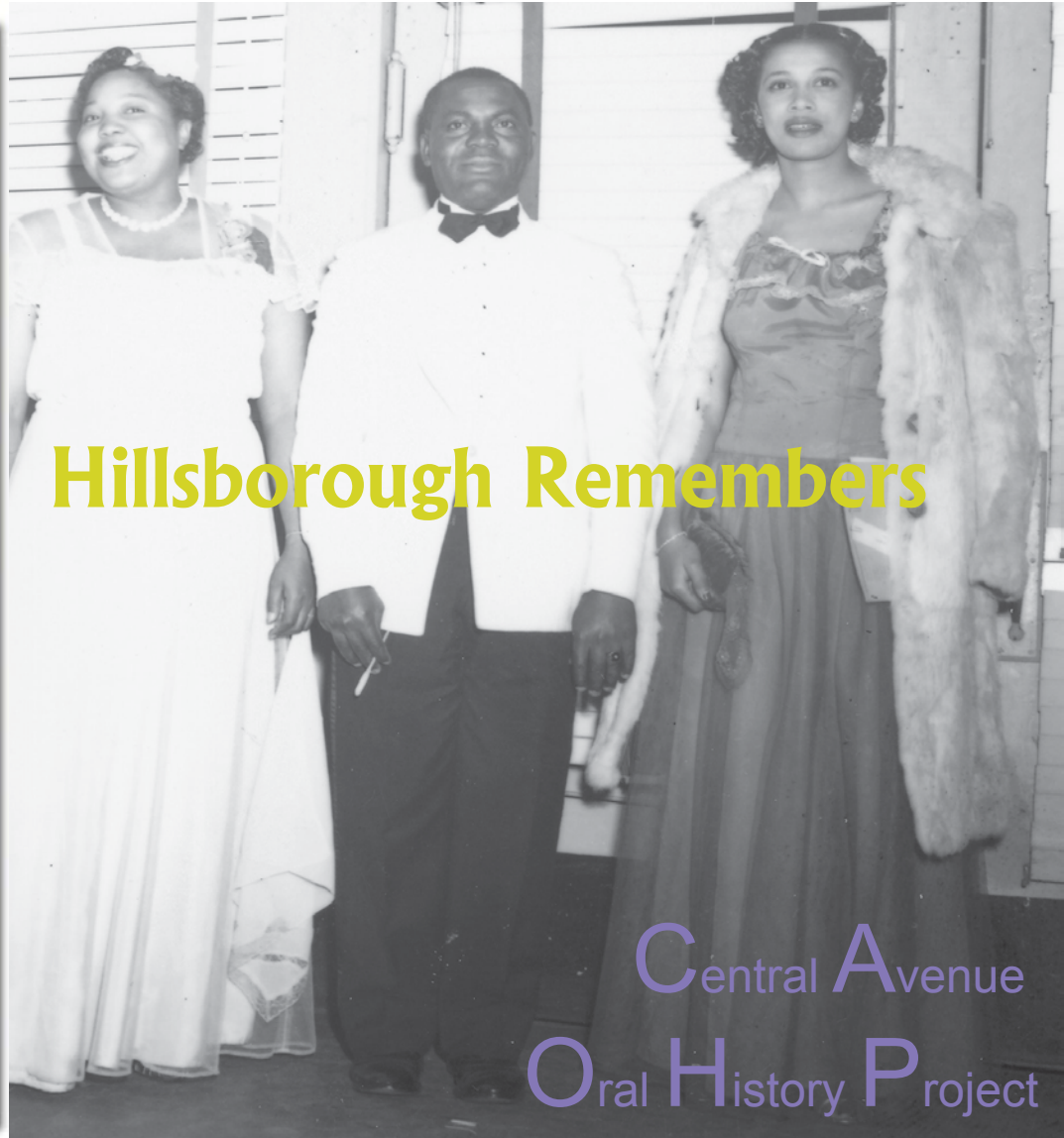


*Amanda White-Anthony*



**Hillsborough Remembers**

Central Avenue  
Oral History Project

*This is an interview with Amanda White-Anthony (AA) of Tampa Florida. This interview is being conducted at the Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Library on January 6, 2004. Mrs. Anthony will tell us about her memories of Central Ave. and the Anthony's Drive-in business. The interviewer is Carrie Hurst (CH) representing the Central Avenue Business and Entertainment District Oral History Collections Project.*

CH: Ms. Anthony what are your earliest memories of the Central Avenue Business and Entertainment District?

AA: Well, when I came to Tampa um I heard of Central Ave. And um when I first went to Central Avenue I thought it was the most interesting place I had seen for people to get dressed up and go out and have a good time. And on the weekends people ( ) of getting the outfits, going dancing down to the Blue Room. And my family, the Whites, came to Tampa and opened a, a, the Palm Dinette dining room and I must say it was fabulous. It was really fabulous. And um Blake High School had their prom there. And um they had a bar, no alcoholic beverages, it was just simply magnificent. And um you, you were served in china. And um, you were well served in china and silver. All white linen tablecloths, white napkins and I think the most delicious food that you could get in Tampa. Soul food. And ah, the best bar-b-que in town, just the best food period. And people enjoyed coming there and having a great time. And my father looked up and told my brothers Moses and Chester, "we can't open this place until we got a crystal ball" and they got, daddy and him went and got the crystal ball and when they opened the Palms Dinette it was a sight to see. People really enjoyed it. Then after dinner or before we'd go to the Blue Room and dance and just have a good time. Count Basie, I remember County Basie. Louie Armstrong and um, I believe Fats Wallace came here, one time when we were there. And we all just had a good time, it was a great time.

CH: How old were you when you first came to Central Avenue?

AA: Um, when I first came to Tampa I was um sixteen years old. Sixteen years old. And this is where I met my husband, and we got married. And so um, there was um Lincoln Theatre and um Kid Mason, Rodgers Dining Room and ah, or um McArthur's Studio and we enjoyed getting dressed going to McArthur's Studio taking pictures. And there was a the Palace Drug Store. And that was a nice place to go and have a nice time and be served ice cream and everything. And people respected you in those days. They see you coming down the street and if there was someone drinking they say, "Oh no, there come respectable ladies. If you say anything don't say any profanity." It was well respected and we just really enjoyed each other.

CH: And so you are a relative of a Central Avenue business owner?

AA: Oh yes! My family the Whites.

CH: O. K. and who owned the Palm Dinette?

AA: My brother, Moses and Chester. And my father had interest in it, Thomas White, Sr. And my brother Moses is the first one sponsored um the children Maroon and Gold parade here. And Coach Gaither and President Gore stayed at our home, here. And ah the first parade, oh it was beautiful! Beautiful floats and um Miss Bethune and all, they was the

judges of the floats. And um, my brother and Coach Gaither and them they would work so hard. They would come into Tampa from Tallahassee for meetings, getting the games together and all and so. My brother Moses was the one that sponsored the Tiltamaroon coming to Tampa. Florida A&M and them coming to Tampa.

CH: So the Tiltamaroon and Gold was that the plan for the football game?

AA: All of it was combined. The parade was before the football game. The football game was at night.

CH: O. K. What other kinds of businesses were on Central Avenue?

AA: Well um, I think Kid Mason owned his place. Watt Sanders. Rodgers Dining Room. There was the Palace Drug Store. Now I don't know who owned the other little, I know there was Walker's Grocery Store down there and I can't remember who owned the other little businesses. But those were the big time.

CH: What represented the best times on Central Avenue? Such as the parades.

AA: Yes, the parade and Watt Sanders' and all of them, you know. Brought in the best entertainment. Oh! And there was the um, not the Shriners. Yes, the Shriners and ah, they all had good times. There was ( ) inside rooming house in the back of my family's restaurant. And Henry Joyner owned um, owned the Cotton Club. The Cotton Club down there. That was really nice.

CH: What represented some of the worst times on Central Avenue?

AA: When the riot—when the riot came.

CH: Where did you live in what would have been the summer of 1967 and what do you know about the death of Martin Chambers?

AA: Well we have a restaurant ( ) in the West Tampa. That time when I went to work, that Saturday afternoon and I didn't know what had happened. And ah, so um all the people came in and was telling me what had happened. That the police had ah shot Martin Chambers. And so um that was the worst time of my memory. And that's when people just started rioting. You know in the street.

CH: Why did you think they rioted? I mean, was it because—well you tell me what you think.

AA: Because they thought it was unfair. They thought they just shot him, you know killed him.

CH: What were some of the changes that you saw on Central Avenue a few years before the closing of the street?

AA: To be honest with you I didn't go down there after that. I really didn't because it became, you know um it wasn't the same. Things just really changed and um it just weren't my cup of tea to go down there anymore. Because you know people didn't really hang out down there anymore. It just wasn't the same.

CH: Where did you typically go for business or entertainment after Central Avenue was closed?

AA: Well we had our restaurant and um Anthony's Drive-in on Main Street.

CH: And you would go to?

AA: Ah, club dances in our sorority/fraternity in different club dances.

CH: Is there anything further that you would like to tell us about your memories of Central Avenue, the business or is there anything we have not discussed?

AA: Well, that's just as far as I remember now of ah that.

CH: I want to thank you for coming by and sharing your memories with us.

AA: Your more than welcome. I was glad to do it.