## Shared Stories: Business

## African Americans in North Mecklenburg

I even worked for Davidson College. In the library in the serials and documents. That's in the early 70s. I had worked at the bank, Piedmont Bank and Trust in Davidson. I was one of the first blacks, really I was the first black they hired at Piedmont Bank and Trust. —Peggy Rivens

## Church & Social by Marjean Torrence



Grand Opening of J & G Beauty Supply Shoppe

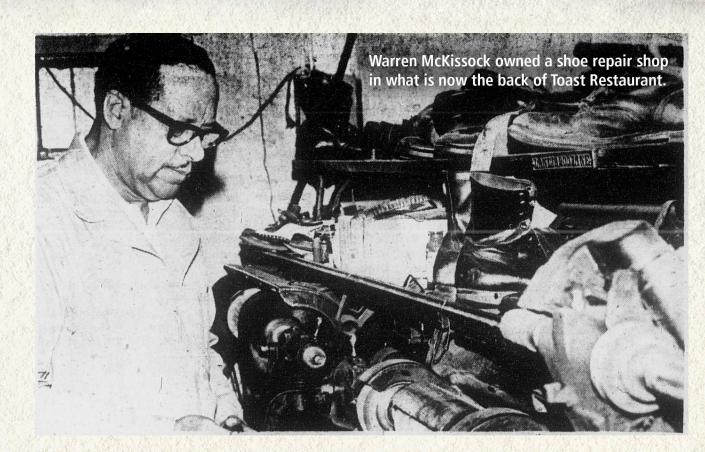
I started being a lead man at Asbestos [Carolina Asbestos in Davidson], right after I left there I went to Merita Bakery and I was assistant shipping clerk. That was down on Trade Street in Charlotte, NC. I left there after four years and I wanted to get a job closer to home, so I started working at Reeves-Foamex. I spent 27 years there. While I was working there, I was partly doing my own business. I was working on second shift and at that time I had about 27 employees. I was a supervisor down there at that time. After I stayed there for a while, I went and took some business courses so I could start my own business. After I finished up doing that I continued to work at Foamex. I worked until they closed down the plant. I went off doing my own business. I used to have a garbage route when I was working on second shift. I had a commercial painting business as well. I started it shortly after I started the limousine business. —Frank Jordan

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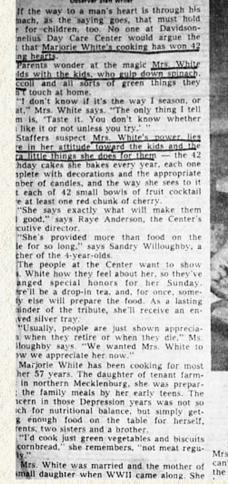
I graduated from nursing school in 1956. Then after that, I worked at Good Samaritan school for 2 years, on the medical unit. After that, I changed jobs and went to the Physical Rehabilitation Institute in Charlotte and worked. I worked rehab for 36 years. I changed different positions there and my last 15 years at rehab I was in nursing administration. And I did some family education during that time at rehab with families and physically handicapped patients. That was really rewarding. The whole time I was there I enjoyed it, you were always learning something different, some new from working with those people. My mother was a licensed practical nurse and she did private jobs in private homes. And then she started going out of town for jobs. Most of the people worked at the college or they did day work in homes when I was growing up.

—Erving McClain



I think Mr. Withers had a sawmill and a farm. Most all of them really did mill work because that was the only thing around here for black folks: farming, millwork or the asbestos plant. —Evelyn Carr

picture from





We quit farming then. Everybody had jobs and we went to the white folks, took care of their children, cleaned their houses, and cooked. I worked at the Mooresville cotton mill and Mooresville laundry a while and over at the fraternity boarding house. —Susie Lowery

Margaret Robbins Parks

Retirement home says thanks to barber duo Father-son team give unselfishly

With 114 years of experience as barbers between them, the father and son team at Potts

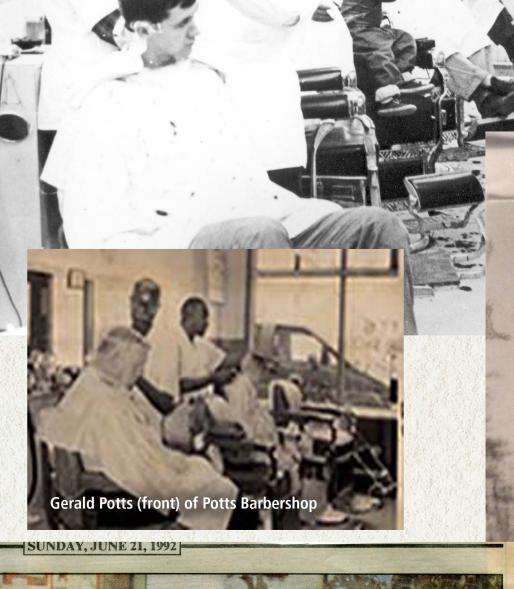
Avenue in Cornelius is an insti-

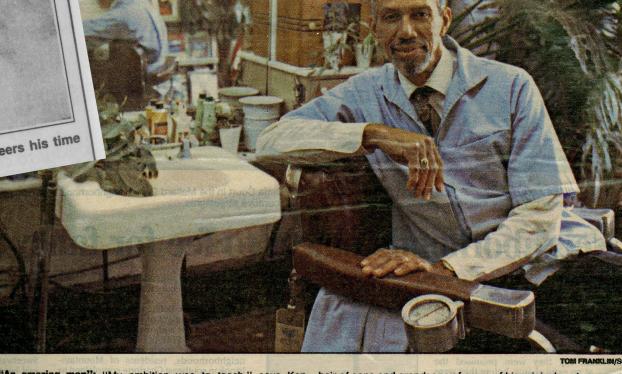
And recently, they were honored for their volunteer efforts at the Huntersville Oaks Nursing home, where they take time each month to trim resi-

Shop on Catawba

Beginning at nine in the morning, the barbers each may cut the hair of 15 or 20 men before they leave at lunch time. Lois England, volunteer coordinator at The Oaks, calls the free services of Wilson and Gerald One recent day, as the two of them clipped away at the The Gerald Potts, like his 86-year old father, volunteers his time Oaks, residents waited in line patiently and chatted over the and talents. (Photo by Joshua Barach) the electric shears. Many residents who ordinarily are vocal sat quietly waiting I heard that Mr. Johnson had a opening, so I came here in '57

and started working for him....And then in '70, I got a job in Charlotte as a salesman, selling cars. Worked there for six and a half years. Ray Skidmore American Motors. Five and half years and then a year in Gastonia, that was in the middle seventies and the economy got bad, the gas prices. And I said, "well, I'm going back to the barber shop."... I didn't keep my license renewed, so I went back to renew the license and I started at Potts Barber Shop in Cornelius and worked there for a number of years; 22 years. And it was good for me, good to me there, too. I enjoyed working with Mr. Potts over there. Seven years ago, in '93, I decided to come over here and get my own shop. That's when Norton went out of business. The way it got started was, Mr. Knox came over and said, "Raeford, I've got a place available, would you be interested?" I said "Nah," I wasn't even going to think about it. And then he said, "Norton's going out of business," and I said, "It might be good for me." And I went by a few days later and we made a deal that same day to get this place." —James Raeford





"An amazing man": "My ambition was to teach," says Ken hair of sons and grandsons of some of his original customers, and Norton, who has been a barber in Davidson for 50 years. "I he's still in his foster father's shop, the same one with its barber

College town barber meant to be teacher

But family shop became his forum for 50 years

ber College (1943), his associate degree from Carver College (1951), a Silver Beaver Award for his work with the Boy Scouts (1978), the Martin Luther King "My dad said he barbered for 57 years. I don't want to die on the Please see Norton/page f

Well, you see, Davidson didn't have but one clothes store. We had to go to Charlotte to get what we needed. Even groceries. —Susie Lowery

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Back then, it was back in as my dad tells us the 'Hoover days.' They weren't bad. But he told me he worked for 5 cents an hour, or maybe 5 cents a day, I don't remember. After that, my daddy came to the Carolina Asbestos Mill; he worked there for 32 years. No, he worked at the cotton mill first; he was a night watchman and a boiler, kept the boiler going. And he worked up there for many, many years. And then he went to the asbestos plant. —Evelyn Carr

After she left there, she cooked at a fraternity house for about 20 years, probably. That was hard work because she worked 7 days a week. I don't think she was making more than about \$8.75 a week. I remember because I was working with her then and they raised it up so that when I left we were making \$14.50. To make money, we used to have a big old walnut tree almost in our backyard, and I used to sit up on the tree and hurl walnuts and I made money, just my little nickels and dimes. In blackberry season, we would pick blackberries and sell them. And then later on, when I got older, I got a babysitting job, and she paid me \$8 a week. —Evelyn Carr

Sid white, Len Gredy Caldwell + 9.9. Hell all