

# Memories of Brooklyn neighborhood

Continued from page 1A

class structure, with row houses and shotgun houses interspersed amid stately residences of professionals. Those who worked in the homes of Myers Park and Dilworth whites lived, played, ate and went to church along with doctors, lawyers and school teachers.

"People were people and they respected each other," said Ely, the first queen in 1948 of the Queen City Classic football game between Second

Ward and West Charlotte high schools.

"There was a closeness of black people," she said. "Brooklyn was like a second city. We were not allowed to go to white establishments, except maybe to the downtown area to shop, and we were limited there.

"Brooklyn had its own movie theaters, its own churches, its own schools. We did not have to leave Brooklyn to do anything."

Hundreds of businesses were

among the structures razed as urban redevelopment destroyed the physical Brooklyn during the 1960s. Businesses like El Chico's, Ma Georges, Hood's Tea Room, the Ebony Guest House, barber shops, beauty parlors, garages. Some relocated, but few thrived in their new locations. Residents, forced to sell homes for a fraction of what they were worth, ended up renting or living in public housing.

"It was sad to see a lot of

homeowners lose their property," Ely said. "It was sad to see our neighborhood taken away from us. They tore down some beautiful churches, some just built."

In 1969, Second Ward High School closed and it was torn down a few years later.

"It was an awful thing to see our school torn down," said Ely, who taught in Charlotte for 32 years after graduating from Shaw University in Raleigh. She's now historian for the Second Ward Alumni

Foundation, which formed in 1980. The foundation, which meets annually during Labor Day weekend, maintains a permanent exhibit in its house at 1905 Beatties Ford Road. The group, which has a Maryland chapter, will also put artifacts on display at Theater Charlotte during "The Second City" performance next week.

"There's still a special bond with people from Brooklyn, when you see people in a store or participate in a Second

Ward High School reunion," Simmons said. "Anybody that's 40-plus got a little taste of that."

"Brooklyn gave me my strongest sense of interpersonal skills, the ability to get along with people, to accord each person, regardless of their station in life, respect. To know that everybody is somebody. It keeps me humble and lets me know how important intangibles are - integrity, dignity, love, caring and pride."

## Ruth Sloane's play to debut



Ruth Sloane

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

When Ruth Sloane was commissioned by Theater Charlotte to write a play about the old Brooklyn neighborhood, she got excited right away.

Even before an Arts and Science Council grant was approved for the project, she started working.

"I began treading water before it was definitely on go," said Sloane, a writer and director who grew up in the Greenville community. "It has sprouted its own wings and begun to fly."

Sloane said her experiences in Greenville, which like Brooklyn was razed during urban renewal helped her write "The Second City."

"Coming from a community that had been torn down, I can empathize with a community that had been torn down," she said.

"The Second City" tells the story of a community of African Americans which flourished and died in Charlotte's Second Ward, the uptown area south of Trade Street and east of Tryon. Sloane's work is a choreopoem, telling the story through music, song and dance, with words based on interviews with former Brooklyn residents. She drew from the works of Rose Leary Love, who taught and lived in Brooklyn, and produced the memoirs being published this week by the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Public Library.

Love is quoted in Sloane's work, which includes Love's

account of a community effort to corral a wayward goat named Billy.

Animals, including horses, were common in a community which became a self-sustaining home to more than 7,000 people at its zenith, people who lived in some of the finest homes and ran flourishing businesses and professional offices.

Sloane's work includes accounts of the original Queen City Classics, high school football games between Brooklyn's Second Ward High and rival upstart West Charlotte.

There's also the re-enactment of the disastrous 1917 fire which destroyed more than 40 homes and several businesses.

"It took me eight months," Sloane said. "Truth of the matter is, it would have been nice to have had a year." She spent six months on research and two months writing.

The play opens Feb. 29 at Theater Charlotte with a nine-member cast under the direction of Barbara Howse-Meadows. Portions will be performed Friday during the reception unveiling Love's memoirs, "Plum Thickets and Field Daisies."

Sloane has done other work in the choreopoem format, including "Peace is a Woman's Issue" for the Committee for International Womens Day in 1982 and "Bridges to Insight" back in 1977.

She did a play about Ramses for the African-American Children's Theater and her direction credits include a production of "Colored Girls" at UNC Charlotte and

Charleston's Spoleto Festival. Sloane was a producer at WTVI for seven years. She regularly teaches playwriting in the public schools under the auspices of the Children's Theater.

"I'm always teaching," she said.

Sloane praised Theater Charlotte for its vision.

"It was good for the theater to have that vision, to realize the work had to be done," she said. "It has sprouted its own wings and begun to build a momentum that's unimaginable."

"I found it to be one of the most enriching and rewarding projects to have been given the honor of writing this play. It was a joy working on it, to have a chance to work on folk culture and be able to pass along this culture to our children."

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## NAACP's new board

Continued from page 1A

Complaints about the November election delayed the seating of a nearly completely new board of directors. Only Alexander and first vice president Melvin Alston of Greensboro remain, and Hoyle changed positions.

A major item on the state chapter's agenda is review of

the proposed state budget, which was approved in December by the previous board. That review was supposed to take place Feb. 3.

In addition to Woodard and Hoyle, Henry Pickett, president of the Raleigh/Apex chapter, was elected third vice president and Gina Pettis-Dean of Charlotte was elected youth advisor.

### CORRECTIONS

A story in the Feb. 15 Post on the movie "Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored" incorrectly identified Paula Williams as president of the Black Media Association and host of a program on Time Warner cable that featured Phylicia Rashad as a guest. Mary Wilson and Kelly Alexander hosted the program,

with Williams as executive producer and director. A group of local businesses, in cooperation with the Black Media Association, sponsored Rashad's visit.

A story on Fighting Back Cluster One Resource Center on Feb. 15 incorrectly identified Maceo Mayo and Winston Lassiter. They work for the Drug Education Center.

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