

June 21, 1977

Report of Grand Historian

Grand Worthy Matron, Grand Patron, Present and Past Grand Officers, members and visitors of Electa Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, Prince Hall Affiliation Iowa

Jurisdiction:

It has been a pleasure to take a look into our Past, and I have learned so much. Alex Haley, author of "Roots", has created considerable interest in our heritage. What do we know about our O.E.S. roots?

According to the "History of O.E.S. Among Colored People", two Chapters were established in 1875 and 1876. One was in Washington, D.C. and the other was in Alexandria, Va., and within eighteen months, nine Chapters were started. Each Chapter was adopted by a regular constituted Masonic Lodge, but each Chapter was to be an independent Body.

Iowa Electa Grand Chapter was organized May 21, 1907 with six Chapters and in 1924, there were 26 Chapters with one thousand members.

We hold in highest esteem the five Heroines of the Old Testament as they are the foundation of our five Degrees. In probing into our roots, I find that we have five women in the twentieth century, who have planted strong roots for Electa Grand Chapter to grow.

All Past Grand Worthy Matrons and Past Worthy Grand Patrons have shared the responsibility to perpetuate our religious teachings and the Ritulistic Work. Each Grand Matron has been a connecting link in the chain of continuity of Electa Grand Chapter.

However, I would liken five Grand Worthy Matrons to our five Heroines because they have brought about or promoted changes that effects the whole Grand Body.

Naturally our First Grand Worthy Matron fits into this category.

Ida Belle Palmer came to Burlington, Iowa as a small child, and because her step-father was one of the Founders of St. John A.M.E. Church, her young life was centered around religious activities. At eighteen she became a member of Esther Court,

Heroines of Jerico(the oldest Fraternal organization) which was organized

by her brother-in-law, John L. Brooks, one of the Founders of Negro Masons in the State of Iowa. From the Court membership, an Eastern Star Chapter was formed and with four others a Convention met under the Jurisdiction of the State of Illinois. Miss Palmer was Secretary. In 1904, St. Elmo #3 received it's Charter from Eureka Grand Chapter, Illinois Jurisdiction. In 1907, she was elected Royal Grand Matron and with her Royal Grand Patron, she set forth to organize the required number of Chapters for the formation of an Iowa Grand Chapter. This was accomplished and she was unanimously elected Worthy Grand Matron of Electa Grand Chapter. She served two years with W.W. Milligam of Cedar Rapids as Worthy Grand Patron. She married A.B. Burris and moved to Chicago, Ill. where she made her home until her death in the early 1930's. She was a woman of high ideals and intellect dedicated to the Order of the Eastern Star. She was truly worthy of having been elected as the first Grand Matron of Electa Grand Chapter.

Sue H. Brown is second choice. She was Grand Worthy Matron 1919 & 1920. She was the only International Grand Matron from Iowa serving 1922-26. She travelled extensively in the United States and Europe while she was International Grand Matron. She was the Author of "O.E.S. Among Colored People", "American Social Ethics", And "History Of Central Association of Colored People". She appeared in "Who's Who in Colored America" and "Who's Who In Central America" She was born in Staunton, Va. but came to Iowa at an early age residing in Des Moines most of her life and was married to Atty. S. Joe Brown who was a Past Grand Patron. She was active in Politics, Women's Clubs, N.A.A.C.P., Fraternal and Religious organizations. She a Steward At St. Paul A.M.E. Church. She was member of Princess Oziel #9.

The Amaranth was organized in Burlington in 1907 at the same time as Grand Chapter but was eliminated in 1910 and reestablished for a brief period in 1915. For a number of years conferring of Amaranth Degrees and the possibility of Grand Court in Iowa was a disputed question; but under the leadership of Odessa Roberts, of Davenport, it was reestablished in 1946. Under the Official Proclamation from Texas, Sister Roberts was deputized and given the authority to set up Amaranth Court. In

1947, she was elected Royal Grand Matron. Sister Roberts was born in Muskogee, Okla. moving to Davenport in 1916. She was married to Josh Roberts who was a Past Grand Patron. They had six children. One is a Doctor, W. Pharmacist, a teacher, an accountant, and a economist. She is a member of Bethel A.M.E. Church and has been Church Treasurer for many years. She is a member of Naomi Chapter #1.

Dorothy Bush, Grand Matron 1952 & 1953, of Electa Grand Chapter. In 1951 she was asked by the Administrative Council to put on the Degree of the Queen of the South. In 1953, the three Chapters of Des Moines, under her direction put on the Queen of the South at Grand Chapter as they are doing this year under the direction of District Lecturer Barbara Palmer. There were 80 members present at Grand Chapter and nearly half were given the Degree. This was the beginning of the Queen of the South Degree in Iowa. Sister Bush recommended to Grand Chapter that \$500.00 be put in Government Bonds or buy Stock with some reliable Company. The Jurisprudence Committee approved, but suggested that \$3000.00 be put in Bonds. This was the first Investment of Electa Grand Chapter. Sister Bush was born in Richmond, Mo. moving to Iowa as a child. She received her schooling in Burton and Des Moines. She married Lowell Bush and they had five children. Two of her daughters, Myrtle and Dorothy Taylor are active members of Princess Oziel Chapter #9. She was an active member of Bethel A.M.E. Church, Federated Clubs and other Civic groups.

The fifth choice is Mary Majors, Grand Chairman of Scholarship Fund. In 1963, Sister Almeda Dickerson, who was Associate Grand Matron, recommended that a Committee be appointed to study the possibility of a Scholarship Fund. The recommendation was accepted and a Committee was appointed, but nothing was done that year, so in 1964 Sister Dickerson, newly elected Grand Matron, appointed a new committee with Mary Majors as Chairman. In 1965 she was made permanent Chairman. The project started as a Loan but was converted to a Grant. She has worked diligently to set up Fund and to govern the disbursements. We can be proud that we are doing something to help our young people. Sister Majors was born in Mo. but has lived most of her life in Keokuk and is married to Carl Majors. They have one daughter. She is active in

many Civic organizations, Politics, and Order of the Eastern Star. She is an A.M.E. Church member. She is a Past Grand Matron and Past Royal Grand Matron. She is a member of Electa Chapter #12- Keokuk.

These five women have one thing in common besides their love for the Eastern Star, all were religious women with a profound interest in their Community.

Sister Ruth Culberson asked that this History be different, and this is what I have tried to do; bring to you some parts of our "Roots" that some do not know and refresh the memory of others. I have really enjoyed seeking out this information and I would like to thank the following for their assistance: Sisters

Geraldine Brown, Gladys White, Bertha Wolder, Gladys Brown, Myrtle Taylor, and Brother James Newsome.

May this be a most successful and harmonious session.

Dorris D. Wilson Grand Historian