

John Taylor

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762 Locust Street, up on higher ground. And of course my father remodeled it and that's where he and my mother died. And we sold the family home last fall.

Z: Did your mother ever have a job?

T: No, she never worked out. She stayed home and took care of the children, my father did the work.

Z: Now the neighborhood that you lived in, was it a neighborhood that was mostly lived in by the colored families?

T: No, we never had any special place to live, but it was hard to buy a place that was maybe all white people in that neighborhood like it was when I came here. But after I got here I showed my little boys where our property line was and I said, "Now you must stay here and you must play," and the yard was just filled with white children all the time to play and they had many, many friends. And after I was here a while the white people in the neighborhood, they accepted us and treated us as human beings and I am still respected and we are one of the oldest residents in this block as of this time.

Z: I'd like to talk about the school now. What school did you go to?

T: Well, the first school I went to was Lincoln School. It's abandoned now, it's at Seventh and Lincoln Street and it was built in 1860, I believe. And I went there, they had it divided up into A's and B's, and when I left the fifth B and then I went to Woodlawn School to the fifth A, a white school, which now is the Welfare Department. We were instrumental in getting that building torn down because it was a hazard for children and everything else and it was bought, I believe, by Basil Green and he tore it down and remodeled it. And now the Welfare Department is there and after I finished the sixth grade at Woodlawn School then went across the river to what they called Central School. And that building now is 901 Kentucky Street, where the apartments are, and where the Douglas County Bank is was another building called Manual Training School, which we went to. And just on the south and southeast corner there's a filling station now, that's where the high school was and I graduated from there in 1921 and the next year they built the new high school which is Central Junior High School now.

Z: Over on 19th Street?

T: No.

Z: Oh, 14th and Massachusetts. Who went to the Manual Training School?

T: Well, we went there for woodwork and mechanical arts and I had physics there and botany in that room. And in the grade school, I mean the Central School we had other academics, like reading, writing and spelling until you finished the ninth grade and then we were transferred to the high school, which we finished there.



Z: At Lincoln School were there any white children?

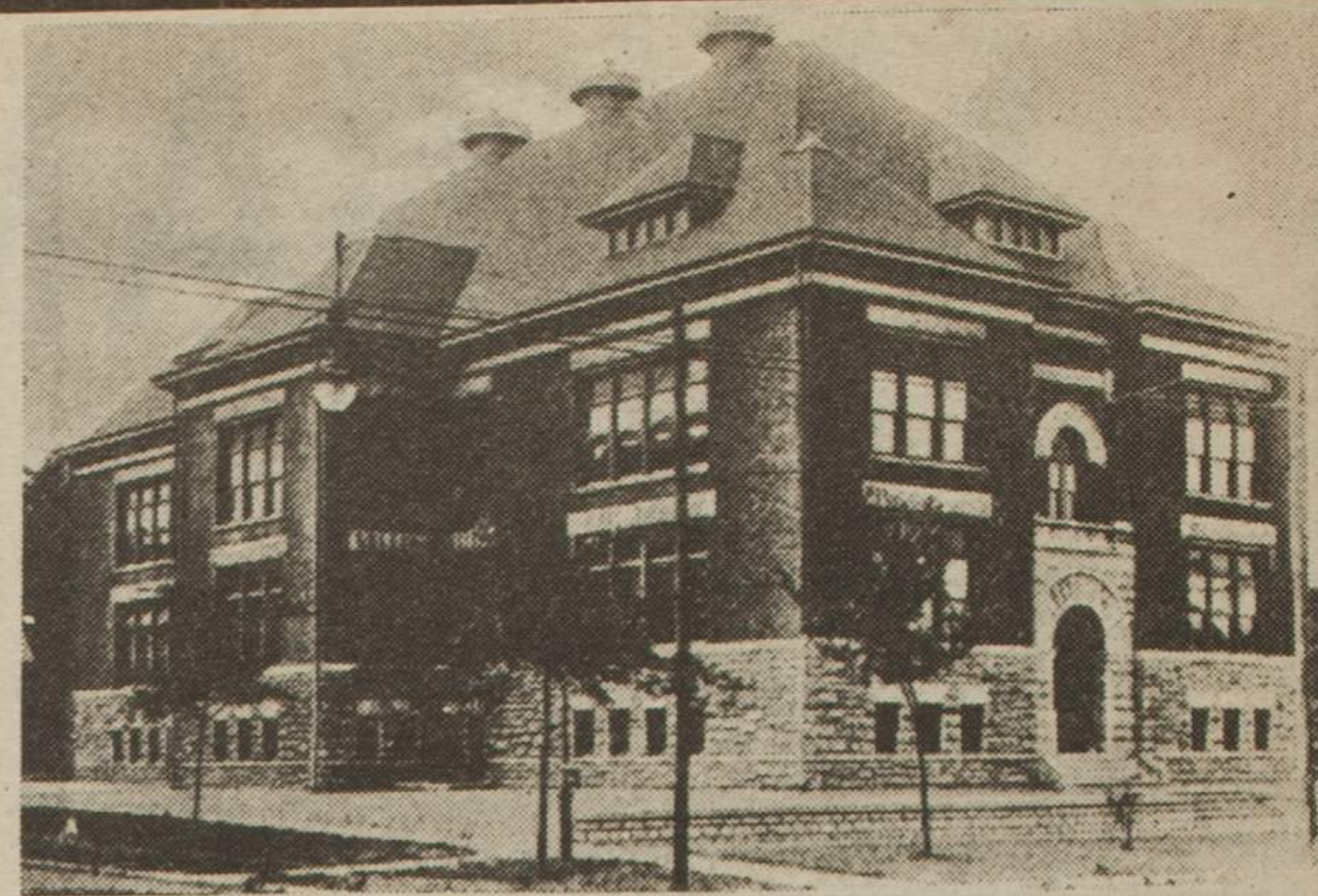
T: Ah, no, it was predominantly colored by choice. And then when it was condemned in the flood area, then the new Lincoln School was built in 1915, which is the Ballard Center now. And at the same time, same year, Cordley and McAllister were built. And of course, McAllister has been demolished and it's not there any more. But Cordley has been built on and is still there. But they were all built in 1915.

Z: At Woodlawn and Central also were the classrooms just black, colored and white students?

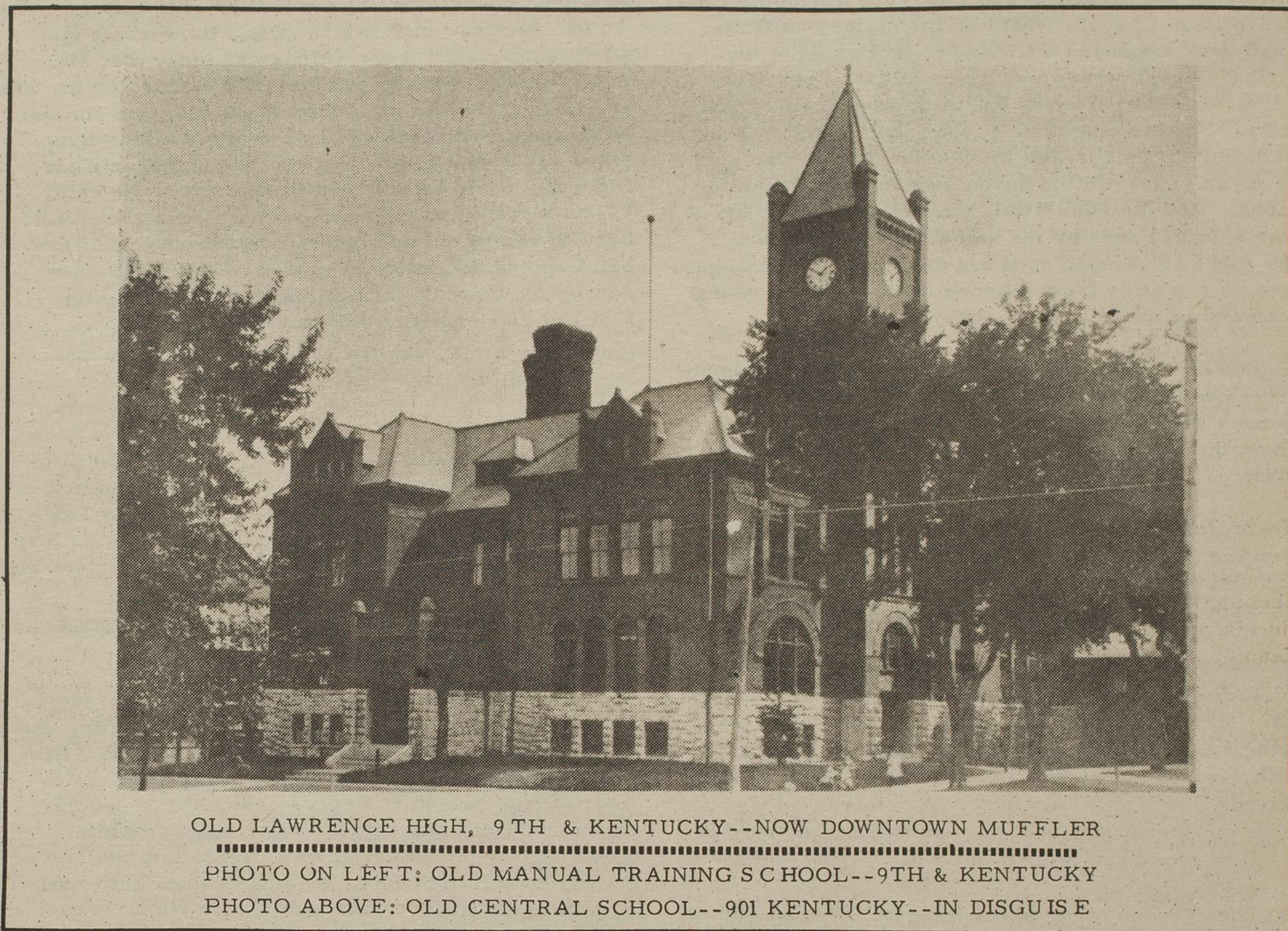
T: Yes. There was no segregation at Woodlawn and there was none in Central School. But before the new Lincoln was built, where the community center is was a school by the name of Quincy. And then they had the old Pinckney School and they had one room for colored students taught by colored teachers before 1915. And then when 1915 came and Lincoln School was built, the principal that we had then was a teacher in Pinckney. Her name was Mary Jane Dillars, and she taught there until she retired.

Z: What about school organizations like clubs, athletic teams and the like?

T: Well, in high school we weren't segregated in seating or anything like that, but we had to have our own basketball team and we didn't have any football team, there wasn't enough of us and then we had a club called the High Y, which was colored. And then when it came to any big events, I had quite a number of white friends and where the parking lot is across from the police station on the east was a building there called Jenny Wren, used to be radio broadcasting there and they had rooms and they had a swimming pool. And one of my good friends, his name was Phillip Anderson, he was white, and his father ran a bakery and so he would invite me to their affairs and I was well accepted. But in our high school when we graduated they had the rest of the students their pictures were classified alphabetically, and all the colored children were put on one page in the back of the school annual. And my brother-in-law who was much younger than me that married the only sister that I have, he was a graduate of KU in journalism and before he could get his degree he had to have a year's practice in linotype operation and he tried, but they wouldn't let him practice at the Lawrence Daily Journal-World. And he had to leave Lawrence and go to Kansas City to the Call magazine owned by colored people and then he finished up his degree there and then he came back to Lawrence and he got his diploma. And then he had to leave and go to California, Los Angeles, in order to get a job in linotype operation.



And then I started custodial work in the school and then later on after the 1951 flood and prohibition was lifted then I was hired by Mr. Fry, Red Fry, as a clerk and bookkeeper and then when he folded up and moved to South Lawrence, well then I went in, while he was still there, I went into private duty, as a private nurse for Mr. A. D. Weaver, the owner of the Weaver's department store. And I was with him practically two years and he died in June, just before the 1951 flood. And Dr. Bellott was the doctor at that time and he says, "John, what are you going to do now?" I said, "Well, I have a job under Dr. Houston



OLD LAWRENCE HIGH, 9TH & KENTUCKY--NOW DOWNTOWN MUFFLER
 PHOTO ON LEFT: OLD MANUAL TRAINING SCHOOL--9TH & KENTUCKY
 PHOTO ABOVE: OLD CENTRAL SCHOOL--901 KENTUCKY--IN DISGUISE

Z: After you graduated from high school in '21, you went to the University?

T: Yes.

Z: What courses did you take?

T: Education.

Z: Education courses. How long did you attend?

T: It was two years. And then after that I went to the Lawrence Business College and took up secretarial accounting. And the Business College when it first started was where the Lawrence National Bank is and then they moved from there, over to, oh, I believe, Seventh and Mississippi. And Skip Williams bought the building and he remodeled it into a home for himself. And I graduated and I took the examination and passed with good grades for postal clerk, but they wouldn't hire me. That was under Postmaster Hosford, Hosford, I believe.

Then I did custodial work at Lincoln School, Woodlawn School and Central Junior High School. And then the war was going on in 1917 and after that in the Second World War they were asking for people to get in some sort of defense to help out. Well, I went to Topeka at the Veteran's Hospital and went into nurse training as an attendant and I graduated there under Dr. Carl Menninger. And I worked there three years and the war was over and they had a veteran's preference and course I wasn't a veteran, I was too old and too young, too young and too old to be in the service at that time. They were supposed to get a job and well, the only job that came about, the first that came about was they recommended me for a job in surgery at Price Hospital in Topeka, I think which is now-- what is that main hospital there now--Stormont? I think Stormont took that over and I got a letter on Saturday that I was recommended to work in surgery and Monday morning I went there, I got there about 9:30 and I presented my letter and they looked at my letter and then they looked at me and I sat there until 1:30 before the Director of Nurses called me in. It took her all that time to figure out something to tell me that I wasn't wanted and when I got in, she says, "Well, the job that we had open, the girl that had it came back on bended knees and I gave her the job."

and Dr. Lewis in Oskaloosa of managing the rest home there." He said, "Well, I wish you wouldn't take that." He said, "We need you at Lawrence Memorial Hospital." I said, "I had tried and they tell me they don't have an opening." He says, "Maybe they don't, but they're going to make one." And then in a few days I was called and was accepted on the nursing staff and I stayed there until three years ago in December when I retired.

Z: Moving back again into earlier Lawrence, 1910-15, when your family needed groceries, clothing, drugs, where did you buy them in Lawrence?

T: We had a, we could buy drugs and clothing and groceries any place in the city. We had our own drug store in North Lawrence which is at 500 Locust Street run by Mr. Lindley. He was a brother to the Chancellor Lindley at that time at the University, which was chancellor when I went to school there. And there was a grocery store right at Seventh and Locust Street where we could purchase our groceries.

Z: What about the business run by colored men?

T: There were pool halls, barber shops and restaurants and we had one, oh, I wouldn't call it, it probably wasn't a theatre, but it was mostly vaudeville and some theatres that we could go to. And then of course we could go to what's called the Bowersock Theatre which is the Red Dog Inn now, but they had what we called the pigeon roost where we had to sit up in a segregated place in the highest. And the only time that I ever sat down in the front was when we had commencement and I was graduating. They lifted the ban and then we could sit any place in the main lobby.

Z: Where were the black, I mean the colored, barber shops, blacksmith shops?

T: They were in South Lawrence... right along in there where oh, it's Sawyer's Electric shop is where the barber shop was and across the street there was the restaurant and right adjoining it was this here opera house where they had vaudevilles and amusements of that kind. And then later in life where the parking lot of the Lawrence National Bank is there was a building there, a hardware store that was owned by Al Green and we could rent the upstairs for a ball-