



Meet
me on
*South
Street*



by **Robert L. Woodard**
The Wynnefield Barber

Neighborhood pride is being gentrified right out of many Philadelphia communities. As I walk through my city of neighborhoods, many historical places are disappearing. The memories of my youth seem to have vanished overnight. I can remember going to sleep in the ghetto and awakening in Center City. The beauty of any neighborhood lives in its historical memories. These memories will remain a part of you for the rest of your life.

I can remember South Street. It was known all over the world as the *'hippest street in town.'* There were a multitude of Black-owned businesses on South Street in the 1960s and 1970s. My grandfather, Mr. James Woodard, Sr., had his tailor shop at 1831 South Street called *The Ideal Cleaners*. In the neighborhood, my grandfather was known as *'Mr. James.'* As a kid, I remember him

standing outside of his tailor shop, doing demonstrations on people passing by to show his professional skills. If the customer's pants legs were too high or low, he would take them inside his shop and elevate or lower the cuff. I can recall Mr. Benny Krass of *Krass Brothers Suits* sending my grandfather customers that needed special alterations on their new suits.

My grandfather was a pretty heavy man and I was a fat kid. So, at the end of the day, we would eat at *Miss BeBe's Southern Barbecue* on the 1700 block of South Street. Miss BeBe's was known as the best barbecue place in town. Many famous people came from all over the world to experience her exquisite cuisine. The late great unforgettable Nat King Cole was also a customer

of Miss BeBe's. She displayed a large picture of herself and Nat King Cole in her establishment for all to see. That picture became a conversation piece for all of her many customers.

I can remember the first Black bank at the corner of 19th and South Street called *Citizens Bank*. When I was 13 years of age, I was one of three barbers who worked weekends at *Mr. Buddy Young's Barbershop* with Mr. Freeman and Mr. Young on the 1700 block of South Street. I was a pretty big guy for my age, so I had very little to say. However, I learned a lot about the tonsorial trade at a very young age through my experience working there. I even learned how to cut straight hair that was processed. Black men who wanted their hair straightened would go to *Paige's Process Shop* on the 1500 block of South Street. The first Black firehouse was on the 1800 block of South Street. Back then, Black firemen and white firemen were not allowed to sleep in the same firehouse.

South Street became the place to be and visitors from around the world learned to sing the famous song that made South Street great! *"Meet Me on South Street, the Hippest Street in Town."* That song became a worldwide phenomenon.

Times have changed, now, but memories last forever. From a child to now an adult, I am very proud to say that my grandfather, Mr. James Woodard, Sr., lived on South Street, the hippest street in town.

Take the "RACE Test" today for a better way at www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org. **PRH**

Woodard's Barbershop, 5031 Diamond Street, is a member of the Philadelphia Row-Home (PRH) Business Network.



*St. Anthony
of
Padua*

Regional Catholic School

Administered by
St. Nicholas of Tolentine
&
Annunciation B.V.M. Parishes

*"Educating Our Future
One Child at a Time"*

A rigorous **Pre-K** (3 year old) to
8th Grade Academic Program,
administered by **Religious Teachers**

Filippini

&

*Qualified and dedicated
lay teachers & staff*

913 Pierce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19148

Currently taking registrations for the
2020-2021 School year

**Call for a school tour
with Principal,
Sr. Mary Esther**

215-468-0353

WWW.STANTHONYOPADUARCS.ORG

WRITERSBLOCK