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James D. Elder – 1903 – 1983

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Sister: Emma Elder Matthews

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Brooklyn Law School

United States Postal Service

Friends in New York

Mt Zion Baptist Church, Edison

Edison Housing Authority

School Crossing Guard, Edison

Park Dedication

Namesake Remembered

James D. Elder

1903 - 1983

On October 16, 1984, a dedication was held by members of the North Edison Civic Improvement Club to honor James D. Elder, a long-time activist who spent many years working for the good of the North Edison community.

Elder Park, located on Grove Avenue and Firethorn Drive is the only park named to honor one of the township's African American citizens.

Mr. Elder moved to Potters Crossing from Hempstead, NY in 1935 with his wife, Viola. Mr. Elder came to the community with valuable assets, a Bachelor of Law Degree from City College in New York City and a Juris Doctor Degree from Brooklyn Law School.

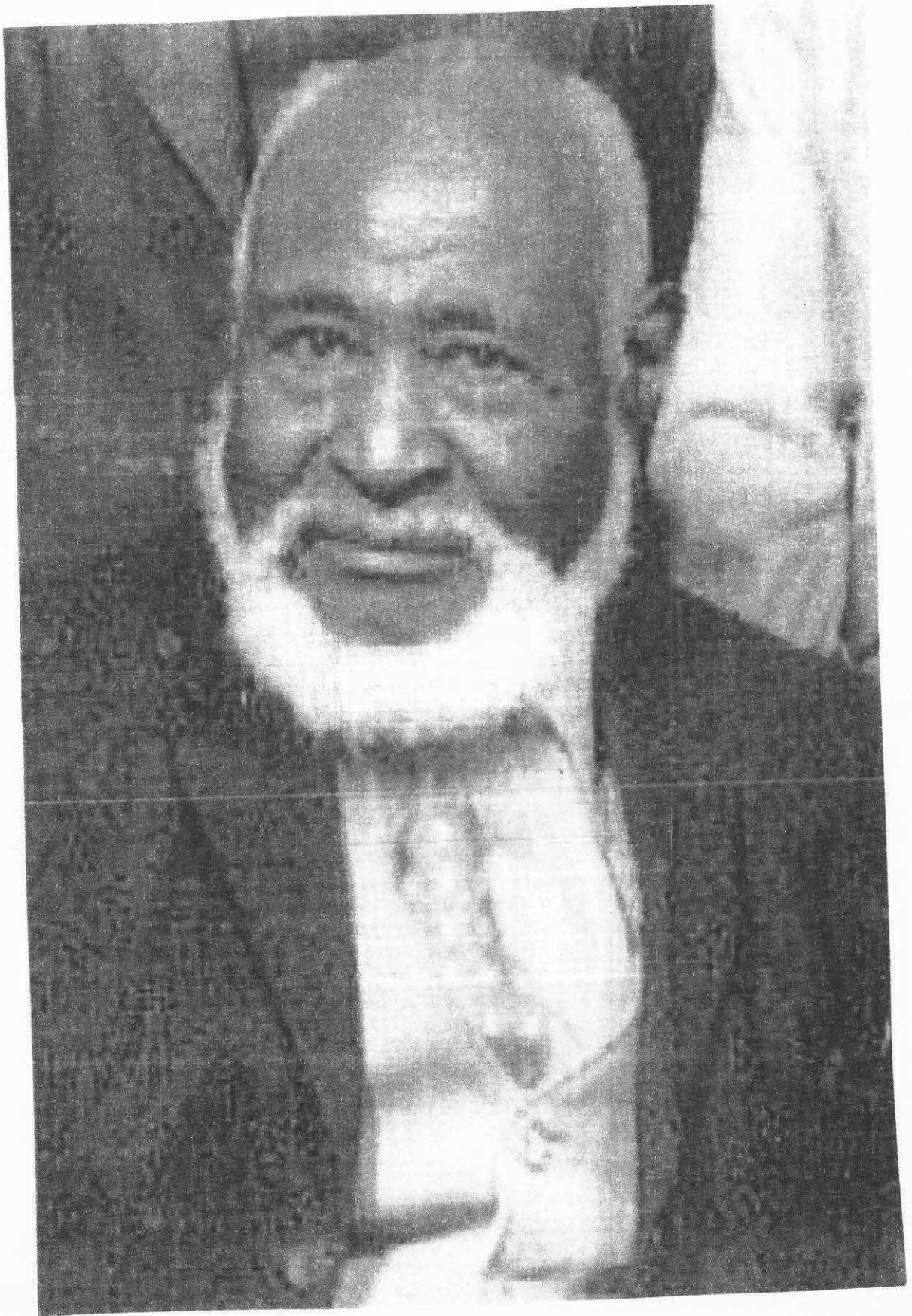
The couple immediately joined Mt. Zion Freewill Baptist Church where he became a trustee and was appointed chairman. As chairman, James Elder helped the church buy land and build a modern facility in Potters Crossing. A groundbreaking ceremony for the new church was held in 1967.

Mr. Elder was one of the founding members of the Potters Civic Improvement Club, later renamed the North Edison Civic Improvement Club. The North Edison Civic Improvement Club received full support from then-Edison Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsis and the Township Council. An urban renewal program was begun and the Mayor appointed Mr. Elder as one of the commissioners of the newly created Housing Authority of the Township of Edison.

James and Viola had two children, Eric and Janet and custody of two grandchildren, Eric jr. and Sheila
Grandchildren, Great-Grandchildren and Great-Great Grandchildren

James Elder died in 1983, one year before the dedication. Viola Elder attended the dedication with family and friends. Viola died in 1997. Their son, Eric, died in 2012.

The family would like to thank the Edison Township community for remembering the origin of Elder Park and what it represents; the dedication of Mr. Elder's contributions to the economic growth of his community.





Mr. James D. Elder

The man behind James D. Elder Park, North Edison, NJ

James Elder was born in Memphis, TN July 30, 1903. His parents, Minnie and James Sr. had two children Emma and James. James Sr. was the first Black man to become founder and editor of a newspaper published in Memphis. James, his Mother, and sister left Memphis when James was nine years old and moved to Hempstead, NY. He graduated from Hempstead High School and was Sr. Editor of the Patriot Staff, the school newspaper. During his high school years, James was an excellent student who enjoyed learning. This caption was written under his yearbook photo:

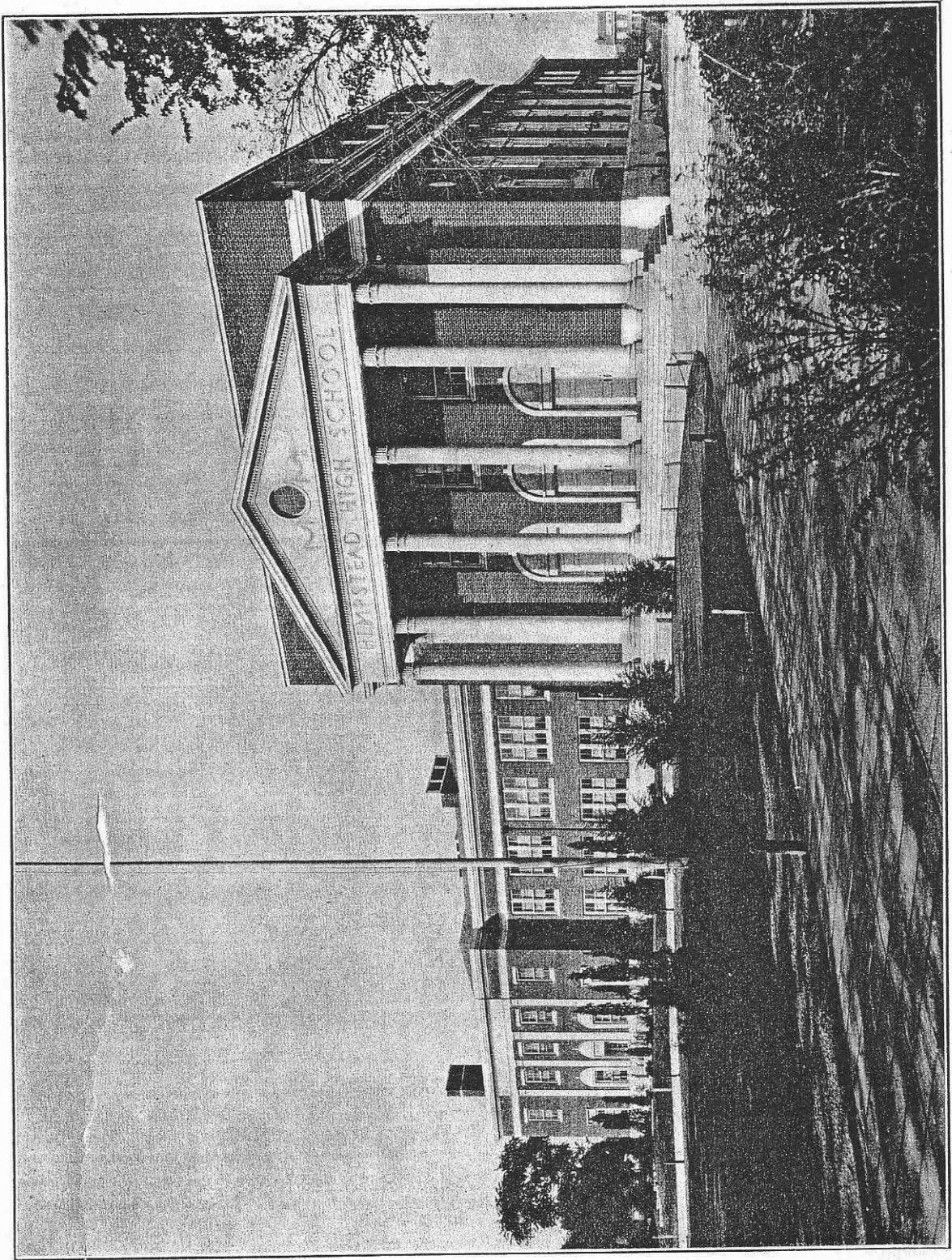
"Whence is all thy learning? Hath thy toil O'er books consumed the midnight oil?"

Latin was his favorite subject. Also written in the yearbook:

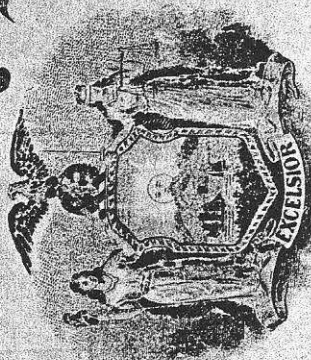
"James Elder! How that name rings through the Latin room. When Miss McDermott has almost given up all hope of our ever learning Latin, she turns to James to console herself. James always has a cheerful smile that greets us when we feel blue. Undoubtedly Irving Berlin will never attempt to compose a song entitled "The James Elder Blues." Having established for himself a reputation in scholarship, James will be especially missed in the classes where the students leave it for the "other fellow" to do the work. He will be a valuable asset to the freshmen class of City College next year."

Those words reflect the Father I knew. My father was the other fellow who got the job done. After graduation, James decided his career would be in law. He attended City College in New York City where he spent two years studying Pre-Law. After four years attending Brooklyn Law School, James received his Bachelor of Law Degree, the only black man in his class. My father's dream of becoming an attorney didn't occur. As I remember my father's statement, and I quote: "After I graduated from law school, black attorneys were starving, there was no work." During his college years, he was employed with the General Post Office in New York and after graduation from law school worked there full-time until his retirement after 35 years. I remember the stories my father told us about his work and his accomplishments. He never allowed his skin color to hold him back. There were several African Americans employed at the Post Office but it was James who was determined to be promoted to work behind the Registered Mail cage. He was turned down several times even though he had the training and skill to perform the job efficiently. After several more attempts, he was promoted, the first and only black who worked in that position until his retirement. He was a very determined man who believed in a good education and fair treatment of people. He knew things would not be easy, but with his drive and determination things were accomplished.

James Elder and Viola Taylor were married in June 1931 in Hempstead, NY. They moved to Potters Crossing in May 1935. Through this union they had two children, Eric and Janet.



THE
SCHOOL



This certifies that

James Dolphos Elder

has satisfactorily completed the Course of Study prescribed by the Board of Education for the High School and is entitled

Diploma

Given at Hempstead, New York, this twenty-eighth day of _____ in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-

Class No. 7

[Signature]

Superintendent of Schools

"Whence is all thy learning? Hath thy toil
O'er books consumed the midnight oil?"

JAMES ELDER—James Elder! How that name rings through the La
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freshman class of City College next year.

SENIOR CLASS

OFFICERS

- President Elizabeth Lewis
- Vice President Byron Morrison
- Secretary Cora Losee
- Treasurer Austin Wyatt

CLASS ADVISOR

Miss Burton

- Florence Cornell
- Charles Conran
- John Deyo
- Walter Dibblee
- James Doyle
- William Ellwood
- James Elder
- Elton Fisher
- Catherine Herman
- Edith Jones

- Florence Baker
- Adelena Baldwin
- Lois Barnes
- Marion Berg
- Sophie Berwind
- Howard Baylis
- William Boardman
- Helen Carter
- Mellicent Clowes
- Edna Coppinger

- Walter Riley
- Abraham Schachewitz
- Eileen Shea
- Grace Smith
- Alpha Street
- James Stoddart
- Mollie Stoddart
- Alice Wettstein
- Austin Wyatt
- Kathryn Yeager

- Anna Kelly
- William Loeber
- Cora Losee
- Gertrude Losee
- Elizabeth Lewis
- Byron Morrison
- Elizabeth Michel
- Evelyn Parsons
- Mildred Parsons
- Helen Riley



HISTORY OF "THE PATRIOT"

<p>Senior Editors</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Grace S. Smith James Elder Byron Morrison</p> <p>Sophomore Editor John Gardner</p> <p>Freshman Editor Katherine Vlymen</p> <p>Commercial Editor Alan Purdy</p> <p>Advertising Manager Renwick Hurry</p>	<p>Editor-in-Chief Elizabeth Lewis</p> <p>Junior Editors</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Anna Ryan Ethel M. Vega Simon Nathan</p> <p>Distributing Agent Evelyn Parsons</p> <p>Treasurer Cora Losee</p> <p>Alumni Editor Alice Hawkins</p> <p>Exchange Editor Kathryn Yeager</p>
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A high school without a paper or magazine! Yes, it does seem incredible! Yet it was true! A number of years ago, though within the time of each of us, our high school had no paper. There was no way of communicating with one another. If one heard a funny story in school there was no way of sharing it with everyone. Those with executive ability had no way to exercise it. The budding poets and authors had very few opportunities to develop their talents. It seems to be contrary to nature, to strive to put forth our best efforts, unless we have a definite object in view. The Senior Class of 1916 realized all this.

This class was composed of thoughtful, industrious young people. Each one was doing his "bit" to help the great cause that lay nearest all loyal, patriotic hearts, at that time. A committee was appointed to obtain permission from Mr. Calkins, our Superintendent, to start a high school paper. Mr. Calkins readily sanctioned all the plans presented by the committee. A name must now be chosen. With such intense emotion experienced by the members of the class, what more appropriate name could be had than "The Patriot?"

The paper was to be the connecting link between the classes and the Faculty. The editing of "The Patriot" was placed under the supervision of the English Department as it has so continued. Although the Seniors held offices on the staff, the paper was by no means for Seniors only. All classes in the high school were allowed to contribute material for it.

Each year "The Patriot" conducts a short story con-

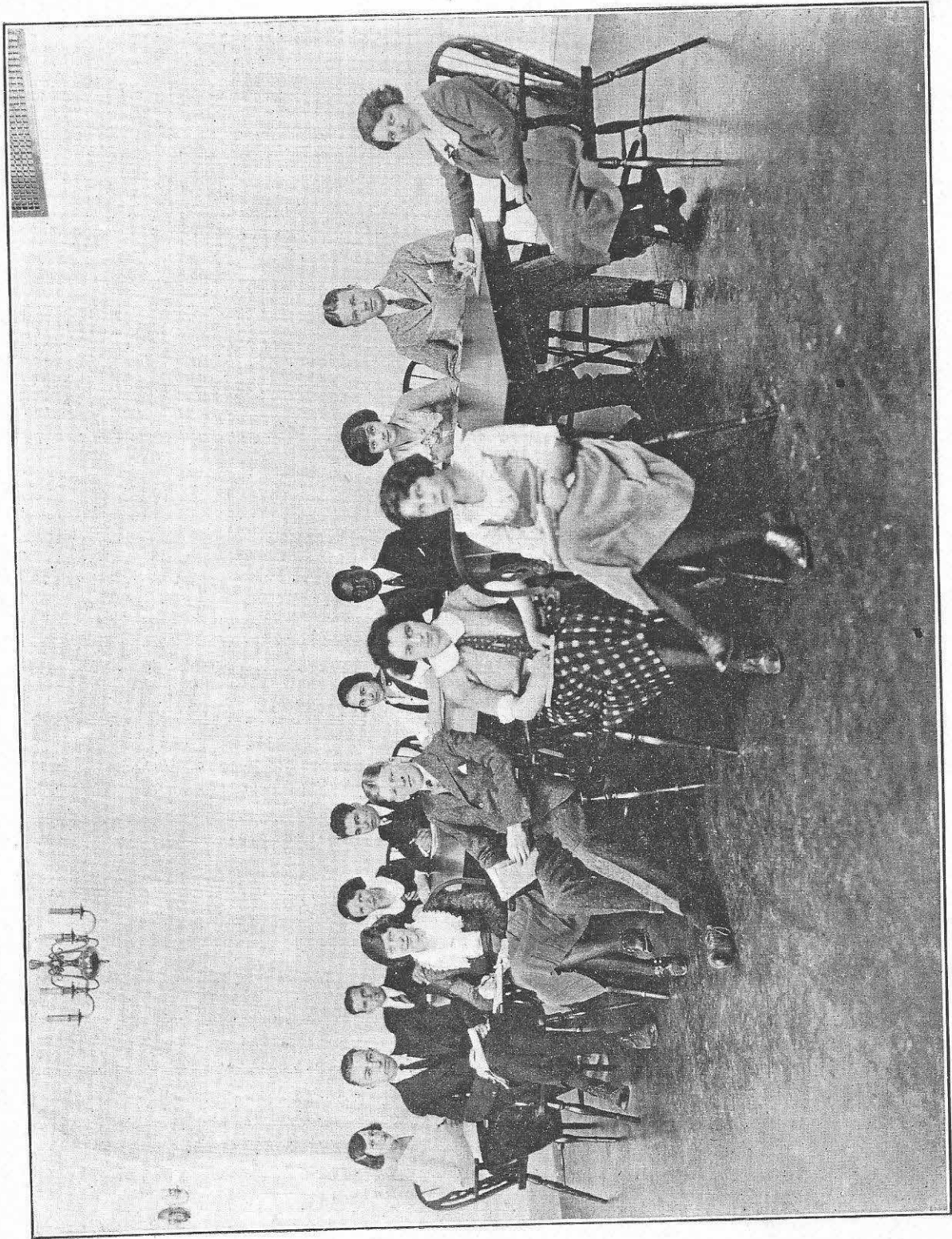
test the money for the prizes being taken from the treasury of the paper. These contests are held to encourage those with the ability to write, to do so. The type of story has always been left to the student's own choice. "The Patriot" has always maintained the highest standards. The editors have borne this in mind when selecting material to print. Our paper is not a "joke" paper, it was originally printed merely to record all high school activities. This still holds true to-day.

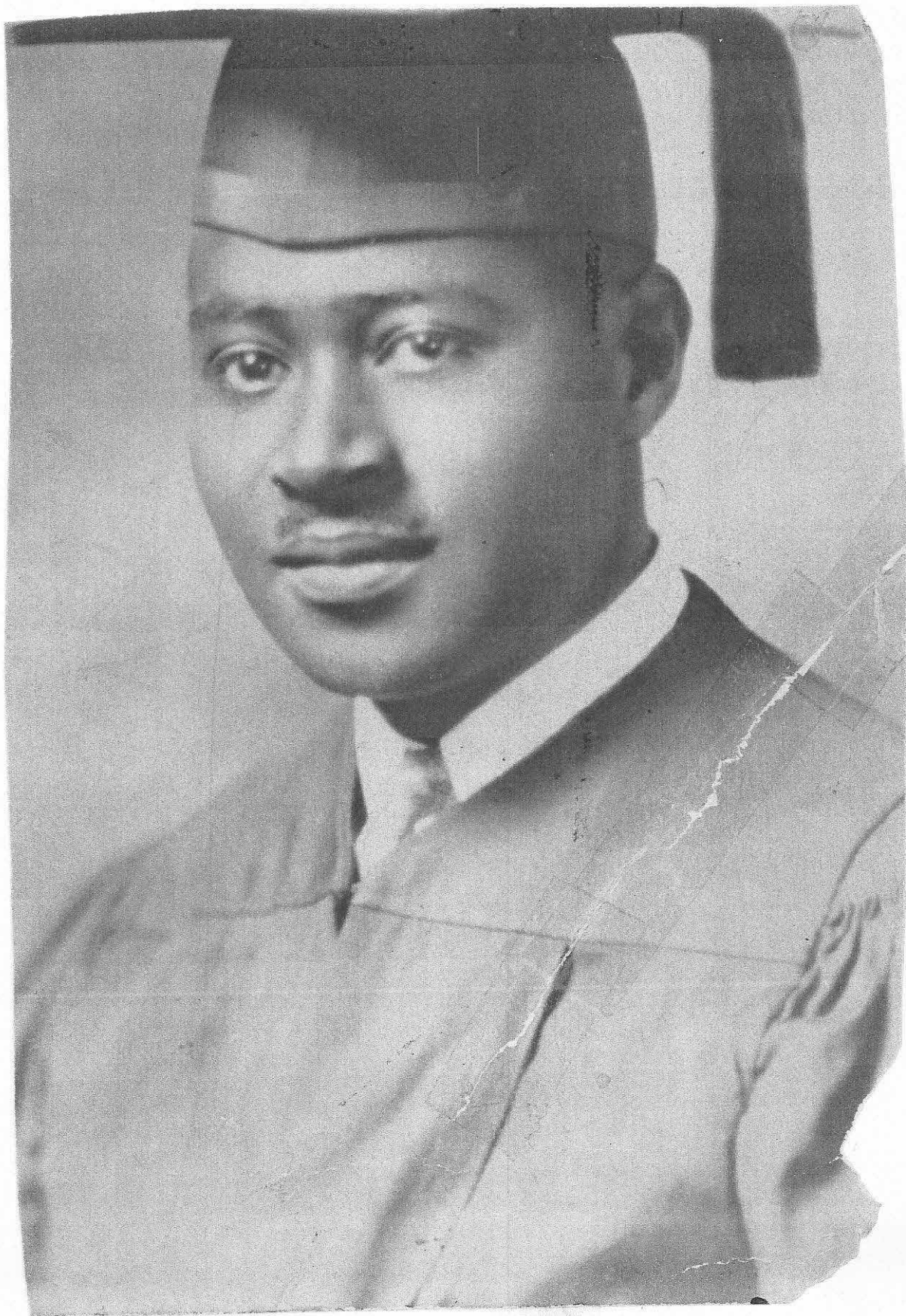
The field covered by "The Patriot" has been steadily increasing. Now an Exchange Editor has a place on "The Patriot" staff. Our exchanges are widely scattered. Among them we find "The Lawrencian" coming from Lawrence High School, Long Island; "The Argus" from Classical High School, Worcester, Mass.; "Vindex" from Elmira Free Academy, Elmira, N. Y.; "The Arrow" from Cornwall-on-Hudson High School, Cornwall-on-Hudson, N. Y.; "Bernards Crimson" from Bernards High School, Bernardsville, N. J.; "The Horace Mann Record" from Horace Mann, New York City.

Each year the number of copies printed has increased. In 1916 there were four hundred subscribers to "The Patriot" and in such a short time the subscribers have increased three hundred and fifty. This is a very encouraging report!

"The Patriot" is your paper and it is mine! It can be just what we make it! So let us make it a success in every sense of the word!

E. M. V., '23.



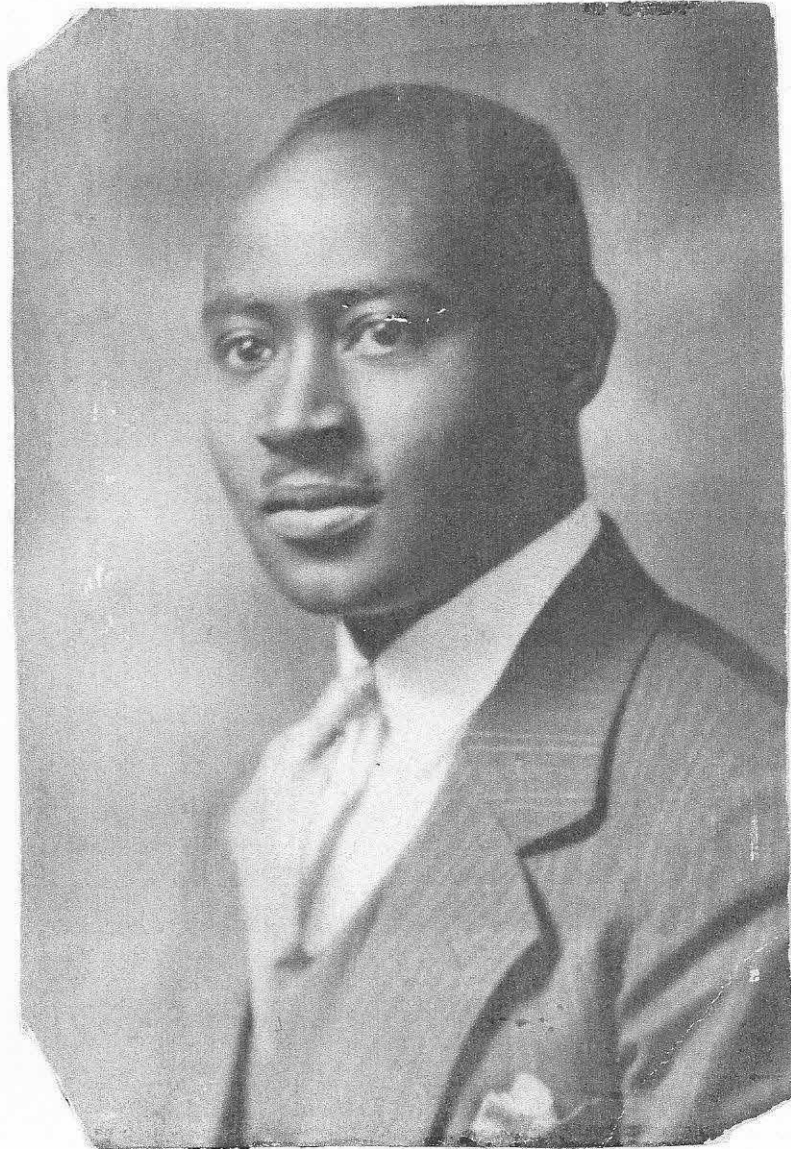


Class of 1929

James D. EARLE Lawrence H. Underhill John T. Lamson S. C.

Only African American in Class





Post Office Department



Honorary Recognition

is accorded

James D. Elder

*for devotion to duty in the course of an
honorable career in the
United States Postal Service*

*This citation, tendered upon the occasion
of retirement from active duty, conveys
official commendation from the Postmaster
General and a cordial expression of esteem
from coworkers in the Service.*

Date of retirement: July 31, 1959

Robert K. Christenberry
Robert K. Christenberry
Acting Postmaster

Carlton J. Summersfield
Postmaster General



OFFICE OF THE POSTMASTER
NEW YORK 1. N. Y.

July 31, 1959

Mr. James D. Elder
306 Edward Avenue
Metuchen, New Jersey

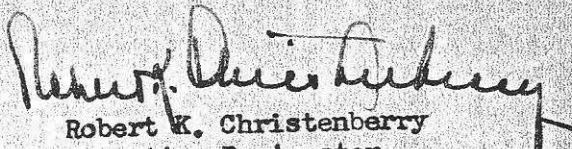
Dear Mr. Elder:

Now that your career as a Window Clerk in the New York Post Office has drawn to a close, I should like to congratulate you on your 35 years of faithful service.

Your record has been a most commendable one, and we are proud of the contribution you have made to the progress of our organization.

On behalf of your fellow employees and myself, may I extend to you our best wishes for many years of good health in which to enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Sincerely,


Robert K. Christenberry
Acting Postmaster

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE


This is to certify that

JAMES D. ELDER

retired from the Postal Service

this 31 day of July 1959

after 35 years of Loyal Service to the Government

 POSTMASTER, NEW YORK, N. Y.



They immediately became active members of Mt. Zion Baptist Church where James served on the Board of Trustees and later was elected Chairman.

James and Viola loved the country atmosphere of Potters Crossing after moving from New York, but James knew improvements had to be made to improve the quality of life for his family and friends. James was always the type of person who made friends easily. As stated in the Hempstead High School Yearbook: he always has a cheerful smile. He and my mother made others feel welcome because of their natural personalities.

James organized the Potters Civic Improvement Club, Inc. and through the efforts of the Club the name of the community was changed to North Edison. The North Edison Civic Improvement Club, Inc. received full support from Edison Mayor Anthony Yelencsis and the Township Council. An Urban Renewal Program was started and the Mayor appointed James Elder as one of the Commissioners of the newly created Housing Authority of the Township of Edison. Improvements started to happen. Before the Civic Improvement Club was organized there was no public service bus transportation to and from North Edison. My Father, along with the club members, had the bus route extended to include North Edison. A new Mt. Zion Baptist Church was built on grounds selected by James Elder and Bishop Anderson Adams, Pastor of Mt. Zion. An appreciation dinner was held by members of Mt. Zion Baptist Church December 1981 for James. What he wanted to obtain through the committee was to have better housing that could be afforded by the residents of North Edison. Many problems and disagreements arose but the program developed and the problems were resolved.

Whenever James had leisure time, he would play the piano, listen to music from the big band era or read books. Reading was his favorite past time. Volumes of Bible literature, law books, and mystery novels lined the bookshelves that he built himself. We had multiple sets of encyclopedias, always had up to date dictionaries and all sorts of literature to use for school projects and research. He was a devoted family man who spent a great deal of time with his wife and two children.

Park Dedication Honors James Elder

This newspaper headline was printed in the News Tribune Wednesday, Oct. 17, 1984

The late James D. Elder, a man who spent many years working for the good of the North Edison community was honored yesterday as a park was renamed for him on Grove Avenue. The former Groveland Park was chosen by members of the North Edison Civic Improvement Club who urged the township to change the name to James D. Elder Park. Mr. Elder served as a commissioner of the township housing authority and was remembered yesterday for his work in the community. The park site is located where Mr. and Mrs. Elder had their home built when they first came to the community. The money for the park didn't come easily for the members but they wanted something to last in the memory of James D. Elder. Part of the funds was derived from the sale of the organization's building located on Inman Avenue, which was demolished for urban renewal.