

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ethel Darden

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Darden, Ethel, 1900-2011
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 1, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:52:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Elementary school teacher Ethel Darden (1900 - 2011 ) taught at Chicago's private, black, high achieving, Howalton Day School, and became the school's assistant principal. She later contributed historical material to the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of the Chicago Public Library's "Howalton School Archives". Darden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 1, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_059
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Ethel Darden was born Ethel Roby Boswell on February 17, 1900 in Dallas, Texas. She and her twin sister, Esther, were the youngest of the five daughters of two school teachers, Ella Mary Allen and Charles Roby Boswell, from Talladega, Alabama. In 1890, her parents moved to Dallas, Texas and by the turn of century had three daughters: Alberta, Bessie and Doris. Darden attended Washington Elementary School (School #2) and graduated from Dallas Colored High School in 1917. The twins attended historically black Wiley College, in Marshall, Texas and Darden graduated in 1921.

Teaching school in Dallas for nearly two decades, she married Lloyd Darden, a successful accountant in 1942 and moved with him to Chicago where her sister, Doris Allen enlisted her as a teacher in Howalton Day School, where she was a founder. An outgrowth of Oneida Cockrell's pioneering pre-school and kindergarten, the Howalton Day School (1947-1986) was founded by three black educators: June Howe-White, Doris Allen-Anderson, and Charlotte B. Stratton. The name of the school is from a combination of the founders' three last names. Chicago's oldest African American, private, non-sectarian school, Howalton's educational philosophy stressed discovery, enthusiasm, creativity, the arts and the humanities in an informal, controlled atmosphere. Howalton started with 23 students at its height grew to over 200 students from kindergarten to eighth grade. Progress reports were given at teacher/parent conferences and teachers led by Irma P. Johnson and Elizabeth Jones were committed to teaching phonics. Using John R. Malone's unifon alphabet and trained by Dr. Margaret Ratz, Howalton, as cited by John Culkin in the *New York Times* of July 20, 1977 demonstrated the highest first grade reading scores in the Chicago area from 1974 to 1975. Dr. Frances Horwich, chair of Roosevelt University's Education Department who starred as "Miss Frances" in NBC's "Ding Dong School" also consulted with Darden and Howalton staff members.

Darden often sacrificed her pay to help keep the school afloat. Fundraisers such as a Grace Bumbry concert and a benefit dinner featuring Dr. Andrew Billingsley subsidized revenue and united parents and teachers. Due, in part,

to increased black acceptance into better-funded accelerated private and public school programs, Howalton closed in 1986. Darden and Mildred Johnson donated historical material to the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of the Chicago's Carter G. Woodson Regional Library's "Howalton School Archives" in 1996. Darden, who is now over one hundred years old, is active, watches her diet and attends church and social events. She is the only surviving member of her family.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ethel Darden was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 1, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Elementary school teacher Ethel Darden (1900 - 2011 ) taught at Chicago's private, black, high achieving, Howalton Day School, and became the school's assistant principal. She later contributed historical material to the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of the Chicago Public Library's "Howalton School Archives".

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Darden, Ethel, 1900-2011

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Darden, Ethel, 1900-2011--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Elementary School Teacher

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden, June 1, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden, Section A2004\_059\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Ethel Darden was born on February 17, 1900 in Dallas, Texas to Ella Mary Allen and Charles Roby Boswell. Darden's grandfather was a traveling CME minister. Both of her parents were born in the late 19th century in Alabama, graduated from Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama and moved to Dallas, as a couple, to teach. Darden's father left the teaching profession to start a Negro bank; however, the enterprise failed. Darden remembers calling her parents by their first names and catching them drinking wine with friends. Darden was raised in Dallas, which was a segregated city, although, she played with white children who lived across the street. She also vividly remembers the signs displayed throughout Dallas promoting the city. Darden had four sisters: Bessie Foster, Doris Allen, Alberta Joseph and a twin, Esther Boswell. One day when she and Esther were home alone, they were outside skating and were frightened by a group of men marching up the street whom they were convinced were ax men.

Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden, Section A2004\_059\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Ethel Darden attended George Washington Elementary School and Dallas Colored High School in Dallas, Texas. She and her twin sister were "cry babies," enjoyed confusing people and aspired to be ballet dancers. Darden graduated from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas in 1921, and was a charter member of Dallas' Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority chapter. She began her teaching career in Dallas, but frequently visited her sister Doris Allen-Anderson in Chicago, Illinois where Darden met Lloyd Darden. In 1942, the two married and Darden moved to Chicago where she eventually taught at the Howalton Day School. Concerned by overcrowded classrooms and the poor conditions in Chicago's public schools, Darden's sister Allen, June Howe-White and Charlotte B. Stratton began Howalton, with the support of Garden Apartments Nursery School director Oneida Cockrell, as a summer school. At the request of black parents, such as U.S. Congressman Ralph Metcalfe's mother, they expanded the program into a primary school in 1947.

Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden, Section A2004\_059\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Ethel Darden taught at Howalton Day School in Chicago, Illinois which was an outgrowth of Oneida Cockrell's Garden Apartment Nursery School in the Rosenwald Building. The manager of the Rosenwald Building, Robert Taylor, provided Howalton space when it first opened. The school later moved to a number of different locations on Chicago's South Side. The school followed Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) curriculum, but augmented it with curricula from Cincinnati, Ohio and advice from professors at Roosevelt University in Chicago. It had smaller class sizes than CPS schools and pioneered the concept of parent-teacher conferences, which were later implemented by CPS. Howalton received funding from its mother's club and donations from local businesses. Darden remembers organizing May Day celebrations, including the maypole dance and crowning of the May Day queen. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her life philosophy as a 104-year-old.

Video Oral History Interview with Ethel Darden, Section A2004\_059\_001\_004, TRT: 0:22:50 ?

Ethel Darden had retired by the time Howalton Day School in Chicago, Illinois closed in 1986. She believes finances and being unable to offer teacher salaries competitive with those offered by the Chicago Public Schools were the primary reason for the school's closure. She shares her food regimen, and reflects upon her twin sister's health issues following a car accident. Darden considers what she would have done differently, describes how she would like to be remembered and reflects upon her legacy. She concludes by narrating her

photographs.