



### Amaza Lee Meredith

Amaza Lee Meredith (1895-1984) one of the United States first black female architects, was born in Lynchburg, Virginia to a white father and black mother. Due to anti-miscegenation laws, Meredith's parents could not be legally married in Virginia, so they traveled to Washington, D.C. in racially segregated railroad cars to marry lawfully. But Samuel Meredith, a respected carpenter, lost much of his business as a result of the controversial marriage and took his life in 1915. Despite this family tragedy, Meredith graduated from high school the same year at the top of her class, and enrolled at the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, now Virginia State University.

After college, Meredith taught in Botetourt County and then moved to Brooklyn, New York in 1926 and enrolled in the Teacher's College of Columbia University, New York where she majored in fine arts. There she received a bachelor's degree with honors and a master's degree. Meredith soon returned to Virginia State to teach art and was appointed chair of the Art Department a year later. She is credited for establishing Virginia State's Fine Arts Department. Meredith also developed interior decorating and design skills and coordinated color schemes for campus buildings.

In 1939, Amaza completed her own home, which she fully designed and built adjacent to the campus of Virginia State. Her home, which she named Azurest South, was considered to be "one of the most advanced residential designs in the state in its day" and a bold investigation of the International Style, a style that espoused a complete break with architectural traditions.

As racial segregation was the law of the land in the 1940s, whites either would not or could not rent to Blacks in the Hamptons. She worked with her sister Maude Terry to create a neighborhood of vacation homes for middle-class African-Americans minutes from the Hamptons in Sag Harbor, NY. They developed 120 lots into what they called Azurest North, now known simply as Azurest. The lots sold for \$1,000 on the bay; less inland. She named a road for herself (Meredith Avenue) and one for her sister Maude Terry (Terry Drive). Many of the Black residents were doctors, lawyers, nurses, social workers, school teachers, judges, entrepreneurs and artists. Although blacks had been summering on the East End for some years, Azurest spurred a steady tradition of vacation-home ownership there that continues to this day.

Meredith was also an active member of the Virginia State University Alumni Association. In 1943, she was one of the architects of the first “Capital Campaign” for the Association, with the goal to build an Alumni House. In 1949, she provided several sets of blueprints for the proposed Alumni House however, plans fell through by 1962. Undaunted, Ms. Meredith tried another approach: she willed half of her house, Azurest South to the Alumni Association.

Amaza Lee Meredith lived in her house, Azurest South until her death in 1984.

In 1986 Azurest South became the official “Alumni House” for the VSU Alumni Association, making Ms. Meredith’s dream a reality.

Read more at;

[http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site\\_id=134](http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=134)

<http://hamptons-magazine.com/lifestyle/articles/sag-harbor-african-american-communities#cMDm1PWG5gc76tDc.99>

<http://dashingclaire.hubpages.com/hub/Sag-Harbor-NY>

[http://www.vsuaaonline.com/amaza\\_meredith/](http://www.vsuaaonline.com/amaza_meredith/)