

Almira Saunders (1921 - 2007)

A Life of Change

Almira Sauder's life was one that required adaptation. Born in Halifax County, North Carolina, Almira was raised by her grandfather on his farm. At sixteen, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she cared for her sister's children, worked as a waitress and attended night school. Almira, like many African Americans, moved north in the early 20th century to seek opportunities. Her adult life was spent working for elite families who traveled between homes in the Mid-Atlantic and summer homes on Martha's Vineyard, a lifestyle she and her husband Russell enjoyed. Almira's work at Cliveden focused on cooking, housekeeping and caring for the children of Samuel Chew and his second wife Audrey McLean. On weekends, the couple would visit family and friends in Germantown, Washington, D.C. and New Jersey. After Cliveden opened as a museum in 1973, Almira and Russell continued to work on site as caretakers until 1981. Her later years were spent in Rocky Mount, North Carolina until her death in 2007.



above: Almira and Russell Saunders outside the Kitchen Dependency

