

AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN DELAWARE

A HISTORY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS
1865-1930



BRADLEY SKELCHER, PH.D.

African American Education in Delaware

A History through Photographs, 1865-1940

By

Bradley Skelcher, Ph.D.



Delaware Heritage Press

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Dedication

For my wife, Dinah L. DeMoss, who has struggled her entire life to achieve equality for all and for providing to me the inspiration for this book.

Acknowledgements

The research and writing of this book was one of the most fulfilling experiences that I have encountered during my career as a historian and teacher. It brought together individuals and groups in an effort to preserve the memory of the African American experience in Delaware. For us today, we can all relate school experiences, which are often similar. These memories bind us together in many ways that may help explain who we are. In the time covered in this book, however, not everyone enjoyed the same experiences in childhood. African American and Euro-American children attended different schools and had almost parallel and clearly separate experiences during their early years.

Writing this book as a Euro-American opened up these experiences to me and allowed me to become a part of a community of citizens who want to revive their school experiences for this and future generations before they are lost. This community crosses lines based on race, class and sex, which makes this rewarding for me and hopefully for all involved. It is my pleasure to acknowledge those involved in making this project become a reality.

This book is based upon a report written for the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office funded by a sub-grant from the National Park Service to fully develop a historic context to begin plans for the preservation of African American schools in the state. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge the National Park Service and the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office for their efforts in preserving African American heritage. I would also like to thank the Delaware

Public Archives and the Hagley Museum and Library for assisting in locating primary sources of information for this book.

In the process of research, I formed a committee that provided guidance and advice along with research assistance. This committee came together to form a community of concerned citizens that saw the necessity in preserving African American history. I would like to acknowledge their efforts here. They include Professor Akwasi Osei and Professor Jean Ramsey-Smith both at Delaware State University and Lucretia Wilson, Nelson Driggus and Lola Gibbs who are members of the Star Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church. I would also like to give special thanks to Reba Hollingsworth, who not only helped with the original research, but also saw this a worthy project for the Delaware Heritage Commission to support. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Delaware State University and in particular Professor William H. Flayhart and Dr. Johnny Tolliver. Without the support of the Delaware State University and these individuals, this project would not have been undertaken.

Finally, I would like to thank the Delaware Heritage Commission for seeing that this is an important subject and the need for a publication on the subject. Over the years, the Delaware Heritage Commission has taken the lead in preserving the memory of the people within the State. Truly, without its support, this book would not have been completed.

About the Author

Bradley Skelcher received his Ph.D. in Historical Studies from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1990 and is currently a Professor of History and Acting Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences at Delaware State University in Dover. He is the author of several articles and chapters in books focusing on historic preservation. For his work with the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office on developing a plan for the preservation of African American schools in Delaware, he received Honorable Mention in the First State Award for Community Enhancement. Skelcher has lectured on African American and Afro-Caribbean cultural history in New England, the Chesapeake region, and the

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Chapter I

Introduction



GEORGETOWN COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware

*“Oh—that mine adversary had written a book.”
-Job Chapter 31, Verse 35¹*

The history of African Americans is one of the most underdeveloped topics in historical scholarship. African American history in Delaware is even more neglected with only two published books both written in 1997 and covering the period before the Civil War. This book hopefully will generate interest in African American history that covers not just the slavery period, but also the rich history of African American struggle in the post-Civil War period through more recent times. It was in this period that African Americans in Delaware struggled to establish free and independent communities. This included the establishment of institutions that would help them build strong and enduring communities. The centerpieces of African American communities in Delaware and throughout the nation for that matter were the churches. Flowing from them were other community institutions necessary in the creation of strong communities such as civic and fraternal organizations, and business, and labor organizations. Above all else, African Americans understood the empowering effect of an education.

This book is about the struggle to establish public education in Delaware following the Civil War from 1865 through 1940. It was originally inspired by the efforts of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office to formulate a plan to preserve existing African American schools beginning in 1995. With the completion of the historic preservation context for the plan, I came to the realization that the story was important and should reach a larger audience than what a state report would attract. Therefore, I began work on revising it to manuscript form, which the Delaware Heritage Commission thankfully saw as an important story and agreed to publish the manuscript as a book.

Although this book begins after 1865, the story of African American education in Delaware actually began during the late eighteenth century, however limited educational opportunities were for them. For that matter, Euro-Americans in Delaware had few educational opportunities during this period. Until 1829, there was no public support

for education in Delaware. With the passage of “An Act of Free Schools” the state began providing public support only to Euro-American schools although both Euro-Americans and African Americans paid taxes to support them. Reverend William Yates, an M.E. minister, called this “taxation without representation.” He went on to point out:

...the colored people being charged \$200 a license (marriage license) in common with the whites. The avails passed to the credit of the school fund. Yet the fund by law is apportioned... according to the number of white population. White children have benefit of it; colored children are shut out.

African Americans leveled similar charges against the state during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Following the Civil War, religious groups like the Society of Friends and the Methodist Episcopal Church championed educational opportunities for African Americans in Delaware as they had done in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Before the Civil War, there were only seven schools in the state for African Americans. Most likely, all, but one, were organized by the Society of Friends. There were three in Wilmington, two in Camden (these may have been the two Friends Schools at Little Creek and Murtherkill), one in Newport, and one in Odessa.²

While religious groups worked diligently to establish African American education, a public debate brewed over the issue during the antebellum period in Delaware that continued after the Civil War into the twentieth century. Advocates for public supported education for African Americans equated religious based-education with civilization. The *Dover American Watchman* newspaper pointed out that: “Religion and Civilization, the grand restorers of man to his pristine state, have uniformly been accompanied by some degree of education.”³ In the case of African Americans, the newspaper argued that education would uplift them from their present condition, which was “not the effect of natural, but artificial causes.”⁴ The reasoning was that education would therefore

help make them good citizens by preparing “the minds of this people...for that state of freedom which is their right, and which they will one day most assuredly obtain.”⁵ The author went on to emphasize: “Keep the people in ignorance, lest they attain knowledge of their rights; withhold from them instructions, lest they become dissatisfied with government.”⁶

In response, one person opposed to educating African Americans in Delaware pointed out that it would be dangerous to educate them. He wrote: “It [an African American] is a ferocious, ugly beast, and the more you bring it to the light, and the more tricks you teach it the more ferocity will increase.”⁷ There was fear that education would allow African Americans to “better carry out their dastardly plot to degenerate Euro-American people.”⁸ The belief was that by teaching them to read and write, it would cause them to revolt. Some even feared that education would lead to miscegenation and “compel whites to deliver their daughters to negro [sic] men for marriage.”⁹

Advocates for African American education faced this kind of opposition throughout their struggle. Many held little hope of securing public support even though African Americans contributed to public education for Euro-Americans. According to Reverend Yates, the state taxed African Americans to support public education for Euro-Americans. Although the state did not prohibit African Americans from receiving an education, Reverend Yates argued, “they were denied education by implication.”¹⁰ Reverend Yates elaborated on this when wrote:

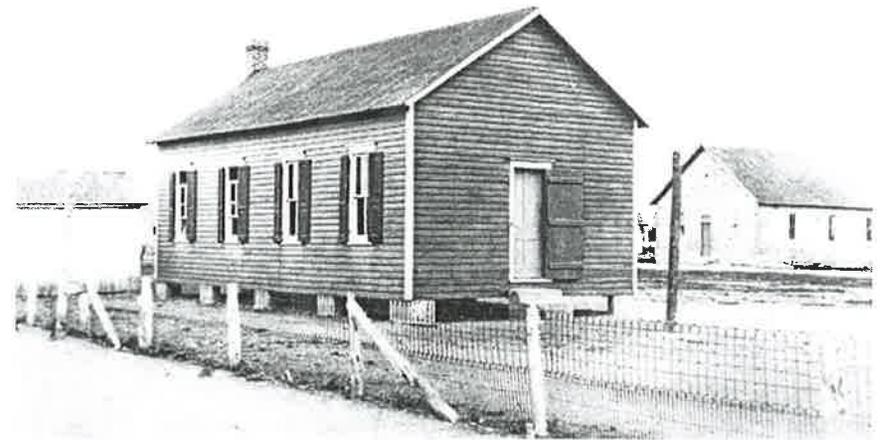
Prior...to the passage of the free school law,...it was not uncommon for colored children...to be admitted to the ordinary schools of the state...since the passage of that law, which gave a legal sanction to the exclusion of the colored children, the appearance of one of them in a school of white children is an unusual phenomenon.¹¹

That left only religious organizations to fill the void. Reverend Yates recorded that 187 African American students attended schools supported

by religious organizations in 1850. In 1860, there were 250 African American students attending these schools.¹²

Despite these efforts, many still feared that education would make African Americans ferocious and rebellious. Out of frustration, one advocate for African American education sarcastically wrote in the *American Watchman*, “Oh—that mine adversary had written a book.”¹³ He implied that if only the opposition to African American education understood the benefits of education to society as a whole, they would then restrain themselves.

During the period covered in this book African Americans and their Euro-American supporters built educational institutions in Delaware in the face of opposition that feared “Negro Domination.” They struggled first to build schools and to offer quality instruction through a system of public education that was separate from the Euro-American system. This is the story of that struggle illuminated with photographs, which hopefully will inspire others to add more to it.



NASSAU COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.



DELMAR COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County

Courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Chapter II

From Church House to Schoolhouse: Building Schools for African Americans in Delaware During the Late Nineteenth Century



VIOLA COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Del.

Following the American Civil War, African Americans pressured white religious leaders in the state of Delaware to turn their attention to expanding educational opportunities for African Americans. They built upon the limited earlier efforts by the Society of Friends and African American Methodists. For example, some African American M.E. Churches of the Delaware Conference received support from the Freedmen's Aid Society of the M.E. Church. At the end of the Civil War, there were seven schools for African Americans in Delaware. Quakers and Methodists worked with African Americans to build upon these educational foundations in the late nineteenth century. The result was the establishment of the Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of Colored People (hereafter Delaware Association). Through their combined efforts, advocates for African American education pressured the state to establish public education for African Americans in Delaware.¹⁴

Efforts to establish public education for African Americans in Delaware did not go unchallenged. White supremacist groups led by the Democratic Party, known as the White Man's Party, opposed any further advancement by African Americans arguing that it would lead to Negro domination. Despite opposition, Methodists and Quakers continued their efforts to bring about equality and to establish racial justice for African Americans. The key to achieving these lofty goals was education.¹⁵

Initially, there was little hope among the advocates for African American education that they would receive state support. The Democratic Party controlled the state legislature and opposed any such legislation. Led by Gove Saulsbury and Thomas Bayard, the Democrats refused to ratify the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. They also led the charge against what they called "Negro Domination" claiming that the Democrat Party was the "White Man's Party." With so much opposition, several religious leaders in the state, who had earlier led the movement to abolish slavery, concluded that any effort to establish education for African Americans had to come from private philanthropy. To them, this meant that the churches had to take the lead. This trend of private philanthropic support of African American education continued through the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

In spite of the white supremacist verbal attacks, on December 27, 1866, a group of Quakers and Methodists met at the Wilmington Institute in Wilmington, Delaware, to begin planning an educational system for African Americans in the state. They came to hear about similar efforts in Maryland from speakers Francis T. King, Dr. James Carey Thomas, and Hugh L. Bond of Baltimore and representatives from the Baltimore Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People. Major General E.M. Gregory, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) also spoke at the meeting. The following from Delaware attended the meeting.

Samuel Hilles	Bishop Alfred Lee
Rev. Aaron Rittenhouse	Lea Pusey
James P. McLearn	Samuel M. Harrington
Rev. W. Aikman	Rev. J. B. Clemson
George Bush	

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the establishment of a similar philanthropic group in Delaware. Both Maryland and Delaware had significant populations of African Americans and a newly freed populace that in their minds needed education and moral uplifting. With this situation, it convinced the Freedmen's Bureau to offer some assistance to the Border States that did not secede from the Union. Gregory spoke to the issue concerning the Freedmen's Bureau that education should "...rouse the colored people" to become self-sufficient through education of themselves and of their children. Initially, religious leaders in Maryland found support through private charity and philanthropy, but upon this occasion both states found new support from the Freedmen's Bureau.¹⁷

Following the meeting, Delaware leaders decided to follow a similar course and created the Delaware Association, which they formally organized on January 3, 1867. From the beginning, both Euro-American and African American churches played important roles in the establishment of schools for African Americans. Initially, William Hilles, a Quaker, and Bishop Levi Scott from the Methodist Episcopal

Church led the efforts to establish an educational system for African Americans in Delaware. Other religious and community leaders from Delaware joined them in their efforts, as they saw it, to make African Americans better citizens and church members through education. Even though African Americans demanded educational opportunities laying the foundation for the Delaware Association, it excluded African Americans from leadership roles, which remained the purview of whites only.¹⁸

The list of officers and managers of the Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of Colored People:

President Thomas Kimber	VP Daniel Corbitt
VP Isaac Jump, M.D.	VP Rev. James McKim
Secretary W. R. Bullock, M.D.	Treasurer Joseph W. Day
Managers:	W. Hilles
Bishop A. Lee	Rev. W. Aikman
Samuel Hilles	Henry Eckel
Lea Pusey	Rev. Aaron Rittenhouse
William Ferris	Samuel M. Harrington
E. L. Sewall	Richard S. Griffith
James P. McLear	Hanson Robinson

Notwithstanding its lack of African Americans in leadership positions, the Delaware Association still gave an air of legitimacy to the effort within the Euro-American power structure of the state. Euro-Americans dominated the Delaware Association. With so much opposition and suspicion within the Euro-American community, it was imperative for such an organization to exist for an effort of this sort. At a meeting on January 9, 1867, the Delaware Association discussed this critical situation. Members stressed the need to keep:

...our operations apart from all political association, basing them upon the true ground of the advancement of religion, morality, and good citizenship...great care should be taken not to offend by the

assumption of a political complexion, the partisan feelings of many with whose political views we could not unite, but who seeing the importance of the object to be attained, might favor us with their assistance.¹⁹

To be sure, if any broad base of support was to come from the Euro-American community in the state, there was a need for such an organization.

The Delaware Association took over the educational responsibilities of the African School Society in Wilmington. Eventually the African School Society gave additional support to the efforts of the Delaware Association by naming Jacob Pusey, (first name illegible) Caby, Ellwood Arrett, A.M. Smith, and (first name illegible) Tatnall as members of the Delaware Association board. The African School Society continued in operation, but it became almost an appendage of the Delaware Association until the latter ceased operations in the early 1890s. After that the African School Society reemerged as the leading philanthropic organization in support of African American education in Delaware. The group eventually terminated in 1909 and turned over its trust fund of \$11,000 to the Security Trust Company in Wilmington. The African School Society stipulated that:²⁰

the income is for the State College [for Colored Youth], the Howard High School kindergarten and the Garrett kindergarten in Wilmington...If payment becomes impracticable...to the Board of Education in Wilmington to be used by it in such manner that it will practically be applied to the education of children of African or Negro descent." 21

Nonetheless, the Delaware Association was the leading philanthropic group in the late nineteenth century supporting the efforts of African

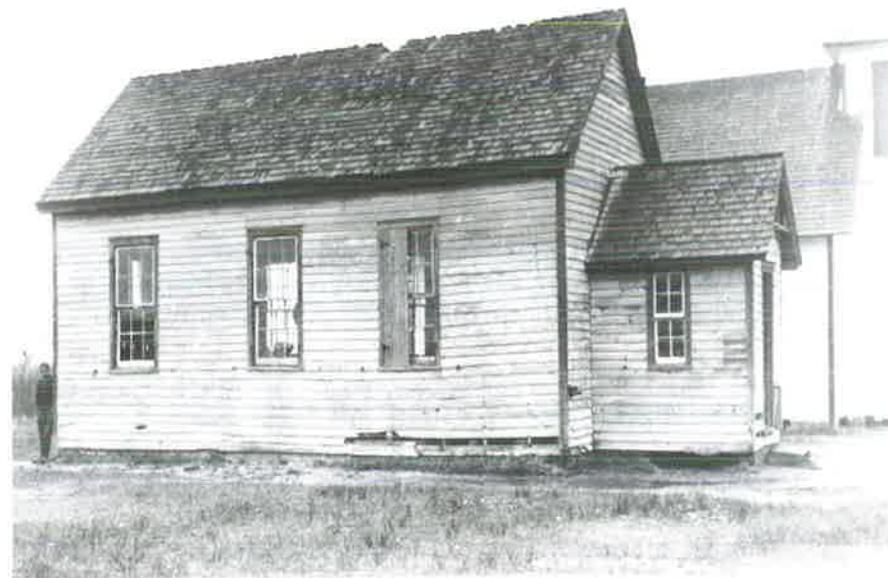
Americans who were already actively establishing schools within their communities.

Clearly, African Americans understood the meaning and importance of education to their communities. It meant not only a means to create better citizens and church members, but it also provided the keys to empowerment through opening new economic opportunities and, thereby, leading to a strengthened community and family. Historian Bettye J. Gardner describes this jubilation for education throughout the South:

The scarce education opportunities available to African Americans in the antebellum period continued into the decades after the Civil War. The pursuit of education came to be the great preoccupation of newly freed slaves. African American fathers and mothers made untold sacrifices to give their children the education that the parents had been denied.²²

Churches had come to symbolize the strength of African American communities. They provided the institutional support for achieving strength or empowerment within African American communities. African American ministers helped organize the communities that they served from the pulpit. They also well understood that they had to establish a trust among their congregations instilling in them an ethic of education that would become the ethos of the African American community. The community raised money and lobbied the legislature continuously for support. Parents even convinced their children to want to attend school. Once African American communities started schools, they found a scarcity of teachers in Delaware. Thus, African American ministers took on the added responsibilities to their ministries serving also as teachers. In support of the ministers' efforts, the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church passed a resolution at their annual meeting in 1866 that recommended to ministers that they should stress in their sermons "the vital importance of education, as being the great lever in elevating our race." Thus from the

beginning, church and school in the African American community were inseparable, and the Methodist Episcopal Church took a strong position in support for education.²³



ELLENDALE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Del.

This school is just one example of the inseparable relationship between churches and schools in Delaware.

Initially, ministers held school in churches before separate schools were built. Churches and ministers not only tended to the spiritual needs of their congregations, but they also served as teachers. Some of the schools began as Sabbath Schools with classes held in the churches on Sundays. Historian Lewis V. Baldwin claims that: "[The] Sunday School movement was the single most important vehicle for black youth education."²⁴ Reverend John W. Alvord, Inspector of Finances and Schools and later General Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau, observed this trend throughout the South as the

predecessors to the free or public schools. On a tour of the South in 1866, he observed:

Sabbath schools among freedmen... [offer] elementary instruction...reaching thousands who cannot attend the week-day teaching. Indeed, one of the most thrilling spectacles which he who visits the southern country...is the large schools gathered upon the Sabbath day, sometimes of many hundreds, dressed in clean Sunday garments, with eyes sparkling, intent upon elementary and Christian instruction.²⁵

Alvord did not elaborate on what age group attended the Sabbath schools, but the observation leaves the impression that they were adults. T.K. Noble, Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau schools in Kentucky reported in 1867: "The places of worship owned by the colored people are almost the only available school houses in the State."²⁶

The Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, organized in 1866, emerged as an important agency for missionary, educational, and social work among African Americans. Funds to support the Society were raised within African American churches. The M.E. Church also encouraged young members to go into the South and help with these efforts. In its first appeal, the Freedmen's Aid Society called for church members to help the newly emancipated African Americans.

The emancipation of four million of slaves has opened at our very door a wide field calling alike for mission and educational work. It has developed upon the Church a fearful responsibility. Religion and education alone can make freedom a blessing to them. *The school*

*must be planted by the side of the church; the teacher must go along with the missionary...from among themselves the ministers are to be raised up who shall conserve, carry forward, and make permanent the work of Christianizing and educating the race.*²⁷

African American M.E. Churches in Delaware supported the efforts of the Freedmen's Aid Society and received support from the agency through its contributions to the Delaware Association. In all, the African American churches were the centers of the sustained effort to establish an educational system in Delaware.²⁸

Above all else, African Americans demanded public support for their schools while maintaining community control over their schools. These demands were not unusual; for African Americans throughout the South demanded the same. William Channing Gannett, a white teacher with the American Missionary Association, wrote:

...they have a natural praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands. There is jealousy of the superintendence [sic] of the white man in this matter. What they desire is assistance without control.²⁹

W.E.B. Du Bois remarked: "Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea." And, clearly, Delaware was a southern state in this regard. It, too, was a former slave state and mirrored other southern states in the struggle to establish an education system for African Americans.³⁰

Financial support from the state was not initially forthcoming. Major General E.M. Gregory, Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, observed that there was no state tax aid in Delaware. He mentioned, however, that conditions could be worse in Delaware.

There [Maryland] the colored people are distinctly ignored in what school system the state has. But, Delaware does not perpetrate the injustice practiced in Maryland of taxing the colored people and using the money thus said for the education of white children.³¹

This was not accurate. African Americans who owned property did pay taxes that supported public education for White children. Indirectly, African Americans who rented property also paid a tax, which was included in their periodic payments to Euro-American property owners. Without the same public financial support, African American education relied upon private charity, administered by the Delaware Association, self-help within the African American community, and some aid from the Freedmen's Bureau.³²

In the absence of public support, advocates for African American education in Delaware relied upon a philosophy of self-help. The Delaware Association provided some funds for the construction of schools and for teachers' salaries. Henry C. Conrad, Actuary for the Delaware Association, reported, "[the] Freedman's Bureau contributed lumber for 14 schools. [The] local residents paid for the purchase or rent of land and the erection of buildings [which were] entirely built and paid by locals."³³

Financial Support for African American education in Delaware, Washington D.C., West Virginia and Maryland in 1887*:

	Delaware*	D.C.*	Maryland*	West Virginia*
Tuition	\$1,980	\$4,896	\$18,480	\$0
Bureau	\$2,820	\$1,170	\$6,020	\$300
Tax	\$0	\$18,360	\$6,340	\$1,800
Private	\$3,000	\$10,110	\$4,200	\$1,200

♦ Maj. Gen. E. M. Gregory, asst. commissioner, Monthly and Other School Reports, July 1, 1869, District Superintendents Report, 1867-1868, records of the Education Division of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Microfilm Record Group M0803, Roll 32

* not including building supplies and books; no enrollment figures were provided.

Supporters of African American education in the state secured support from a variety of sources. On the local level, they held fundraisers. Local residents volunteered to build the schoolhouses. Isaac Hinckley and S. M. Felton of the Delaware Railroad donated free passes to officers of the Delaware Association for travel to the various school locations. Samuel Woolman, associated with the Delaware Railroad, helped supervise construction and performed carpentry and laid bricks. Although, it is unclear as to what they contributed, the Delaware Association mentioned members of the British and Foreign Freedmen's Aid Society lent additional support. The New York Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission provided financial aid. A committee of the Conference of the M.E. Church passed a resolution in 1867 to collect donations for the Delaware Association. In all, the Delaware Association managed to build the necessary assistance among white philanthropic groups to begin the process of building African American education in Delaware. Above all else, African Americans themselves had built a trust in the power of education and were also agents of change even though they were not included in much of the decision making process.³⁴

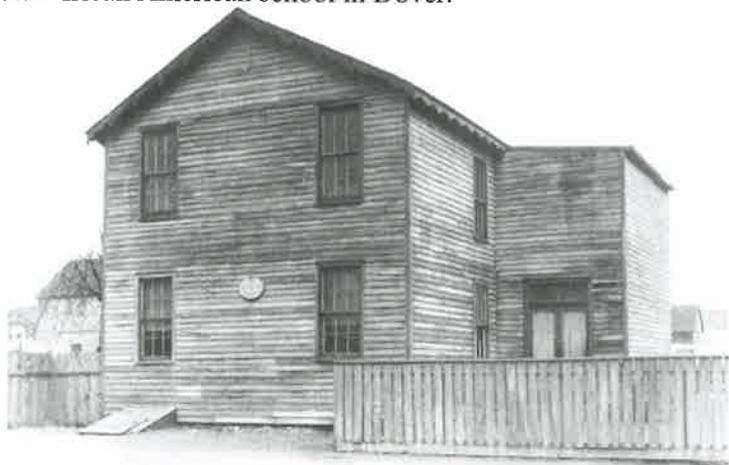
A.J. Congo of Glasgow, Delaware exemplified African American philanthropy and his commitment to education. He formed Howard Associations, named after Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau General Oliver Otis Howard. These were organizations formed within African American communities to raise funds. Howard Associations helped poor children pay their tuition. There were 400 members, who raised \$400 per week. Schools also charged ten cents per student for tuition.³⁵

Reverend John G. Furey was the Delaware Association's superintendent for the construction of schools. In the first months of 1867, he supervised the efforts of several African American communities in the building of schoolhouses. They did not, however, wait until the completion of the buildings before offering school. Many opened schools in churches with the Methodist Episcopal Church taking the lead.³⁶

In 1867 there were several requests from African American communities to build schools. The first school to seek assistance from

the Delaware Association was the Whatcoat M.E. Church in Dover located in Kent County. Through their own efforts, they started a school in the Whatcoat Church building while they waited for the completion of their new schoolhouse. They located the two-story, wooden structure on the East Side of Slaughter Street next to the Whatcoat Church. The Freedmen's Bureau provided the building materials for the 24'x50' wooden building, which cost \$1500 partially raised by the African American community with contributions from the Delaware Association.³⁷

On February 9, 1867, the Delaware Association appointed James H. Rodgers from the New York Branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission as the first teacher for the Dover school and provided a portion of his salary. Dover opened its school on February 11, 1867. Not long afterward, on June 27, 1867, Thomas Slaughter, a prominent white farmer in Dover who owned much of the land in the immediate area, transferred the land deed for \$300 to Joshua Parker, a leader in the Dover African American community. Through their hard and diligent work, the African American community became the sole proprietor of the new African American school in Dover.³⁸



DOVER COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Soon thereafter, other communities requested schools. Following the Dover request, African Americans from Deakneyville on Thoroughfare Neck in southern New Castle County asked for assistance from the Delaware Association. J. Davis submitted an application for the rebuilding of a meetinghouse in Thoroughfare Neck near Taylor's Bridge. He proposed to use the first floor for school and the upper story for meetings. The Delaware Association only approved a one-story building measuring 24'x50'. Once again, the Freedmen's Bureau furnished the building materials.³⁹



TAYLOR'S BRIDGE COLORED SCHOOL,
New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

On February 23, 1867, the Delaware Association reported that Nathaniel Brinkley, President of the Camden Colored Lincoln Union League in Kent County, asked for a school and assistance. Camden-Wyoming already had a school in operation at the time of the request. A letter to the Delaware Association from C.P. Ramsdell of Wyoming

mentioned a night school in operation midway between Wyoming and Camden with forty scholars. He also wrote that forty to seventy scholars attended summer and winter school. There were between forty and fifty students attending night school. The American Missionary Association maintained the school in Camden until the Delaware Association began providing financial support.⁴⁰



WYOMING COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The Delaware Association approved the request and secured building materials for their school from the Freedmen's Bureau. They constructed a one-story, wood framed schoolhouse with dimensions of 22'x36'. After completion, in May 1867, school trustees William Brinkley, Cato Gray, Perry Woodall, John Jones, and Prince N. Caldwell authorized the school to lease a lot. The description of the lot is as follows:

[It is a] small plot of ground on the east side of public road leading from Camden to Dover in Kent County adjoining the lands of Nathaniel Brinkley and contained within the

following limits beginning at a point in or near the center of the road corner from lands of Nathaniel Brinkley and lands of Prince Caldwell and extending thence eastward along the dividing line of said Brinkley and Caldwell...⁴¹

The Delaware Association also assisted in the construction of a new school at Camden South better known as Star Hill not far from the Wyoming Colored School. In Star Hill, the members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church took up the cause to establish a school for children in the community. Many of the residents of Star Hill had been free since the late 18th century and played an instrumental role in the Underground Railroad along with other African Americans living nearby.⁴⁷



STAR HILL COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

African Americans in Milford, also located in Kent County, elected a school committee to establish the “colored free school”. They followed with a request for a three-story schoolhouse. The Delaware Association rejected the request and approved a two-story schoolhouse for which the Freedmen's Bureau provided the building materials. Milford started construction on April 1, 1867, completing it on July 1, 1868. While waiting for completion, they went ahead with school in 1867, but experienced problems with attracting students. The Delaware Association concluded that the Milford school could not continue unless thirty students enrolled. They finally reached an enrollment of thirty-nine just before completion of their new school. Debt also plagued the Milford Colored School. The Freedmen's Bureau paid \$123.00 on the outstanding debt of the building that was \$260.38. James H. Bell of Milford assumed the remainder of the debt.⁴³



MILFORD COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

School Committee Members in Milford, Kent County were Joseph Mason, Littleton Van, and Washington Reading. Church Trustees were William Polk, Elias Webb, Samuel Pernell, George A. Owens, William Winsmoore, Clark Spencer, John W. Truet, and Charles Horsey.

The Milford school committee leased a lot from the Methodist Episcopal Colored People's Church. Before this, the church trustees purchased a lot adjoining the church on West Street from Susan Pernell and James Layton. They leased the lot for thirty years at \$3 per annum.⁴⁴



OWEN'S CORNER COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

In February and March 1867, the Delaware Association received several more requests for assistance to establish schools. The Colored School Committee at Pearson's Corner in Kent County and Fieldsboro in New Castle County asked the Delaware Association for aid. Reverend Isaiah Taylor of Frederica in Kent County wrote to S.M. Harrington about a school. The Frederica area did eventually receive two schools, but they were located in nearby Union and Little Heaven both in Kent County. Mary Rest followed with a request for a school in Bridgeville located in Sussex County. Also, African Americans from Odessa in New Castle County requested and received a school. All received building materials from the Freedmen's Bureau and built one-story, wood framed structures.⁴⁵



UNION COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



ODESSA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



BRIDGEVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

In March 1867 Reverend Henry Lewis of Smyrna in Kent County asked the Delaware Association for aid to establish a school. Like so many others, Smyrna held school initially in a church. The Delaware Association accepted their request resulting in the construction of a two-story wooden building with a one-story addition. Like other African American schools in the state, the Smyrna school was located near a church. Unlike the other schools, however, it was located in a newer addition of the expanding African American community in Smyrna, which crossed over to the west of King's High Road (later duPont Highway)⁴⁶



SMYRNA COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Alex Peterson built a school near Smyrna on Raymond's Neck in Kent County. Not much is known about Peterson and his school's location. The Freedmen's Bureau did report that Peterson contributed his personal funds for the construction of the 22'x28' one-story, wood framed structure. It cost \$200.⁴⁷

Laurel in Sussex County received assistance from the Delaware Association and building materials from the Freedmen's Bureau for the construction of a school for African Americans. The M.E. Church rented 300 square yards of land to the trustees of the school for \$2. The indenture showed the location of the land on the corner of Jeremiah Elliott's land and a public road. Construction began on May 1, 1867. They completed the construction of the one-story wooden schoolhouse in September 1867. It measured 22'x36'. William Sipple, the principal trustee of Laurel reported to the Delaware Association in December 1868 that the school had received \$160 from the Freedmen's Bureau and was debt free, the school still lacked shutters and furniture though.⁴⁸

The School Committee members for Laurel in Sussex County were William Cooper, William Sipple, John Sipple, and Henry Sharp. The trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church were Minos Dulaney, George Cooper, Theodore Marsh, Samuel Dulaney, Daniel Brown, John Gaine, and John Cooper.

On June 1, 1867, African Americans in the New Castle Common (New Castle Common was a private group dating back to the management of the common lands when William Penn founded the community) in New Castle County reported to the Delaware Association that they had commenced construction of a school, which they eventually finished on September 1, 1867. To help with retiring the accrued debt, the Freedmen's Bureau contributed \$123.

Principal trustee William C. Spruance (most friendly white man as recorded in a Freedmen's Bureau Report) convinced the New Castle Common trustees, who served as trustees of the African American school, to raise funds to pay the remaining debt through tuition. Even with this, there was a complaint about the contribution from New Castle Common.⁴⁹ Bishop A. Lee presented a letter from Dr. Joseph Parrish of Philadelphia to the Delaware Association in which he complained about "the mode of appropriation of the revenue from New Castle Commons." This body, dating back to the early eighteenth century was responsible for public finances in an area near the city of New Castle. It also made purchases for the city. Nonetheless, some believed that African Americans had not received their fair share of revenues collected by the trustees forcing African Americans to pay a double tax in the form of tuition to support their school. This was a portent of future problems in funding of African American schools. Following these complaints, Parrish argued that "efforts be made to secure to the Colored people that portion of said revenue which is justly their due."⁵⁰

On November 13, 1867, New Castle Common recorded an indenture with New Castle County which showed Charles C. Lister renting land to Thomas T. Tasker, Senior of Philadelphia and the Trustees of the Town of New Castle for \$100. The school was built on the southwest side of William Street near the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad and Turnpike Company.⁵¹

African Americans in Seaford, located in Sussex County, began construction on a schoolhouse in June 1867 and finished it in October 1867. On December 30, 1867, Jessie P. Conaway transferred a lot for \$150 to Noah Blockson and other Trustees to hold in trust. They located the school on North Street in Seaford.⁵² Trustees of the Seaford School in Sussex County were Noah Blockson (principal trustee), Emory Gaines, Joseph Green, Bryan Phillips, and Dennis Fooks.



SEAFORD COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

On August 31, 1867, African Americans in Milton, located in Sussex County, began construction on a schoolhouse. As it did for other schools, the Freedmen's Bureau furnished the lumber. Principal Trustee Alexander Young reported that four of the trustees furnished the

remainder of the materials and built the schoolhouse. He also reported no debt. The land deed showed William Mosely rented a lot to the Trustees of the Milton school on February 13, 1868. They built the schoolhouse on the public road running from Milton to Waples Mill, which adjoined the lands of William Warren and William Mosley.⁵³

Shortly following the Milton school project, African Americans in Middleton located in New Castle County requested and received support to build a school. Although they completed their one-story, 22'x36' wood framed schoolhouse in 1867, they did not record the indenture for the lot until June 1869. Joshua B. Ferrimon rented a lot to the Trustees of the Colored School. The location of the school lot was on Lake Street and the corner of a newly constructed street located on the corner of J. Allston's land.⁵⁴



NEWARK COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

From Church House to Schoolhouse

During the Civil War, John Congo (relationship to A.J. Congo is unknown), an African American from Newark in New Castle County, started a school for African Americans in his home located at Corbit Street and New London Road. In 1867 he moved the school into a new and larger building located on East Cleveland Avenue. Material for the building came from a disassembled Army barracks donated by the Federal government. Financial assistance came from the Delaware Association, volunteer contributions, and tuition.⁵⁵

In nearby Newport, African Americans constructed a new schoolhouse in 1867. Deed records showed Joseph Killgore sold a lot to the Trustees of the First United African Wesleyan Society. They, in turn, rented the lot to Trustees of the African School of Newport for \$45 in October 1868; the Trustees were John Turner, Phillip Tilghman, and Henry Cook. In 1870 they purchased more land from John Tilghman of Christiana Hundred. The lot was situated on the southwest side of the Newport and Gap Turnpike Road in Christiana Hundred.⁵⁶



NEWPORT COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

On August 23, 1867, the Union American Church of Summit Bridge in New Castle County built a schoolhouse and, like the other communities, received assistance from the Delaware Association. On November 16, 1868, they purchased land for \$125, which was located on the northern side of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal on a public road leading to Kirkwood, Delaware to the north. Most likely, the school served the African American population in St. Georges, Pencader, and Red Lion Hundreds since it was located on their edges. Also it appears that the Union American Church lead the effort to establish a school there.⁵⁷



SUMMIT BRIDGE COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The Union American Church trustees in Red Lion Hundred, New Castle County were Robert Guy, Stephen Wright, William T. Roy, Isaac Porter, Richard Anderson, Benjamin Dickson, and Enoch E. Guy.

The trustees also stipulated in the deed that "...no person shall be excluded from said school house or school by reason of his color complexion, race or religious belief or profession." At the time, most of the African American schools in the country had similar non-discriminatory statements regarding the admission of students. The issue of racially mixed schools was debated within the Freedmen's Bureau and among political leaders in Delaware. Still, few if any Euro-American students attended schools for African Americans.⁵⁸

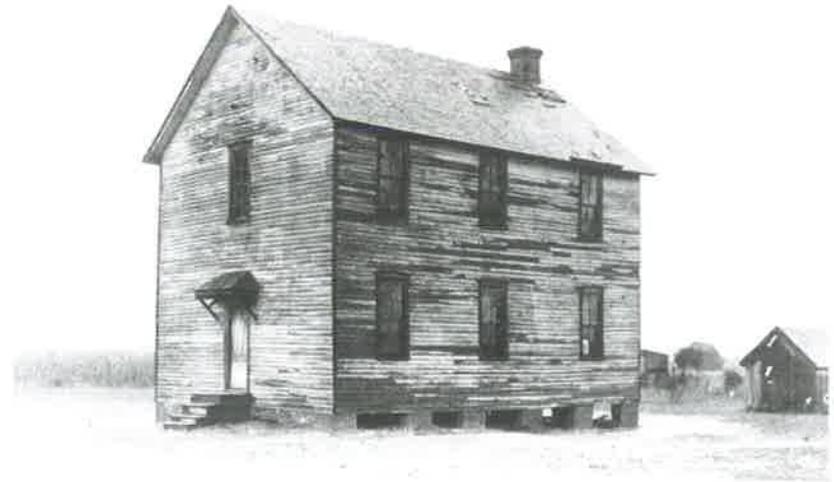
In general, African Americans constructed schools and experienced no violence while doing so from the local Euro-American community. The exception, however, came in Sussex County. In 1867 African Americans built a schoolhouse in Cedar Creek Hundred in the village of Slaughter Neck. In a similar fashion as elsewhere, the Trustees of the M.E. Church secured support for a new school and selected Trustees for the school. They built it on the "north side of the public road running diagonally across the lot of land in Slaughter Neck [and] bounded on the northerly by Elias T. Bennett, and on the west by Charles M. Shockely and on south and east by Public Road." The rent on the lot was \$5. Like Summit Bridge Colored School, the trustees declared that "...the colored people erect a school house...for the education and instruction of colored people and their descendants...and no person be excluded from said school on account of his religious profession." It is clear that they meant not to exclude whites, because "of color" was lined out of the deed.⁵⁹

Ironically, almost immediately after the completion of the schoolhouse, a local mob of Euro-Americans burned the building. This prompted an investigation from the Freedmen's Bureau. In its report, Major General E.M. Gregory, one of the investigators, found:

One school house has been burnt located at Slaughter's Neck, Sussex Co. Delaware. It was just finished. The plastering hardly dry. They were about moving the school from the old church into it when it was burned to the ground.

I visited the place with General C. H. Howard and Major W. Van Denlip. The evidence was very strong against some young men who were at a store that night...and who were known to be hostile some of whose professed ladies has said "'No use to build a nigger [sic] school house. It shall not stand it shall be burned down.'" But the evidence was not sufficient to warrant an arrest so we promised to aid in rebuilding the house this autumn...⁶⁰

Not to be intimidated, the local African American community rebuilt the school. In the meanwhile, classes were held in a nearby M.E. Church. Gregory admiringly observed, "The scholars had not been frightened away but were in full force over forty in their old church one [of] the most interesting schools I have visited."⁶¹



Rebuilt SLAUGHTER NECK COLORED SCHOOL,
Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The school trustees in Slaughter Neck, Sussex County were Robert Young, Asberry Curuthers, Anthony Shockley, Joseph Pettyjohn, and George Shockley. The trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church were Jesse Shockley, Charles Shockley, David Conwell, Solomon Shockley, and Joseph Young.

Earlier, in 1867, African Americans in Georgetown, located in Sussex County, also faced violence. As he did with the Slaughter Neck incident, Major General E.M. Gregory investigated the Georgetown act. He recorded that "...violence to teachers is reported, which occurred in Georgetown, Sussex Co., Del. [on] June 27, 1867." A white mob attacked the boarding house where the African American teacher at the Georgetown Colored School stayed. Other than being badly frightened, she was not physically harmed. Following the incident, she resigned leaving the school without a teacher.⁶²

CITY OF WILMINGTON SCHOOLS

The efforts to build an educational system for African Americans in Delaware did not go unnoticed by the Freedmen's Bureau. Still, the work and the commitment among African Americans themselves went unnoticed or at the very least unrecognized. The Freedmen's Bureau instead lavished its praise on the work of the Delaware Association.

The Delaware Association is due great praise for the energy for which they have pursued their work. It is reported that very few colored people even know what a school is, so work in recruiting students is needed.⁶³

The enthusiastic response among Euro-Americans to African American education in Delaware especially caught the attention of General O.O. Howard, Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau. Their work so delighted Howard that he offered to match funds raised by the Delaware Association in 1867 targeting Wilmington with his challenge.⁶⁴

The center of efforts to establish an educational system for African Americans in Delaware was Wilmington. Before the founding of the Delaware Association, the Freedmen's Bureau reported that there were three schools for African Americans in Wilmington; these were identified as No. 1-1865, No. 2-1827, and No. 4-1827. Although they were not identified other than by number and date of founding, they may have been the African School Society and the Female African School Society schools which had already been established schools before the Civil War. Another unidentified school existed on Montgomery Street. In 1867 the Delaware Association took over two of the schools, which were not identified in their annual reports. One hundred seventy-five students attended these schools. By February, there were four schools with three sponsored by the Delaware Association.⁶⁵

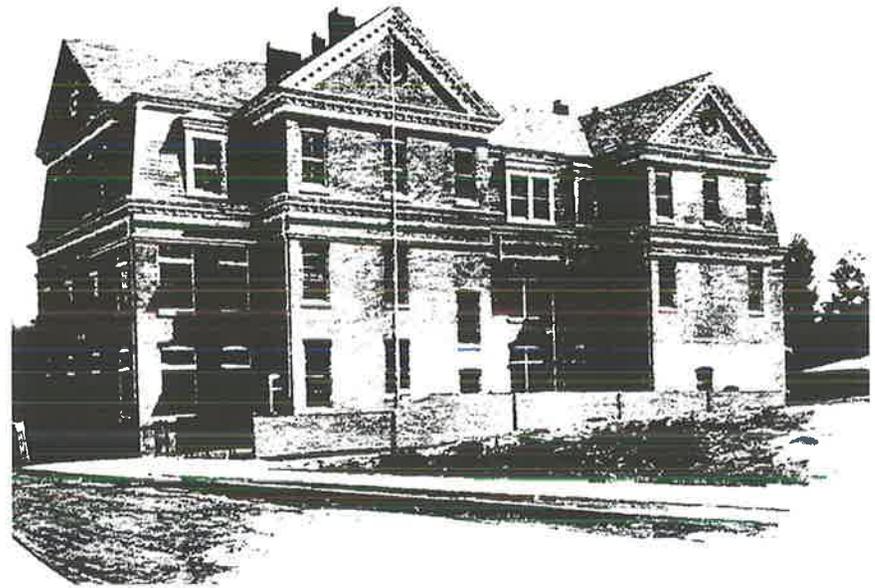
African Americans and supportive Euro-Americans responded immediately to the call from the Delaware Association to establish schools under its auspices. On January 1, 1867, Major General E.M. Gregory held a meeting at the Walnut Street Church in Wilmington where he called for the establishment of night schools for adults. In the following summer, Gregory appointed William Howard Day, an African American, to serve as superintendent of schools for Maryland and Delaware. Day had long championed educational opportunities for African Americans as their fundamental right as citizens. He spoke throughout Delaware and Maryland encouraging African Americans to build schools.⁶⁶

Esteline Johnson was the first to respond. In January 1867, under the auspices of the Delaware Association, she opened a night school for adults in a house on 12th Street in Wilmington (possibly, the location of the Female African School Society). Initially fifteen students enrolled and paid ten cents per week for tuition. Two Euro-American teachers, named Mary T. Walker and Helen Dodge took over the instruction at the 12th Street School after Johnson left. In February, Louisa Newton joined Johnson, and under the charge of Frisby Cooper, they temporarily opened a new school in the African School Society schoolhouse on 10th and Orange Streets. Cooper took over the newly created secondary night school for adults. Johnson and Newton taught the adults in the primary night school.⁶⁷

Soon after the initial flurry of activity, more schools began to open. Another school opened at an unrecorded location with the support of the Delaware Association bringing the total of consolidated schools to four in Wilmington. A day school also opened in the schoolhouse attached to the Zion Church on 9th and French Streets (the area around 9th, Walnut, and French Streets was known as "Little Africa"). Major General E.M. Gregory reported in his October 1867 Report that Wilmington had five day schools (one of which was private) and two night schools. He indicated that the Delaware Association supported School No. 3, and the New York Branch of the Freedmen's Union Commission supported School No. 4. There was no indication of support regarding School Nos. 1 and 2. Most likely, the African School Society and the Female African School Society continued their support of these schools.⁶⁸

Probably, the most important symbol of future advancement for African Americans in Delaware was the establishment of O.O. Howard High School: the only one in the state for African Americans. Following his dismissal as superintendent of schools in Maryland and Delaware in 1868, William Henry Day moved to Wilmington where he led the movement to pressure the city council and school board to publicly support African American education. In 1869 members of the city council and the school board finally agreed to grant \$5000 to the Delaware Association for construction of a high school for African Americans. The Delaware Association applied it towards a matching grant from the Freedmen's Bureau. They raised additional funds from private philanthropic societies.⁶⁹

Located at 12th and Orange Streets in Wilmington, O.O. Howard High School was completed in September 1869 at a cost of \$5000. The first principal was an Euro-American named Whitehead. In 1876 Edwina B. Kruse became the first African American principal at Howard High School. It remained the only high school for African Americans until the 1920s when the State College for Colored Students in Dover opened one.⁷⁰



HOWARD COLORED HIGH SCHOOL, New Castle County
Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Del.

Howard High School also housed a Female Normal School and Male Normal School to train teachers for Delaware. The normal schools offered two years of instruction in pedagogy, which led to teacher certification. For many African Americans, it was an important issue to train their own teachers for their schools. Major General E.M. Gregory had come to a similar conclusion that: "Normal schools produced superior teachers: all the schools could be supplied with colored teachers from our normal schools for the coming year." And, it was Edwina Kruse who played an important role in expanding the Normal schools within Howard High School following her appointment as principal in 1876. Kruse first taught in the Middletown Colored School when she first arrived following her graduation from Hampton Institute in Virginia.⁷¹

Soon after, other schools were erected in and around Wilmington. By the summer of 1875, members of the Mt. Joy M.E. Church, first organized as a branch of the A.U.M.E. Church in 1873, built a new chapel in south Wilmington near A Street. Continuing the practice begun by Peter Spencer earlier in the century, Girard Rollins, a member of the Whittington Methodist Episcopal Church in Wilmington, organized an elementary school for the Mt. Joy Methodist Church. It began with an enrollment of 103 students. Most likely, they conducted their first classes within the new chapel. Emilie N. Dorster became the principal and remained in the position for nine years. Later, the church did build a school on the corner of A Street (date unknown). Eventually, Wilmington Public School System incorporated it into the system and was then known as the Public School of South Wilmington.⁷²

From the Mt. Joy M.E. Church, missionaries organized other schools in the area during the late nineteenth century. The Buttonwood Church established the Buttonwood Day School (located off present-day Rt. 9 and currently annexed into the City of New Castle), that also became a public school in Wilmington. The A.U.M.E. Church also established a school at Lobdel and South Claymont Streets (In the 1920s, duPont built the John Palmer Jr. Elementary School replacing the original school). It also established a school at C and Townsend Streets. (In the 1920s, duPont replaced the school with a new one named the Samuel G. Elbert Elementary School) The Wilmington Public School System incorporated both schools into the public school system in the late nineteenth century.⁷³

By the beginning of the 1870s, Delaware had laid the physical foundations for African American education with the construction of several schoolhouses. In 1875 the Delaware Association reported twenty-six schools in operation throughout the state outside of Wilmington (officially, the Delaware Association had no role in the administration of schools in Wilmington, which were under the control of the Wilmington school board). At the end of the decade, the Delaware Association listed fifty-two schools for African Americans. In the 1880s, there were seventy-one schools open. And by the end of the century, there were over eighty schools for African Americans in Delaware. Still, challenges remained for African Americans to

overcome in their efforts to establish permanent and meaningful educational opportunities in the state. Questions remained unanswered as to a philosophy of education and how the schools would be funded to sustain their efforts.



**BUTTONWOOD COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
*Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Del.***



Edwina Kruse
Howard High School principal



Maj. Gen. O.O. Howard

Chapter III

Toward a Philosophy of Education



REEVES CROSSING COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

With the growing numbers of new schools in Delaware, African Americans began to establish a philosophy of education. Above all else, the goal of education was to strengthen African American communities. In this task, churches, especially the M.E. Church and the Society of Friends, played primary roles. Therefore, religion played an important part in the curriculum. This influence led to the establishment of a classical education with little industrial training influence during the late nineteenth century.

In this respect, Delaware differed from other areas in the South. Delaware had already established industry in the northern part of the state. There was also an established and trained workforce. The rest of the state below the C&D Canal remained a rural and an agrarian society with most of the African Americans working in agriculture. Unlike other areas in the South, this area of Delaware remained immune to the pressures of industrialization during the late nineteenth century.

Northern industrialists went into the South during Reconstruction to introduce industry beginning with textiles. In the process, there was a need for an industrial workforce. Historian James D. Anderson argues that this led to the Hampton-Tuskegee Model for industrial training. In 1868 General Samuel C. Armstrong founded the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute in Hampton, Virginia where he developed the industrial education model. This model aimed:

to train selected Negro youth who should go out and teach and lead their people, first by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor; to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands; and, to these ends, to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character. And it seemed equally clear that the people of the

country would support a wise work for the freedmen.⁷⁴

Many schools in the South adopted industrial training as their philosophy of education for African Americans. Education involved training African Americans to work in factories or to serve the new industrial society. This philosophy also stressed the notion of producing a better citizen by building moral character through the appreciation of manual work. Booker T. Washington summarized this philosophy in his 1895 Atlanta Exposition Address.

“Cast down your bucket where you are”—Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions...Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion to as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life;...No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top...⁷⁵

Many agreed with this philosophy of education, which stressed the production of a docile citizen who would accept his or her station at the lower rungs of an industrial workforce.⁷⁶

The Delaware philosophy of education, however, stressed a liberal educational curriculum. Because of local control and the religious missionary influence, African American education in Delaware developed along a New England style of education. Anderson points out

the notion that northern missionaries received their education in a New England style school and established the same in their sponsored African American schools. Simply, they adopted a familiar curriculum for the African American schools. African Americans in turn demanded the same type of education as the Euro-Americans.⁷⁷

Primarily, the New England model stressed state support for universal education. In addition, it stressed a classical education that included reading, writing, and arithmetic as the core courses. Since most schools in Delaware terminated at the sixth grade, this curriculum fit well. Delaware adopted these subjects and added spelling, history, and geography to the curriculum. For secondary education, the curriculum included these subjects with the addition of classical literature and languages such as Latin. The curriculum also included Christian instruction for both primary and secondary schools. To support this instruction, the Pennsylvania Branch of the Bible Society contributed 250 copies of English Testaments with Psalms. There was opposition to this donation from the Delaware Association, which directed their return without explanation.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the majority of teachers came from the Colored Institute for Youth in Philadelphia. Most came from New England and received their early education there. Their methods of teaching were based on the New England model. Even though there were teachers like Edwina Kruse in Delaware who were trained at Hampton Institute, its industrial training model was not readily adopted in Delaware during the late nineteenth century.⁷⁹

The Delaware Association recruited teachers from schools that were not normal schools from outside of the state. The New York Branch of the Freedmen's Union Commission also supplied teachers to Dover and other schools. At first most teachers came from three schools. Teachers came from the Biblical Institute (Morgan State University) in Baltimore, Lincoln University in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and the Institute for Colored Youth (Cheney State University) in Philadelphia. Most teachers came from the Institute for Colored Youth, which the Delaware Association had contracted with Ebenezer D. Bassett, the Principal, to supply teachers. In March 1867, there was a request to waive the rule restricting teachers to come from only the Colored

Institute. This reflected a growing demand to train teachers from Delaware in normal schools to teach in the newly established African American schools. In 1869 there were seventy graduates from the Wilmington normal schools. The establishment of normal schools in Wilmington was a response to this demand. Delaware State College for Colored Students also trained teachers who taught in local schools by the turn-of-the-century. For example, Jeannette Donovan Turner taught at Sanfield Colored School, located two miles from Hartly off the Sudlersville road in western Kent County, following her graduation from the State College for Colored Students in 1908.⁸⁰



SANFIELD COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

African Americans in Delaware developed an educational philosophy that demanded a state supported universal education that included each rural and urban African American community. African Americans wanted to achieve equality within American society, and education was the key. To them, racial justice also meant equality in education. The Presiding Elder of the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church summarized this notion writing:

The amazement of accomplishment and of possibilities of our race spring into a surprising emancipation of blooming into manhood and leaping into citizenship is scarcely possible to believe when one beholds it...Education prepares a citizen to appreciate the rights and privileges of a free government and also qualifies them to perform the duties, responsibilities and obligations resting upon them...the future of our republican institution is to be largely determined by the colored race number over seven million, each community has its share of responsibility.⁸¹

In line with religious instruction, African Americans wanted to teach proper moral behavior. In many cases, learning moral behavior meant learning Protestant middle class values and giving up traditional values, many of which were African in origin. For example, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote of an incident, which occurred at Fisk University. A religious leader banned dancing there. Du Bois wrote: "What kind of dancing he was acquainted with I do not know, but at any rate in his mind dancing figured as a particularly heinous form of sin."⁸² Du Bois also wrote about his experiences in a New England school.

The teachers intervened and tried to reconcile matters in a way which years afterward made me resentful and led to my eventual refusal to join a religious organization. They admitted that my dancing might well be quite innocent, but said that my example might lead others astray. They quoted Paul: "if meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth." I tried to accept this for years, and for years I wrestled with this problem. Then I resented this kind of sophistry. I began again to dance and I have never since had much respect for Paul.⁸³

In essence, Du Bois used dance as an example of methods employed to eradicate African American culture and values through the educational system. Dance, dating back to Africa, was the essence of African American religion and social system. Erasing it meant an attack on African American cultural values.⁸⁴

To many African Americans, the two most important values to teach children and adults were thrift and sobriety. There was an attempt to establish temperance societies in the schools. The idea was to teach students not to smoke tobacco or to drink alcohol. Still, the creation of such organizations was a difficult task for teachers who were already over worked. This did not mean, however, that moral instruction was not important in the classroom. Major General E.M. Gregory reported to the Freedmen's Bureau that:

...not much effort has been made by the teachers to organize temperance societies. Being very often over worked in other ways they have not felt obliged to proceed in this direction though themselves favorable to temperance...

Temperance societies did not catch throughout the Delaware, District of Columbia, and West Virginia region. Out of 537 schools, only 17 societies were reported. Great objection is made by the colored people against signing a temperance pledge which includes tobacco. The poor colored people, so called, would have ample means by foregoing one luxury...[the] vile weed. It is said that people without land or a house or a horse spends their money on this vile weed.⁸⁵

Beyond tobacco, many African Americans considered alcohol consumption as the most demoralizing influence within their communities. To a point, they equated intoxication with slavery. The Presiding Elder of the Dover District of the Delaware Conference saw alcohol as an impediment against progress for African Americans. He wrote:

The race whose way has been made so difficult by the havocs [sic] and consequences of slavery, can never climb the steps of this twentieth century staggering under the influence of whisky.⁸⁶

Another growing movement within the philosophy of education was the "mixed school" idea. The officials in the Freedmen's Bureau were early advocates of racially "mixed schools." In his 1867-68 Annual Report, Major General E.M. General Gregory outlined the benefits of racially "mixed schools" especially in areas with limited classroom space. He pointed out that: "It is recognized that mixed schools are the best schools. Schools where the white students go in the morning and black students go in the afternoon prove to be of not much benefit."⁸⁷ He also reported that by October 1867 that:

Twenty seven white children attended black schools in the Maryland and Delaware district. I have no doubt but that this number will be largely increased during the coming term. Children who play together will go to school together. Mixed schools have always proved the best schools...This is the only way to furnish exactly equal privileges to all and in many places sufficient education as privileges to many.⁸⁸



CONCORD COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Even though the village of Concord in Sussex County was a racially mixed community of white and black river pilots, the school educated only African Americans.

Reverend Theophilus Gould Steward, an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) minister assigned to Delaware, advocated public support for education and endorsed racially "mixed schools." While in Delaware, he became a strong advocate for not only racially mixed schools, but he also lobbied the state legislature for public financial support of African American education. It also must be added that Bishop Payne advocated the eradication of any practice within the A.M.E. that resembled cultural linkages to an African past. Nonetheless, despite efforts favoring racially mixed schools, by the end of 1867, no Euro-American students attended African American schools.⁸⁹



Rev. Theophilus Gould Steward

Courtesy of Special Collections at the University of Virginia

Henry C. Conrad, Actuary for the Delaware Association, concluded that African Americans did not want racially "mixed schools." He observed that:

I have never found any disposition among the colored people to desire their children educated in the same school buildings with white children, or to claim "mixed schools" as has so often been asserted. On the contrary, I believe the overwhelming and practically unanimous sentiment among colored

people is emphatically in favor of separate and distinct schools for their own children.⁹⁰

Most likely, this was Conrad's personal view rather than that of African Americans as demonstrated when he confessed: "Personally, I desire to be understood as radically opposed to the education of the two races in the same school buildings."⁹¹ The hope of racially "mixed schools" eventually gave way to the institutionalization of a separate educational system that helped form the legal foundations for segregation. The state codified this into law with the ratification of the Delaware Constitution of 1897. Educational facilities were the first legally segregated places in Delaware. Before this, segregation was practiced without legal foundations.



PARKER'S CHAPEL COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The measure of success for African American education in Delaware was attendance. There was a steady increase in enrollment during the first decades of the Delaware Association. For the first time in Delaware, there were educational opportunities for African Americans throughout the state. Furthermore, African Americans understood that they needed education in order to fully enjoy their newly found freedoms that came with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. They also realized that education was essential in the creation of strong African American communities. All of these contributed to the enthusiastic response to the new schools. The Delaware Association acknowledged this enthusiasm in its Annual Report of 1878:

Everywhere there is a marked tendency upon the part of the colored people to improve every educational opportunity, and the earnest, and at times, self sacrificing efforts put forth by these people, have been, indeed, praiseworthy.⁹²

By the end of the nineteenth century, enrollment, however, began to drop. The latter trend was more difficult to explain.

In an attempt to make schools more attractive and to retain students, the Freedmen's Bureau made recommendations for the school term. Officials recommended school year to begin October 1. This was the end of the harvest season allowing students to begin school without interfering with farm work. For the city, they set the length of the school year at nine months. For rural schools, they suggested six months. Looking at the reported school openings during the late nineteenth century, the suggestion for rural schools reflected reality. Schools started to close following March. For summer, they suggested that school sessions begin on July 1 and last for three months. This did not reflect reality for rural school children that worked in the fields during these months.⁹³

Enrollment numbers reflected the initial excited response to education among African Americans in Delaware. In 1868 the Freedmen's Bureau reported 644 pupils attending twenty-one schools for

May. This was an increase of sixty-one over a previous report. In June 1868, enrollment increased to 682. The upward trend continued in the 1870s. In 1875 twenty-eight schools reported a total of 951 pupils. The following year, twenty-nine schools reported 978 students to the Delaware Association. These figures increased to thirty-three schools with an enrollment of 1,061 in 1877. In 1878 forty-five schools reported 2,000 students in attendance.⁹⁴

During the decade of the 1880s, reported figures demonstrated increased enthusiasm for the schools. In 1881 the number of schools increased from forty-six in the previous year to sixty-seven. The number of enrolled students increased from 1,997 in 1880 to 3,121 in 1881. After 1883, the number of students increased to 3,439.⁹⁵ In 1885 the Presiding Elder of the Dover District praised the keen desire for an education among African Americans. He optimistically observed:

The interest of education has not been forgotten. There are, within the bounds of the District (Dover District of the Delaware Conference of the M.E. Church) 60 Day Schools, with 3,005 scholars, of which 1,373 are from the state of Delaware. I am glad to say that the day has come, when we as a race have lived to know that ignorance is death, but to live we must be educated.⁹⁶



**CLAYTON
COLORED
SCHOOL,**
Kent County
*Courtesy of the Delaware
Public Archives, Dover,
Del.*



GREENWOOD COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

At the turn-of-the-century, Euro-American rural schools for the state averaged 156.3 days of school. African American schools remained open on an average of 137 days. Euro-American attendance averaged 89.7 days per pupil or 56.8%, while African American attendance averaged 57 days per pupil or 42%. Many reported downward trends or decreasing enthusiasm among African Americans for education. But, there were several factors that contributed to this trend.⁹⁷ In 1890 the African School Society issued the following report regarding African American schools in Delaware.

African School Society, 1890*

Counties	School Age children	Enrolled	Average Number in attendance during the year	Schools	Teachers	Salary Per year
Sussex	1365	1132	674	28	28	\$23.50
Kent	1715	1501	901	30	30	23.50
New Castle	1058	872	595	21	21	23.50
City of Wilmington	1404	1151	681	6	17	40.79

* records of the African School Society, 1890, *Historical Society of Delaware*

Contemporaries offered several explanations for the decreasing attendance while the number of school openings increased. Illness was a reason for school closing and poor attendance among African Americans. In 1882 an outbreak of smallpox closed the schools in Smyrna, Mt. Friendship, Fork Branch, and Deakneyville. At the turn-of-the-century, the Anthracite Coal Mine Strike led to fuel shortages and sporadic school openings during the winter months. At the same time, another smallpox and diphtheria epidemic hit central Delaware.⁹⁸



FORK BRANCH COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Charles Albert Tindley, Presiding Elder for the Dover District of the Delaware Conference, identified: "Another cause that affects our rural membership [and school attendance] is the constant emigration of the young folks to the cities to find society and work." Beginning in the 1890s, there was considerable out-migration of African Americans leaving Delaware. This was the beginning of the "Great Migration North" in Delaware.⁹⁹

Another growing problem was the need for additional income. In rural areas, families needed children to work in the fields. This often conflicted with school attendance. Given the nature of farm tenant and farm labor work, the schools held irregular sessions. Families also moved with the growing seasons, which led to sporadic attendance.¹⁰⁰ Reverend Steward described this situation as "feudal" and the reason that "illiteracy prevailed to an astounding extent among both white and colored people."¹⁰¹



CHRISTIANA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Many African American leaders saw a moral decay within families to explain the decline in enrollment and attendance. The Methodist Episcopal Presiding Elder of the Dover District pointed to the "spiritual laxity in the home... [associated with] looseness and indifference in spiritual things."¹⁰² There was hope, though. One Presiding Elder Report acknowledged: "Although illiteracy is increasing in the State of Delaware the reason of this is apparent when it is remembered that the State has no public school system." He meant the equalization of public support for both Euro-American and African American education in Delaware. This was an ongoing challenge for African Americans through much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰³



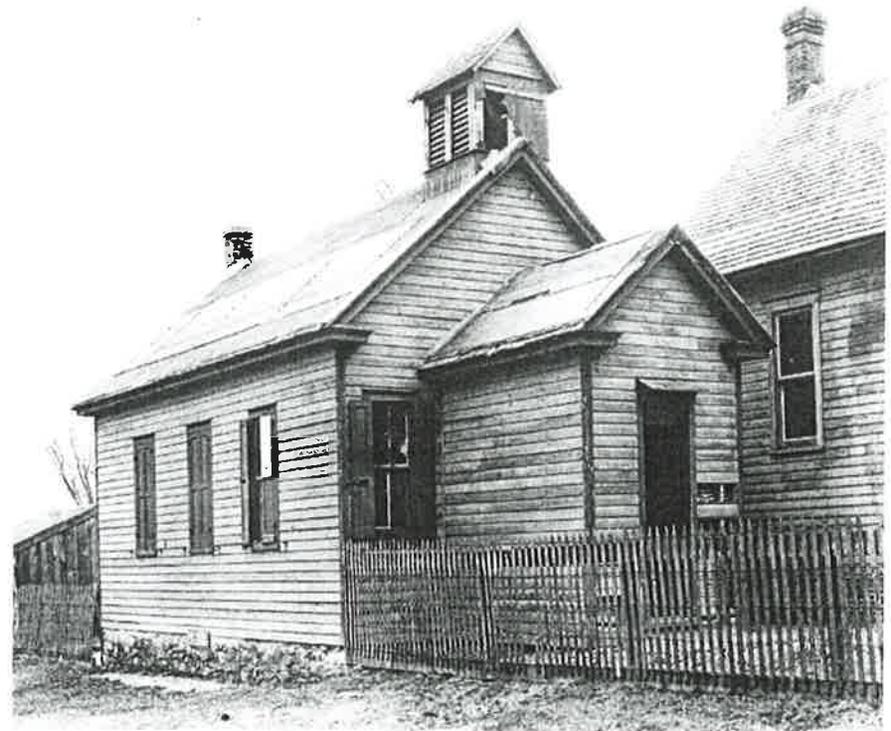
WILLIAMSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County

Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library

Chapter IV

“In the republic of thought, all
men are created equal”:

The Political Struggle to
Establish African American
Public Education



ST. GEORGES COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

By the early 1870s, it was clear to many that additional financial support was necessary to keep many of the African American schools open, especially ones in rural areas. Clearly, they operated at a disadvantage compared with Euro-American schools. State legislation dating to 1829 established a system of free schools for Euro-Americans. This allowed school districts to support public education through property and poll taxes. Even though most of the African American population in Delaware owned no property, they indirectly contributed to the support of schools for Euro-Americans. Many African Americans worked as tenant farmers renting both land and houses from Euro-Americans. The taxes from these properties went toward supporting white schools resulting in double taxation. African Americans paid taxes and received no public support for their schools. To attend their schools, they had to pay ten cents per week for each child. In addition, they had to raise funds through charitable organizations or through fund-raising activities such as bake sales.¹⁰⁴

Following the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 granting all males over twenty-one years old the right to vote, African Americans began to exercise their newly gained political power. They began to demand equal access to educational opportunities once reserved only for Euro-Americans. The issue of public funding of African American education led to two statewide political conventions in 1872 and 1873. In the latter convention, the Republican Colored Men's State Convention met at Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Chapel in Dover to discuss educational reform in Delaware. M. E. minister T. G. Steward issued a call to African Americans in the state that appeared in the *Delaware State Journal* in December 1872. In the article, Steward outlined the grievances among African Americans against the state.

1st. In that we are excluded from the school provisions made by the State. Our children do not go to the public schools.

2nd. In that we are uniformly excluded from the juries of the State and Federal Courts within the State.

3rd. An unholy prejudice fostered by this unfair conduct of the legal authorities excludes us from professions and the mechanic arts, and dooms us inevitably to the hardest work and the lowest wages.¹⁰⁵

During the convention, members elected Reverend Solomon Cooper, minister at Whatcoat to preside as President of the Colored Convention. Delegates produced a report that outlined their goals for a public supported education system for African Americans in the state. They asked:

...that equal school rights be afforded us. This we do not ask merely as a matter of right, but as a crying necessity without which the future of our race appears almost utterly hopeless. This appeal is not only addressed to the sense of justice, but to the higher sentiments of generosity and christian [sic] philanthropy. It is well known that as a people we are not able to sustain schools among ourselves sufficient to well educate our children. To impose upon us specially this burden, is as unfair as unwise.¹⁰⁶

Speaking in support of their demands, the president of the State Board of Education in 1873 commented:

I think it is not too much to assume that in consequence of this supervision the colored schools in some parts of the State are in better condition and more efficient in their work than the white schools.¹⁰⁷

The convention also endorsed the Civil Rights Bill pending the United States Congress, which eventually passed into law in 1875 (the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1875 was eventually ruled unconstitutional by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1883). Ironically, it banned segregation in public facilities, but excluded schools, by not referencing them in the legislation.

From the convention and growing pressure from African Americans, the state legislature, in 1875, passed "An Act to Tax Colored Persons for the Support of their Own Schools." It granted African Americans the right to tax themselves for the support of their schools. The most significant aspect of this legislation was that it recognized and institutionalized education for African Americans in Delaware. The legislation authorized the county Levy Courts to collect revenue generated from "real and personal property and poll [taxes] of colored persons...set apart as a separate and distinct fund for the support and maintenance of colored schools in this State." Once the county treasurers collected the revenues, they were to remit them to the Delaware Association for distribution to school districts for African Americans. It also delegated to the Delaware Association the responsibility to appoint teachers to schools. Under the act, they also administered the funds collected from the tax to support the existing system of separate schools. The Wilmington Board of Education administered the funds collected within the city. Even with the new revenues, the Delaware Association projected that it would pay only about one third of the schools operating costs.¹⁰⁸

This legislation, however, did not resolve the funding problems for African American education. In many cases tax assessors refused to assess properties owned by African Americans. If they did assess their properties, many refused to collect the taxes from African Americans. If tax collectors collected taxes some refused to disburse the revenues to African American school districts. The treasurers from Kent County and Sussex County were slow to levy and collect taxes. The Actuary of the Delaware Association reported on January 1, 1877 that Sussex County had laid no taxes for 1876 under the Act of 1875. By February, the Delaware Association managed to collect \$606.98 from Sussex County.¹⁰⁹ Henry C. Conrad of the Delaware Association argued that:

I am fully convinced that the colored people have done their part to the full measure of their ability. They not only pay their school tax, but after that they pay as much per month for every child they have in school. When it is remembered that they are the poorest in the community, and that for twelve years they have done all they could to *help themselves*, is it asking too much that the State should now assist them?¹¹⁰

One example of the tenacity and strong will among the African Americans to pursue an education was reported in a Wilmington newspaper. The New Castle County tax collector refused to collect property taxes from African Americans. A group of African American men learned that he planned a trip to Philadelphia. They followed him to his hotel room. They then broke down the door and at gun point forced him to collect their taxes.¹¹¹

In response to political pressure from the African American community, the Delaware legislature passed additional legislation in the 1880s to provide additional financial assistance to African American education. In 1881 the legislature passed an act to provide state support for African American schools. The legislature followed in 1883 with a general tax to support education. This tax presented some hardship for African Americans as the Presiding Elder of the Dover District of the Delaware Conference of the M.E. Church reported:

...our people have to build and pay for all school houses, and the children who go to school are taxed 5 cents per week to aid the State in paying the teachers. These are some of the pullbacks which greatly impede the progress of our church work...[Nonetheless,] education among our people is being more appreciated.¹¹²

Even so, according to Conrad, African American schools were free from debt and bills, all of which were paid as a result of the recent legislation.¹¹³

The 1881 legislation led to a conflict among Native Americans in Sussex County. The state classified Native Americans in Delaware as Colored forcing them to attend schools for African Americans. Along with other internecine conflicts, the one regarding school attendance with African Americans led one faction to petition the state to incorporate the Nanticoke Indian Association, Inc. As a result, two schools existed; members of the Nanticoke Association and Native Americans classified as colored attended two different schools named Warwick numbers 1 and 2. This spilled over into Kent County with the classification of Native American students in Cheswold, Del. as “colored” or “more.”



WARWICK COLORED SCHOOL #1, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



WARWICK COLORED SCHOOL #2, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

More legislation followed in 1887. The state allowed African Americans to form local school boards and to form districts to levy special taxes on all African Americans within its bounds. Dover and Slaughter Neck were first to form special districts for this purpose. Another legislative act gave county superintendents of schools the power to distribute taxes collected from African Americans taking this responsibility away from Delaware Association. Soon after, the Delaware Association dissolved and returned advocacy for African American education to the African School Society.¹¹⁴

Beginning in the 1890s, African American schools began to show signs of deterioration resulting from a number of factors. As the state became more industrialized, agricultural problems, stemming from a peach blight of the 1880s, worsened economic conditions for African Americans. In the light of this situation, African American leaders attempted to revitalize interest in education by reinforcing the notion that it was the chief means of achieving new economic opportunities and,

thereby, was a way of achieving social upward mobility and political empowerment. The Presiding Elder of the Dover District outlined the importance of education by writing

I am glad to say that the day has come, when we as a race have lived to know that ignorance is death, but to live we must be educated...schools are the great levelers of the many inequalities that exist among men.¹¹⁵

These hopes, however, began to fade in the 1890s with the introduction of legalized segregation and the emergence of “Jim Crow” in Delaware. In 1892 the Sussex County superintendent of schools reported that African Americans had “absolutely failed with the provisions of the law granting them power to levy and collect school taxes in certain districts. They are not sufficiently intelligent to deal with the matter of taxation.”¹¹⁶ He cited that African American school districts had levied \$1449 and collected only \$569. But, he failed to mention the failure of treasurers collecting the taxes. This attitude exemplified a growing counterattack throughout the South aimed at reversing African American gains made during Reconstruction.¹¹⁷



BLACKWATER COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware

African Americans claimed that accusations like the one by the superintendent of public schools in Sussex County were false and racist in origin. They asserted that the problem with African American schools stemmed from the inequities in the collection and distribution of public funds to support their schools. Presiding Elder of the Dover District complained:

Prejudice and studied indifference to the real wants of the colored people, have led those who control the management and disbursement of the public funds, to make gross...discriminations against the public good...the consequence is, that...most poorly equipped teachers are found in many of the country districts.¹¹⁸

Beginning in 1893, the state took steps to take control of the African American school system. It had already taken steps to completely merge African American schools into the state school system. The action leading to the creation of an African American school system did not come until 1897 with the ratification of a new state constitution. This also completed the process of segregation by legalizing it through state constitutional means. Similarly, other southern states replaced Reconstruction Era constitutions with “Jim Crow” state constitutions in the 1890s. Those also included provisions for segregated schools, which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld in *Cumming v. The School Board of Richmond County, Georgia* in 1899. It had already established the concept of “separate but equal” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896.

Within Delaware, the state constitution not only legally institutionalized separate educational systems for Euro-Americans and African Americans, it began the process of creating parallel socioeconomic systems for whites and African Americans. Nonetheless, the physical presence of schools in African American communities was still an important symbol of dreams for future advancement. And these schools helped African Americans continue to define their communities as self sufficient entities within a growing hostile environment induced by white supremacists demanding separation of the races.¹¹⁹



PORT PENN COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

At the turn-of-the century, African Americans struggled with “Jim Crow” segregation, not only in education, but also in all facets of public life. Following the ratification of the “Jim Crow” state constitution in 1897, the state legislature enacted literacy tests to determine voter qualification. This seemed to have revived an interest in education among African Americans. One person saw a “silver lining” in this legislation. In 1902 the Presiding Elder of the Dover District remarked:

Legislative enactments [sic] under cover of making better election laws, but in reality to disfranchise negro [sic] voters, fixed as a qualified basis, education. It was reasonable to suppose that this was the poor negro's [sic] weak point, and one of the two principal features of contrast between him and his white brother, the other being wealth. Like the hard wind before a summer shower, shaking plants and trees, loosening the

earth about their roots in order that it may drink more freely the coming rain, these agitations [sic] have sent an increased number of boys and girls to school and put gray heads and dimmed eyes to work in primers.¹²⁰

Despite the efforts to demoralize and oppress African Americans in the state, the nineteenth century ended with the establishment of a public school system for African Americans. Following the Civil War, African Americans struggled to build the moral, philosophical, and institutional foundations for their new educational system. During the final decades of the nineteenth century, African Americans fought to secure financial support and public recognition of their educational system. Without access to the Euro-American schools, African Americans pursued the creation of a separate school system for their children. They were successful in their efforts. Yet, they also ironically lent support by these efforts to the institutionalization of segregation, which absorbed much of their energies to combat in the following century.

What can be said about the late nineteenth century is African Americans built an educational system through the spirit of self-help. Granted, there was assistance in this task, but by-and-large, African Americans accomplished the monumental task on their own. In 1892 the Presiding Elder of the Delaware Conference in the Dover District summed up the last half century of struggle when he wrote:

The colored people, for the most part, are given shorter school terms, poorer school facilities, their teachers are poorer paid than others of the same communities. In most cases the salaries allowed are not sufficient to attract and support competent teachers in their schools;...*the colored people must do more for themselves* (emphasis the author's).¹²¹

Chapter V

Separate but Equal: The Struggle for Equality in African American Education



WILLOW GROVE COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

**What they use to keep us back,
Will tend to make up what we lack.
the hottest fire, we are told,
Is used to purify the fold.¹²²**

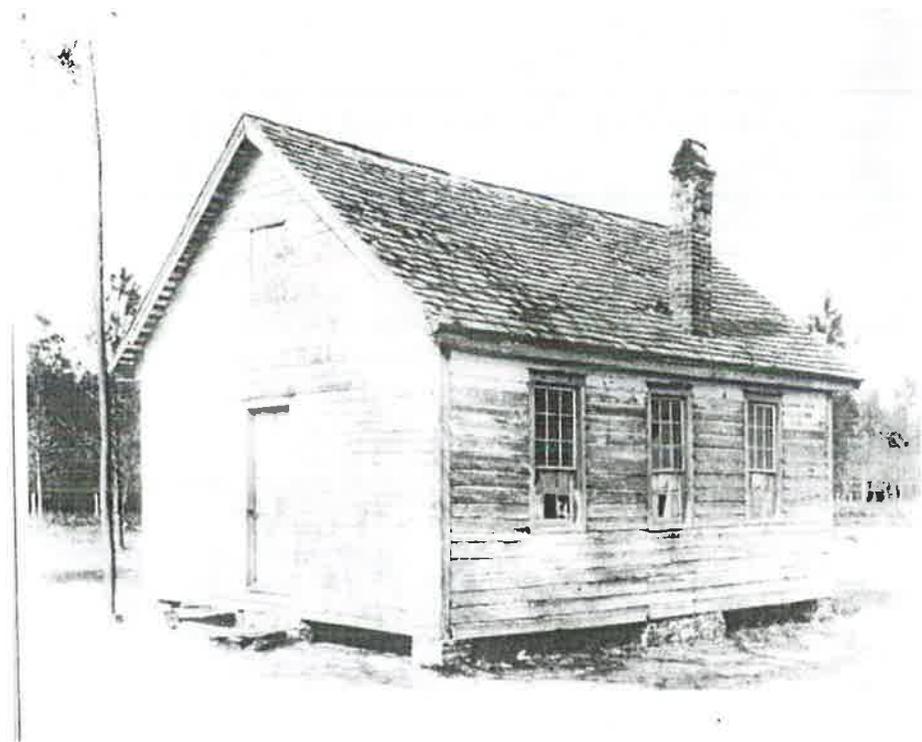
The bitter sweet victory of winning public support for education in Delaware left African Americans with a separate educational system that was far from equal at the beginning of the twentieth century. For the next fifty years, African Americans struggled to resolve both issues of separation and equality. Many believed that equity issues would be resolved if the state would integrate the two school systems. Short of integration, most efforts between 1900 and 1940 concentrated on funding issues to bring about equity in education for African Americans.

Delaware schools in general suffered from lack of funds, which led to the deterioration of both Euro-American and African American schools by the beginning of the twentieth century. It was clear to many that African Americans could never achieve equity so long as their school funds depended on local tax bases because of the under valuation of their property. The only solution was a fair distribution of state funds to school districts throughout the state.¹²³

Delaware had come the closest among all southern states in providing equal funding for African American schools. In 1910 the ratio of expenditure for African American schools was 75% of expenditures for Euro-American schools. The state expended \$31.48 per African American pupil and \$41.80 per Euro-American student. In an editorial, titled "Something Rotten not in Denmark but in Delaware," an editor for Washington *Eagle* newspaper pointed out the basis of these inequities. He wrote: "When a Negro rented a house from a white man, the taxes paid on that house went to the support of white schools and none to Negro education."¹²⁴

Despite the inequities and lack of funds, African Americans had built schools in virtually every community in the state by 1917. Still, expenditures for public education proved inadequate for the support of education in Delaware for both Euro-Americans and African Americans. This resulted in school closures and deterioration of the ones that

remained open. Nonetheless, these shabby structures still stood as monuments to their tenacious commitment to achieve a better future. To African Americans, these rundown schools were "the great levelers of the many inequalities that exist among men."¹²⁵



ROSS POINT COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

There were efforts beginning in 1917 to increase taxes to renew the educational system within the state. Several people in Delaware and outside the state understood the problems that existed in the Euro-American and African American school systems. In 1917 the United

States Bureau of Education published a bulletin, titled "History of Public Education in Delaware." The report ranked Delaware as thirty-ninth in its support of education among the forty-eight states. The basis of ranking included "wealth, money in public school property, expense per pupil, expenditure for \$100 invested, teachers' salaries per pupil, yearly salaries, monthly salaries, new buildings, equipment and sites, school attendance, and school population."¹²⁶

Many concluded that the solution to the problems rested with a statewide tax increase. The hope was that the increase in revenues would go into the construction of new schools and higher salaries for teachers. Both of which, it was hoped, would improve the quality of education leading to improvements in attendance. Supporters of school reform proposed a bill to allow school district referendums to increase real estate taxes for the support of local schools. The state did establish a commission to investigate the findings of the 1917 report.¹²⁷

Among those who lobbied the state legislature to support the new school bill was Alice Dunbar Nelson, an African American teacher at O.O. Howard High School in Wilmington and also director of the Summer Teachers Institute at the State College for Colored Students. Nelson came to Wilmington following her divorce from Paul Lawrence Dunbar, a noted African American poet and literary figure; Nelson was also a renowned author in her own right. In addition, Nelson founded the Kruse (named after Edwina Kruse, principal of Howard High School) Industrial School for Colored Girls in Marshallton, Delaware. This was a school for delinquent African American girls in Delaware. As a part of the reformatory philosophy, the school required girls to perform indentured service; the philosophy emphasized the development of industrial work skills and work habits to reform young girls from a life of juvenile delinquency. She was also the editorial assistant for her husband's newspaper named the *Wilmington Advocate*. In addition, she wrote newspaper articles on a number of civil rights issues including equal educational opportunities for African Americans. In her efforts, Dunbar-Nelson testified before the state legislature on behalf of improving African American education in Delaware. She was not alone in her lobbying efforts, which ultimately proved successful.¹²⁸



WILLIAMSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

The most powerful voice in favor of improving schools in Delaware was Pierre S. duPont, chair of General Motors Corporation and president of E.I. duPont de Nemours & Co. Clearly, duPont was embarrassed by the school situation in Delaware. He collected newspaper clippings that criticized the poor school systems in the state. One of the problems regarded the unfair distribution of taxes. Essentially, they correctly pointed out that African Americans did not receive their fair share. Then, when the Bureau of Education released its 1917 report, duPont decided to take action.

The following year, he, along with a group of concerned citizens, organized the Service Citizens of Delaware and provided the group with a large trust fund. He named Joseph H. Odell as the director. Odell was a Presbyterian minister and newspaper reporter in Philadelphia before

taking on his new duties.¹²⁹ The Service Citizens philosophy reflected the growing concerns of many Americans at the time. They were alarmed at the large number of unassimilated immigrants in the country. The Bureau of Americanization of the Service Citizens outlined one of their concerns.

Our purpose in this is to avoid the catastrophe of the men becoming Americanized and the women lagging behind, with no guidance but the experiences and the language of their former country. This is essential because these women become voters through the naturalization of their husbands.¹³⁰

They also wanted to assimilate naturalized citizens by teaching them to speak, read, and write in English. This also meant teaching them middle class values. There was a general belief in the country that immigrants possessed radical ideals that threatened the American way of life. Many also questioned their loyalty to America thinking that education would remove the hyphen from their names. Many considered this a national security issue including the Delaware State Council of Defense, which authorized the creation of the Service Citizens of Delaware under its auspices. To the Service Citizens, education was essential to stemming this threat. And in many respects, they viewed African Americans in a similar fashion as they did immigrants.¹³¹

The Service Citizens of Delaware was a part of a national movement to reform education that grew out of the World War I experience. The United States Army published a report during the First World War that showed a 24.9% literacy rate among soldiers. The National Education Association was also concerned about the national illiteracy problems pointing to poor teacher's salaries, the large number of immigrants, and the deficiencies within rural schools. The NEA recommended federal funding of public education in the states to help reduce the illiteracy rates.¹³²

George D. Strayer, a nationally renowned professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and president of the National Education Association (he also served as a consultant to the Service Citizens of Delaware), testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education in support of the NEA recommendations. Strayer cited a successful federal program that sponsored research in agriculture to improve crop production. He testified that:

if we can remove a pest by virtue of research and investigation in agriculture, it seems...possible to conduct those investigations and research which will result in the improvement and increase in efficiency of education throughout the country.¹³³

Despite his and others' support, the NEA failed to gain a federal commitment to its recommendations for educational reform.¹³⁴



BETHESDA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Within Delaware, the reform movement was more successful. In 1919 Service Citizens of Delaware played an important role in persuading the legislature to adopt the New School Code. It allowed for the equal distribution of all taxes collected. The state also established uniform tax rates for both Euro-Americans and African Americans. It also established mandatory school attendance for children under fourteen years old and a 180-day school year for them. For children who lived more than two miles away from school, the state provided for their transportation, usually in the form of compensation for their travel expenses.¹³⁵

The law, however, did not require school districts to increase their property taxes. Euro-Americans opposed any tax increase that would go towards African American education. In a 1919 *New York Times* editorial, titled "Primitive Delaware," the editor wrote that, "...even in the benighted South, was it stipulated, say a year ago, as it was in Delaware, that white men should not be taxed to help educate the negro [sic]."¹³⁶ The abstemious attitude among Euro-Americans toward supporting African American education resulted in epitaphs and verbal assaults leveled against them and their supporters. The *Wilmington Evening Journal* responded in an editorial pointing out "...as long as God continues to pour into the brains of Negroes possibilities of development that are unlimited, we must think as other men think...with similar susceptibilities, impulses, tendencies, and emotions, we must feel as other men feel."¹³⁷

Essentially, the opposition to African American education came from farmers who wanted to preserve the agricultural economic system based upon cheap Black labor. Alice Dunbar Nelson explained the roots of the opposition in more detail, which appeared in an article for the *Colored American* newspaper. She wrote:

He (P.S. duPont) was bitterly opposed by the farmers, who saw in his scheme an infringement of their ancient and honorable rights of working children on the farm; by the canning factories, of which there are a legion, who foresaw in

compulsory education a curtailment of the cheap child labor, which has made the canning of tomatoes, peas and crab meat profitable; by the illiterates, who foresaw a raise in taxes that would not benefit them directly, and by the demagogues, who raised the howl of white people being taxed to educate niggers [sic].¹³⁸

She even accused some African Americans of being "over-persuaded by their white farmer neighbors" to join the opposition.

Recognizing the white opposition, P.S. duPont decided not to wait for Euro-Americans to increase taxes for public education. Instead, he decided to spend his money on the "experiment" of African American education in Delaware. DuPont explained his decision in a letter to Carl Murphy, Editor of *The Afro-American* newspaper in Baltimore, Maryland. He pointed out the reluctance of Delawareans to spend money on the improvement of African American educational facilities without first expending public finances on Euro-American schools. Odell justified duPont's position by saying that he only wanted to simplify the funding problem for the construction of new schools for African Americans. He said that the organization "turned its attention first...to the rural negro [sic] schools; not because we wished to show preference to the negro [sic] population to the detriment of the white population..."¹³⁹

African Americans were overjoyed with duPont's decision to fund new construction of schools throughout the state. Dunbar-Nelson witnessed the reaction of the majority of African Americans to duPont's "experiment." She reported that they saw "a chance for their own children to receive a decent education, and for their girls to have an opportunity to receive a living salary as teachers."¹⁴⁰

In 1919 duPont resigned his position as chair of General Motors Corporation and joined the State Education Board as the Vice President. He persuaded the State Education Board to begin to "conduct investigations relating to the educational needs of the State and the

means of improving educational conditions” to comply with Article 1, Section 25 of the New School Code of 1919. He then directed the Service Citizens to fund a survey to determine the conditions of all school buildings in the state.¹⁴¹

The Service Citizens brought in George D. Strayer, N.L. Engelhardt and F.W. Hart from Columbia University to conduct the survey. They scored the schools according to their physical condition and set the maximum score at 1000. The results were “even worse than had been anticipated.” The survey team paid particular attention to health and safety conditions, sanitation, lighting, desks, environmental settings, and recreational opportunities. They then compared these with the current standards for school architecture and furnishing. They considered that the interior should have 200 cubic feet of air space per child for a healthy environment. This included room ventilation systems to insure proper air circulation. Also, the heating system should keep rooms at an even temperature of about 68°. Window space should equal one-fifth of the floor space. For reading purposes, they determined that light should enter from the left side only, and windows should be equipped with curtains to control the light. Out of all the schools, only eight received a score of 500 and thirty-five received 400 points. The rest fell below 400 points. Among all schools, the ones for African American fared the worst.¹⁴²

The survey reports essentially recommended a complete overhaul or rebuilding of the existing schools. Their report determined that the Newport colored school was “very old and in poor condition.” They deemed it “unfit in every respect for the housing of children.”¹⁴³ For the children who attended the Newark colored school, the report concluded that it would be difficult for them “to carry into their homes higher standards of cleanliness than prevail in this particular structure.”¹⁴⁴ They found that the Ebenezer colored school was located in a low and wet marsh where stagnant water stood under and around the entire building. Very high marsh grass covered the entire site. Both sexes used the same outside toilet, which was inaccessible because of mud and water.¹⁴⁵



EBENEZAR COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The school at Delaware City particularly caught the attention of the survey team. Because of its poor condition, they concluded: “There can be little hope for the education or Americanization of children that are required to secure their education under conditions such as are found in this building.”¹⁴⁶ The school was located in a marsh that was about thirty feet from a canal. At the time of the survey, members of the team reported that: “Upon no part of the school ground...was it possible to walk without wading through water and mud.”¹⁴⁷ They also noted that two new toilet outhouses had been recently “struck down in the mud alongside the edge of the marsh.”¹⁴⁸



DELAWARE CITY COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Other schools were found to be of equally poor condition. They found O.O. Howard High School to be a firetrap, and in which they declared it “wholly unfit for the purposes now used and it is a real menace as well.” Reports for the other schools were similar to these examples. In all, the only school to score above 500 points, which was still poor according to the report, was the Middletown Colored School.¹⁴⁹

The survey team followed the condition report with one titled “Possible Consolidations of Rural Schools in Delaware (1919).” The report recommended a reduction of schools from twenty-four to nine for African Americans in New Castle County. For Kent County African American schools, the survey team recommended the reduction of thirty schools to fifteen. The recommended number of schools for Sussex County was twenty-one reducing the total from thirty-four.¹⁵⁰ They based this on the following:

The wide distribution and comparatively low proportion of the colored population make it impossible, except in a few instances, to bring together in consolidated centers a sufficiently large number of pupils to insure well graded schools.¹⁵¹

During this period, according to historian John G. Richardson, school reformers saw consolidation as a means to establishing a modern school bureaucracy. This, in turn, they believed would lead to the standardization or “systemization of schooling” and mass or universal education closely linked to industrialization and capitalism. Since most of these educational reformers came from the industrial Northeast, there was an understanding that there was a relationship between a well-trained and educated industrial workforce and capital profit. Furthermore, reformers studied the general trend toward corporate consolidation. They concluded that consolidation reduced inefficient competition and duplicative efforts. Consolidation was a means to combine resources of several corporations that would promote efficiency by reducing wasteful expenditures through the elimination of duplicative efforts. Therefore, they promoted consolidation of schools as a means to promote efficiency following the current corporate model.¹⁵²

The reported goal was to create a school that fostered learning within a modern society going beyond the traditional education of learning to “read, write, and cipher.” Modern schools should prepare students to **efficiently** participate in modern industrial life according to Strayer.¹⁵³ He argued that:

with the development of our modern industrial life, with the division of labor which is involved, the opportunity for significant participation in productive enterprises has been more and more restricted. The knowledge and skill necessary for the efficient participation

in these activities have, during the same time, greatly increased. During this period, due to the increase in production made possible by machinery and by modern factory methods, more leisure time has been made available for a great majority of workers...Our public schools must be transformed to meet their new obligation.¹⁵⁴

The survey team in Delaware took a “corporate” view when they recommended consolidation of schools. They believed that large student enrollments led to “well graded schools.” Thus, the belief was that the consolidation of resources into fewer school districts lead to better educational opportunities. As it stood, they argued that the large number of schools meant that each had limited resources. To rectify this situation, they recommended that the state should consolidate schools where possible. Still, the survey team recognized that there was a small proportion of the African American population that was dispersed. This created a difficult situation regarding transportation of students from these areas to a consolidated school.¹⁵⁵

In a memorandum prepared by James H. Dillard, Jackson Davis, and Frank P. Bachman to P.S. duPont, the survey team outlined certain guidelines to consider for school consolidation. They emphasized “natural consolidations” meaning children should be able to walk to the new consolidated schools. Consolidation should only take place when it would not disrupt the African American population and its distribution.¹⁵⁶ In more precise terms, they wrote:

Again, where colored schools are consolidated care should be exercised



MIDDLEFORD COLORED SCHOOL in rural Sussex County (showing available transportation at the time).

Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

not to disturb the distribution of the colored people. Delaware is singularly dependent on colored farm labor, and, while large consolidated schools might prove of temporary advantage, on the other hand as to push consolidation that it would tend to concentrate the colored population of the state in a relatively few centers would, we believe, eventually prove to be not only to the economic disadvantage of the Negroes themselves, but to the economic disadvantage of the state.¹⁵⁷

Separate But Equal

They also proposed the addition of junior high schools and high schools. They recommended that every county should have a senior high school. At the time, the only high school for African Americans was O.O. Howard High School in Wilmington. A second high school was added on the campus of the State College for Colored Students in Dover in the early 1920s. Also, they submitted that each county should add two or three junior high schools.¹⁵⁸

The completion of the various reports signaled the end of the first phase in the rebuilding of African American education in Delaware. Out of frustration, Pierre S. duPont took over the leadership to guide the state toward rebuilding its educational system beginning with African American schools. The next phase involved the actual building of new schoolhouses for African Americans utilizing modern concepts of design based upon current academic research and study.



Pierre S. du Pont



BERRYTOWN COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



BLACKISTON COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



Alice Dunbar Nelson

*Morris Library, Special Collections, University of Delaware.
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Chapter VI

Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment



BLANCO (OLD) AND (NEW) COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County

Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

This photograph shows the contrast between the Delaware Association Era schools of the late 19th century in the foreground and the duPont Era schools of the 1920s in the background.



RABBITT'S FERRY OLD COLORED SCHOOL
Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



RABBITT'S FERRY NEW COLORED SCHOOL,
Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The reports submitted to the Service Citizens by the education consultants inspired Pierre S. duPont to establish the Delaware Auxiliary Association. The chief responsibility of the Auxiliary Association was to fulfill the recommendations of the two completed reports and to study the educational situation in Delaware as an arm of the Service Citizens. It was also relegated the responsibility to disseminate the information from the reports to public organizations like the Negro Civic League; it had thirty-two branches and a membership of 150. To assist in teachers' education, duPont convinced Richard W. Cooper from the Columbia Teachers College to join the Auxiliary Association as a consultant. Additionally, the Auxiliary Association was to fund the Delaware College (University of Delaware) Summer School for teachers and the Summer School for Colored Teachers at the State College.¹⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the top priority for the Auxiliary Association was to supervise the new construction of schools for both Euro-Americans and African Americans beginning with the latter. In addition, the primary problem still remained; it was the lack of funds. Unlike duPont, the various reports did not move local residents to increase financial support for their schools as reported by the Auxiliary Association in 1920. It reported that:

The problem in Delaware is obviously financial...It is un-American and unmoral that children who live in a community where the parents have financial resources outside of land values should have a superior education [than] the children who live in the purely rural districts. The tendency everywhere [except Delaware] is toward greater State appropriation in order to save the local districts from a burdensome tax levy.¹⁶⁰

With no additional funds forthcoming from local entities or from the state, duPont devised an alternative approach to funding the new construction of schools. He established a trust fund for the Auxiliary

Association. It began with \$2 million, which soon rose to \$2.5 million. The additional \$500,000 went to Wilmington for African American schools in the city. Out of this fund, duPont set aside \$900,000 for new African American schools replacing almost the entire African American school plant. The rest went toward the construction of Euro-American schools.¹⁶¹

The Auxiliary Association went into immediate action by contracting with James O. Betelle from the architectural firm of Guilbert and Betelle in Newark, New Jersey, to design the new school buildings based on the recommendations of the existing survey teams. Betelle had developed a national reputation as an expert in school design. In 1920 he authored articles on school building designs, which appeared in *American Architect* and *The American School Board Journal*. The articles appearing in the *American Architect* covered his school designs for Delaware. At the time he contracted with the Auxiliary Association, Betelle was an architectural consultant for the New Jersey and California State School Boards. He was also a professor of school architecture at Columbia University.¹⁶² The Auxiliary Association made Betelle's services "at the disposal of any county or special district board, although no board is excluded from selecting and engaging its own architect."¹⁶³

In addition to drawing plans for the buildings, Betelle reviewed topographical surveys of building sites for approval. These were the result of the Dillard, Jackson, and Bachman study titled "Negro School Site Report."¹⁶⁴ The intent of the report was "to secure a site as near as possible to the center of the colored school population." They recommended that the new schools should be built near the present buildings. In special cases, new sites should be selected, "owing to the movement in Negro population" or to the unhealthy environmental conditions at existing school sites. To assist each school district, the State Board of Education compiled a volume of plans titled "Standards and Plans for School Buildings in Delaware."¹⁶⁵ According to the Auxiliary Association:



School officials celebrating the completion of New Castle Colored School in New Castle County. Left to right: James O. Betelle, architect; Reverend J. H. Earp or G.G. Hanson (i.d. unclear); F. de H. Janvier; H. E. Snavely; Judge R. S. Rodney; A. J. Taylor, president of Delaware School Foundation; J. T. Eliason, Jr.; and H. W. Holloway, Secretary of School Building Commission and Superintendent of Public Instruction in Delaware.

Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The work was undertaken by educational authorities of national standing and the plans and specifications for school buildings were based upon the best results of school architecture achieved in different parts of the United States."¹⁶⁶

The Auxiliary Association wanted to start immediately on construction so as to “know from experience the best type of building, the cost of construction and the relative merits of material used.”¹⁶⁷ They based the construction on a book of plans, titled *Standards and Plans of School Buildings and Grounds for the Public Schools of Delaware* produced by Betelle, Englehardt, and Strayer. This was for the school districts to follow or to use as guides. They based their plans on contemporary ideas concerning healthy and sanitary environments both inside and outside, recreational opportunities, and ideal learning conditions inside the building. For example, they followed many of the recommendations made by B.F. Willis, an architect who designed school buildings. P.S. duPont attended a 1916 conference on the preservation of rural life held in Philadelphia. At the conference, Willis presented a paper titled “The Ideal Rural School Building.” In the paper, Willis outlined an ideal architectural design for rural schools. The final designs for the Delaware rural schools included similar recommendations as outlined in the paper presented by Willis.

Strayer submitted draft copies of the book of plans to Odell and duPont for their review in late 1919. In the draft, there were recommendations on site location, drainage, size, form, and use. Similar to Willis’ “Ideal Rural School Building,” the plan called for a central location within the center of population and near a roadway. The setting should be “a pleasing, natural landscape.” It should also contain a garden, playing fields, and a playground in addition to a building that fit into the natural setting. Willis suggested that students grow potatoes in the garden to use as fuel for the internal combustion engines that supplied the electricity for the building. Similar recommendations appeared in the Betelle, Englehardt, and Strayer draft.¹⁶⁸

This was followed by building recommendations for the orientation of the buildings and the placement of windows, which Strayer deemed as very important. The draft called for a north-south orientation of buildings to allow natural light from the west, east, southeast, or southwest through elongated windows. “Classrooms,” Betelle, Englehardt, and Strayer concluded, “should not have full North or South light exposure.” Willis spoke of this in his 1916 speech. He argued that these windows should open as to afford:

...the children a breath of “uncooked air”, which is about the only blessing that God has given us, that may still be enjoyed without paying man for it as it flows down from His vaulted dome—with the opening of the windows. The pupils will then take two or three turns around the class room to the music of the Victrola,—giving their gray matter an agreeable rest, returning to their books with freshened interest. The teacher will then recall the works of Jean Paul Richter: “on the day of Judgment, God will perhaps forgive you for starving your children when bread was so dear, but if he should charge you with stinting them in His free air, what answer will you make?”¹⁶⁹

The fenestration or design of windows in the building was a ribbon of six contiguous and center-hinged windows allowing them to be opened by pushing them outward.

There was also a section on service systems that described heating and ventilation of the modern “scientific” types that Willis also described in his 1916 speech. The draft also discussed fire protection and cleaning recommending vacuum cleaners. Water supply and toilet systems were also included. The recommendations for the toilet systems were also similar to the ones suggested by Willis’ regarding their placement. Students would enter the toilets through the cloakrooms.¹⁷⁰

The draft offered a detailed description of a classroom including its arrangement, construction and finish, illumination, auxiliary rooms such as cloakrooms and wardrobes, and equipment such as desks. It again closely followed Willis’ plan, which called for “movable chair-desks...not more than twenty-two feet wide, lighted on the long side.”



EBENEZER COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

(Notice the elongated windows, which allowed natural light to entire over the left shoulders of the students.)

John Dewey, who was a philosopher of pragmatic education, first advocated the use of movable desks while at the University of Chicago. He envisioned the classroom as workshop where students would work in teams finding practical solutions to problems posed by teachers. The ability to move desks so that students come together in groups would facilitate this effort. Additionally, by installing movable desks, school officials could then convert their schools into community centers when schools were not in session. Local residents could then use the classroom space for meetings or other activities. They also concluded that the idea of multiple-function schoolhouses would win support for education from local residents.¹⁷¹



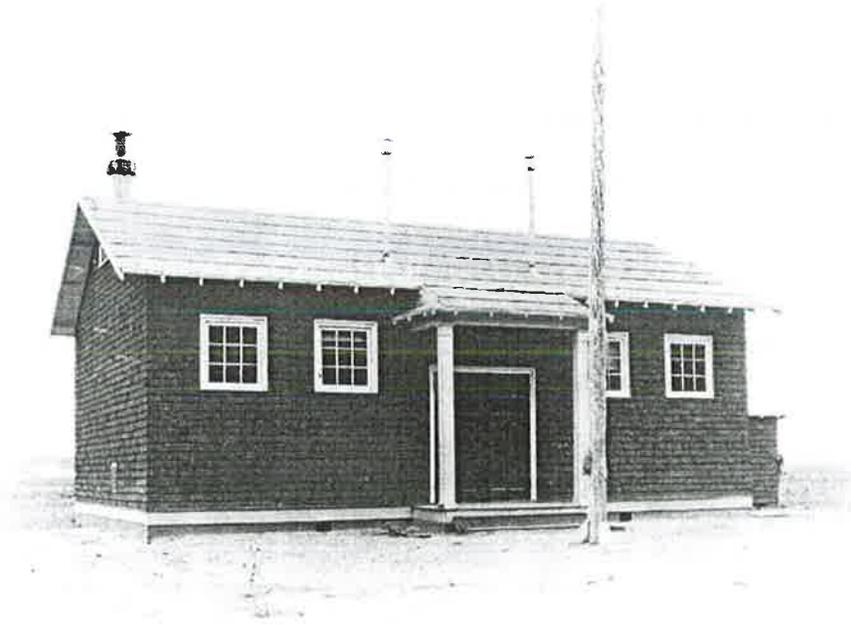
MOUNT PLEASANT COLORED SCHOOL,
New Castle County. This photograph shows the windows open
for ventilation.

Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Betelle, Englehardt, and Strayer also specifically recommended that one and two room school buildings should have a cottage design to create a “homelike” environment. Spacing of the seats and the amount of interior space were also considered important in promoting good health for the students. The draft recommended 200 cubic feet of air space for each student. They even included recommendations for floor design to include reinforced concrete covered with cork linoleum that were similar to Willis’ ideas. Their interior paint scheme of light green or sage followed Willis’ plan to the letter.¹⁷² The schools in Christiana and Odessa exemplified this homelike environment advocated by school designers at the time. Charles Carswell, in an article for the *Philadelphia Record* newspaper described the schoolhouse. He wrote:

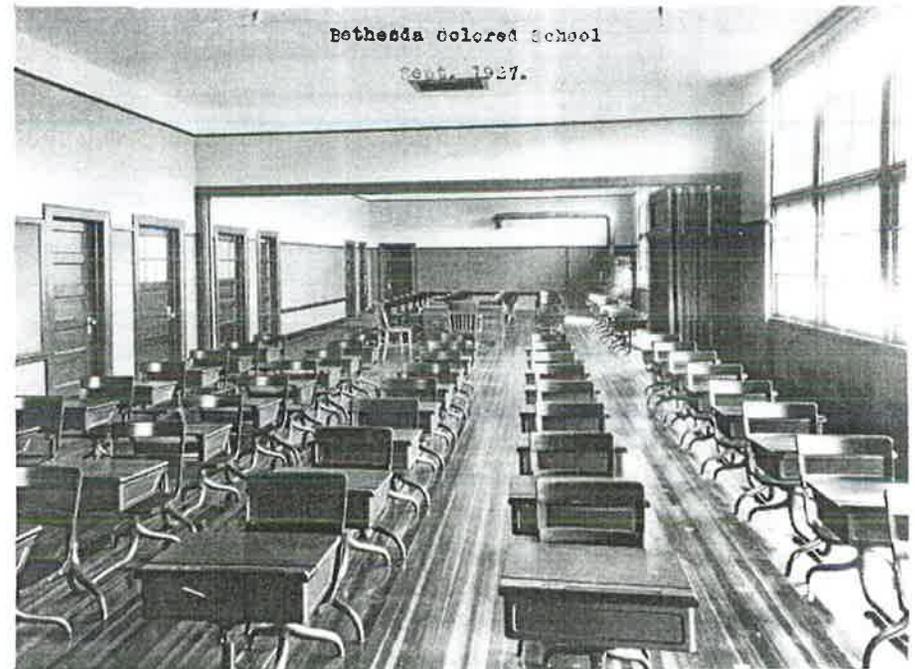
Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment

One interesting experiment in design is the negro [sic] school at Odessa. This new building, which presents a striking contrast to the old frame structure, is entirely fireproof, with brick foundation, asbestos walls and roof, and window frames and all trimmings of copper. It is attractive and thoroughly satisfactory, but it has been determined that it is not an economical type of construction.¹⁷³



WILLIAMSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

This photograph shows the roof venting system protruding from the boys' and girls' toilets and cloakrooms with a heating venting system in the rear.



BETHESDA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.
This photograph shows the movable desks.

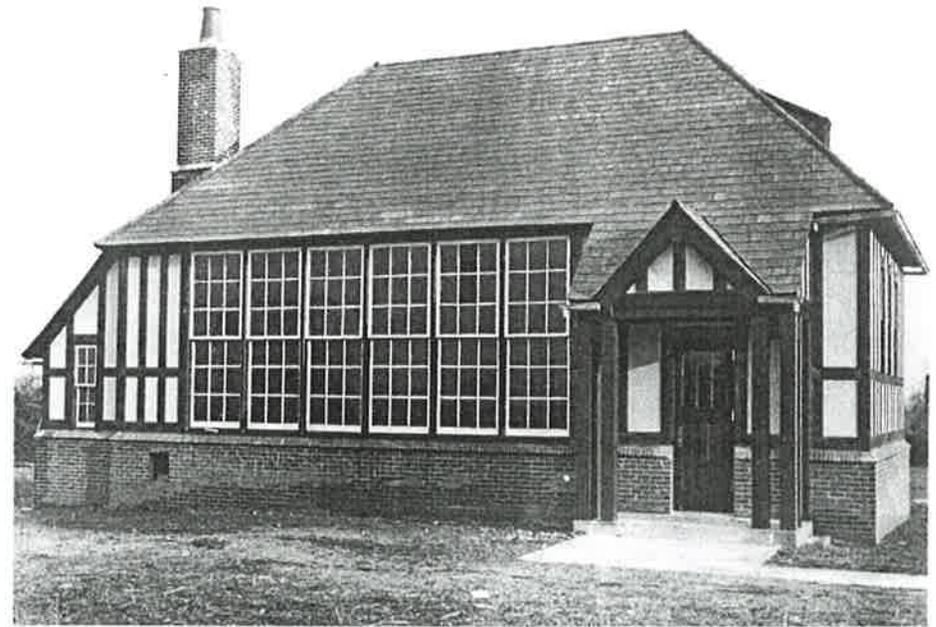


CHRISTIANA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Most of Betelle's designs looked like homes reflecting the revival of historic American styles like the Dutch or English Colonial Revival Style depicted in this photograph. Because of costs, during construction, many of his original designs were modified, however.

Following his review of the draft, Odell pointed out several problems. One problem involved the inclusion of domestic science and manual training rooms. Odell told Betelle to redesign the buildings without the rooms. He wrote:

We have no staff of teachers who could teach these subjects. We must not picture buildings that cannot possible [sic] be built in Delaware under the present law. We must build a consolidated school and the small town high school on your plans and we must



ODESSA COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The Tudor Revival style shown above was one of the more elaborate designs.

build a one teacher, two teacher and four teacher school without the domestic science and manual training rooms, so it seems to me that you must begin all your plans afresh for all the grade schools.¹⁷⁴

This reflected the educational philosophy of a liberal education first established for African American school children following the Civil War.

Odell emphasized that Betelle's designs were simply too costly. He summarized his position stating: "The idea in publishing this book is to assist the Delaware School authorities and there must not be anything in it impractical or beyond their immediate reach." During construction, most of Betelle's designs were modifications of his original work.¹⁷⁵



WARWICK INDIAN SCHOOL SCHOOL #225- C in Sussex County.

Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

This photo shows a modification of Betelle's original and more elaborate design. The builders retained the classically designed porch and palladian window.



WARWICK #1 COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County

Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library Wilmington, Del.

Following external reviews from outside the state, Odell provided Strayer with a list of changes. Again cost was a chief factor. For example, Odell told Strayer to change the water supply system that called for artesian wells furnishing hot and cold running water, which he considered too expensive. Odell told him to remove vacuum cleaners from his draft citing that they were too expensive and experimental. Furthermore, he pointed out that some schools lacked electricity. In several cases, Odell told him to change central heating systems and to replace them with patent jacketed stoves. Odell scrapped the use of linoleum citing sanitation problems with that particular flooring material. G.E. Haak, Superintendent of Building and Supplies in the Scranton, Pennsylvania School District, pointed out that repeated cleaning allows water seepage under the linoleum and eventual disintegration of it. In the draft comments, Odell even wanted to remove the option of using movable seats insisting upon fixed seat arrangements. This demand, however, was not met. Odell also eliminated the light green paint scheme for interiors.¹⁷⁶

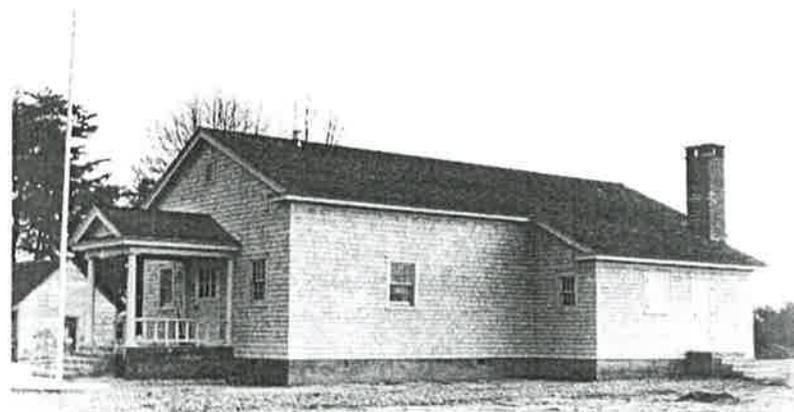
Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment

Early in 1920, the Auxiliary Association began construction on the new African American schools. The final designs produced by Betelle reflected the Neo-Colonial style that was popular during the 1920s. This began with the rebirth of historic English house styles along the mid-Atlantic seaboard in the late nineteenth century. Betelle was well versed in the latest philosophical thought about how to design school buildings to provide children the most advantageous environment to promote learning. The result was a schoolhouse design that looked like a Neo-Colonial cottage.¹⁷⁷ They thought this design would reduce trauma for students leaving home to attend a home-like schoolhouse

The school buildings share a simple menu of Neo-Colonial details. These included both asymmetrical and symmetrical designs, gable returns, pedimented porticos, large multi-paned windows, and simple articulated cornices, surrounds, and woodwork. In larger communities, schools for African American children tended to be constructed of brick like the one located in the city of New Castle. The most prevalent exterior treatment, however, was shingle siding painted or stained in brown found primarily among rural schools.¹⁷⁸



STAR HILL COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



PORTSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

By the end of 1921, the Auxiliary Association had completed eight new schools for African Americans and had thirteen more under construction. At that time, the Auxiliary Association had spent \$131,885 in New Castle County, \$113, 833 in Kent County, and \$167,357.38 in Sussex County. Amounts spent for Euro-American schools were \$86,145 in New Castle County, \$44,250 in Kent County, and \$538,076 in Sussex County.¹⁷⁹

African American Schools: Completed and Under Construction, 1921*

New Castle	Kent	Sussex
Christiana 1 room	Fork Branch 1 room	Frankford 2 room
Odessa 1 room	Milford 5 room	Lewes 2 room
Matthew's Cnr 1 rm	Smyrna 5 room	Bridgeville 4 room
Port Penn 1 room	Williamsville 1 room	Laurel 4 room
Hockessin 1 room	John Wesley 1 room	Millsboro 2 room
Marshallton 1 room	Willow Grove 1 room	Milton 2 room
Claymont 2 room	Union 1 room	Selbyville 2 room

* "Ideals and Achievements in Delaware," Report made to the Annual Meeting of the Service Citizens of Delaware (May 6, 1921), 17, Purnell Collection-Service Citizens, RG 9200 Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

One Room Schoolhouse

There were variations in the one room or one-teacher schoolhouse designs. These varied according to the placement of windows and entries and the shape of the roofs either hipped or gable. All of these buildings were rectangular in shape and contained wing extensions located on the long side-wall usually at the opposite end of the entry. The gable-roofed schoolhouses represented the majority of the one room schoolhouse design. The Clayton Colored School in Kent County had a two-bay, side-wing extension that was located at the center of the side wall elevation. There were also one room schoolhouses that had hipped roofs. These buildings had low-pitched, hipped roofs with a ridge. They also had a pedimented portico entry located at the end of the long wall façade like the school located at Green Spring in New Castle County. There were other variations like John Wesley Colored School, located in Thompsonville, Kent County similar to the Odessa Colored School in New Castle County; it had a hipped roof with ends sloping at different lengths and pitches to create varied eave-line heights.



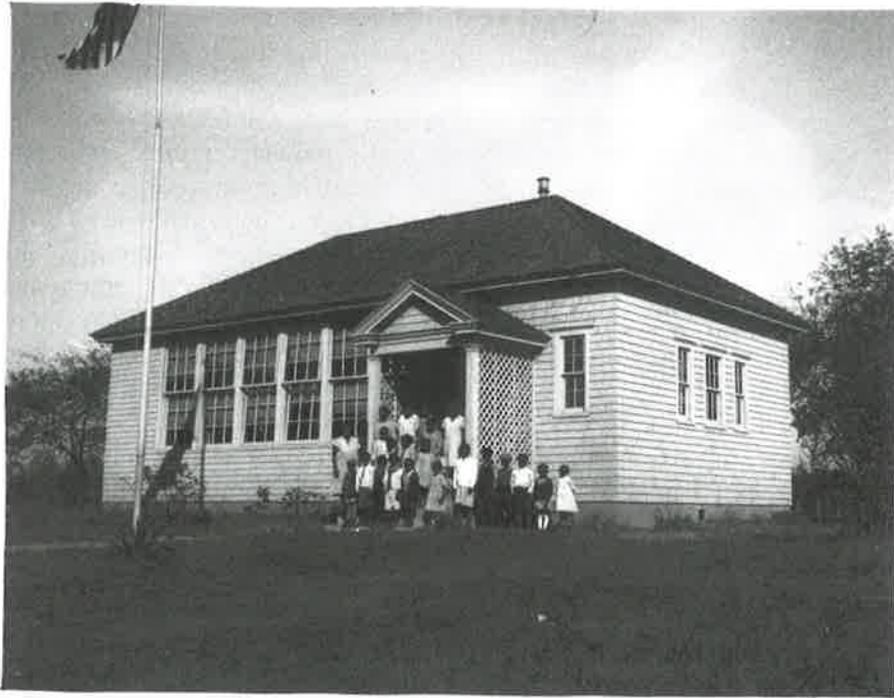
GREEN SPRING COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



CLAYTON COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



JOHN WESLEY COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

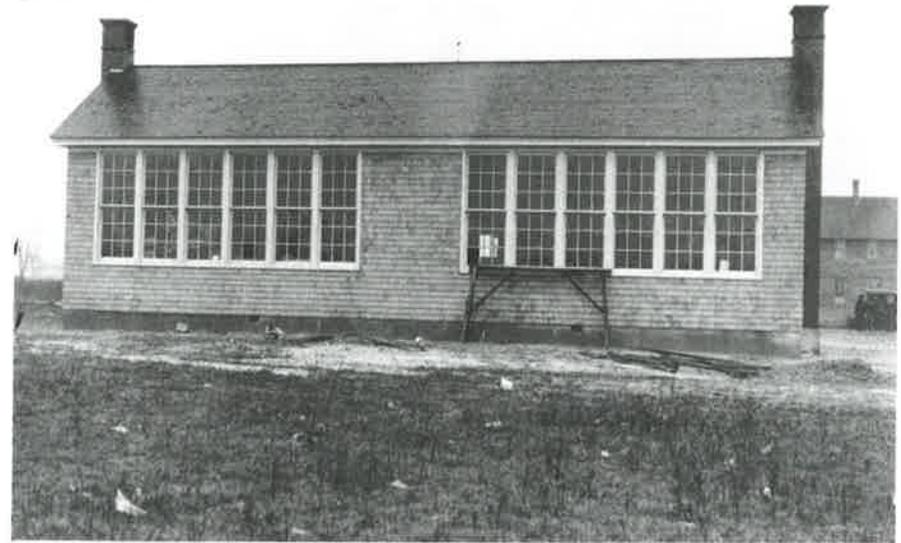


LEES CHAPEL COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Within the one-room schoolhouse, students ate lunch and did other activities; there was no cafeteria room in these one-teacher school buildings. Yet, it seemed to be a point of pride to serve hot meals in the schools as indicated by a Service Citizens bulletin featuring the Friendship/Kenton Colored School in Kent County. The bulletin boasted of hot meals that were served in the classroom to children who filed by with washed hands to music coming from the victrola. Parent-Teacher Associations provided the hot meals. Parents prepared the meals in their homes since Odell removed the additional rooms from Betelle's original plans that might have been equipped with a kitchen. Still, the point made was that children received instruction in health and sanitation.¹⁸⁰

Two Room Schoolhouses

Two room schoolhouses had some common characteristics with the one-room schoolhouses. For example, they had ribbons or banks of six windows, located in the rear long side walls. Instead of one bank of windows, the two room schoolhouses had two banks. On the opposite long wall or the facade, there were four windows on each side of an entry located in the center of the wall. They all also had moderately pitched gable roofs.



ELLENDALE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The interior arrangement of toilets and cloakrooms were located on each side of the entry according to the locations of roof vents. In some two room schoolhouses, there were two separate heating systems as indicated by the number of chimneys located at each gable end. In others, the chimney was located in the center of the building indicating only one heating system. These were jacketed stoves.

Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment



FRANKFORD COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



TRINITY COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

There were two other variations to the two-room schoolhouse design. One variant was clad with shingle siding; others had brick veneer siding. Some shingle sided schoolhouses without secondary roofs had untrimmed eaves. Their entries had pedimented porticos with low pitched roofs. The peak of the portico roof was attached to the wall under the untrimmed eave of the facade. Other shingle clad and all brick veneer buildings had secondary roofs that extended down from the primary roof. On both, there was a raking cornice with returns and discontinuous friezes. The entry portico on both had a low pitched roof and a curved underside that accentuated semicircular glass fanlights over double doors. The portico surround consisted of two round or square columns set on each side of the steps supporting the roof with four pilasters similarly arranged on the facade. One difference was that brick veneer buildings had additional entries located on each gable end. Similarly, both had two sets of four windows arranged closely together on each side of the facade entry.



PAUL LAWRENCE DUNBAR, WYOMING COLORED SCHOOL Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

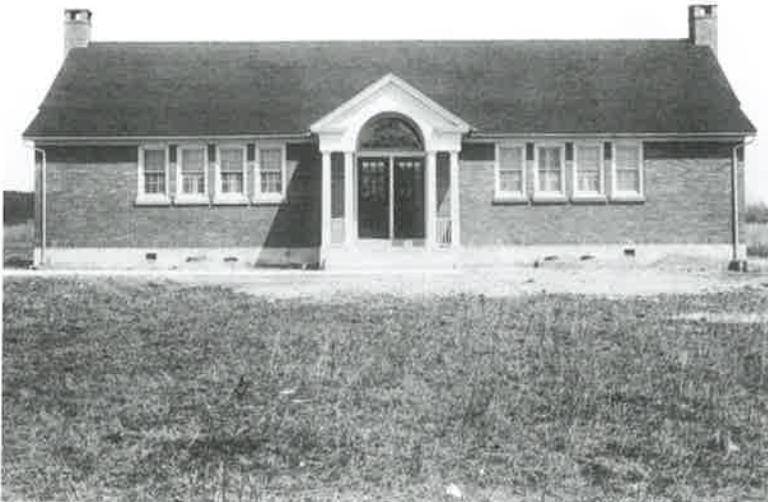
Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment



MILLSBORO COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.



REHOBOTH COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



GEORGETOWN COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



James O. Betelle

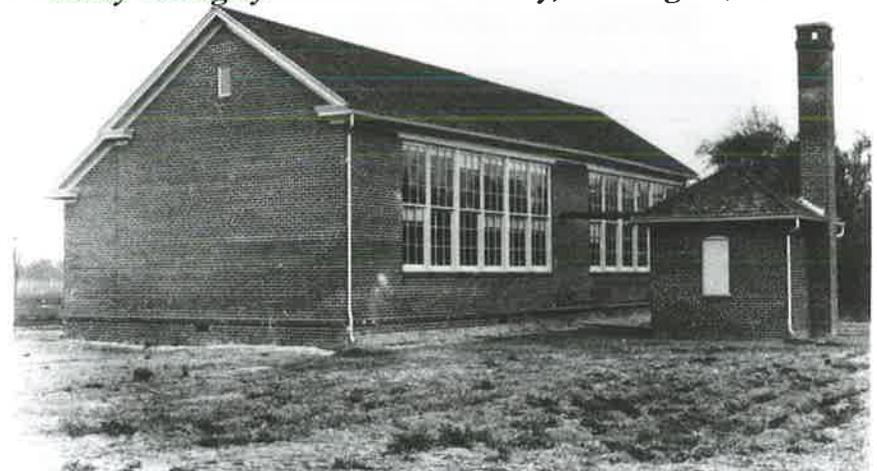


SUMMIT BRIDGE COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

There was an exception to the brick veneer buildings. The State College Colored High School had a design that was similar to shingle clad buildings except it had brick veneer. Also the heating system was located in a rear-detached, hipped-roof building. The schoolhouse also had two banks of windows on the west side of the building. The gable roofing material was wooden shingles. The interior finish contained lath and plastered walls and wood floors.¹⁸¹



STATE COLLEGE COLORED GRADED AND HIGH SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



STATE COLLEGE COLORED GRADED AND HIGH SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Three, Four, and Five Room Schools

With few exceptions, three, four, and five room school buildings were brick buildings. The exception was the Cheswold three-room school, which had wood shingle siding. Like the Fork Branch school, the Lenni Lenape claimed this as a Native American school. Brick schoolhouses had flat roofs. Some had brick parapets with stone inserts over each bay extended above the decorative stone cornice. The three room schoolhouses had three banks of six windows and three bays that divided the interior into three, four, or five rooms. The Bridgeville School was similar except it had two-side wing entrances.



**DELAWARE STATE COLLEGE PRACTICE SCHOOL,
Kent County**
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.



CHESWOLD COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment



BRIDGVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.



NEWARK COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



BENJAMIN BANNEKER MILFORD COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

Booker T. Washington Junior High School

By the end of 1922, most of the schools were completed or nearly finished including Booker T. Washington Colored School under construction in Dover. It included a junior high school in addition to the standard six grades, which characterized most schools. Booker T. Washington Junior High School at Dover was a model design for consolidated schools that contained eight grades or a Junior High School. This was the largest school in Dover at the time costing \$84,955.47. The brick building contained seven classrooms and two auxiliary rooms holding a capacity of 300 students. It was located on a 6 ½ acre plot with a playground in the center of the African American neighborhood in Dover.¹⁸²



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON COLORED SCHOOL,
Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

After completing the building, the school added an auditorium and other rooms in 1923. These were added to the two rear sides of the H shaped building. Service Citizens of Delaware was very proud of the new facility in Dover. In its 1922 Annual Report, the Service Citizens boasted:

The largest colored school in the state will be in Dover and the plans adopted call for a central auditorium. This auditorium will meet a great need in the

state. At present, there is no hall in which the colored people can meet for their various conventions and conferences. As such an auditorium will be used more for community purposes than for school exercises, it is felt proper that we should equip that hall with seats, motion picture outfit and stage properties, at a cost of \$3700.¹⁸³

The Auxiliary Association usually located new school buildings near the old schoolhouses. If surveys showed a change in the concentration of the population, then they made attempts to locate the new school to reflect it. They tried to locate the new schools in the center of population concentrations. The new site for the Booker T. Washington School reflected shifts in the African American population away from the south side of Lookerman Street to the north side of it. There were numerous complaints about these new school locations that came mainly from Euro-Americans. Mrs. Nolan Steele from Dover complained in a letter to duPont about the location of the Booker T. Washington School. She wrote:

I have a little matter to bring before you. We own the farm that joins the ground on which the colored school-house stands here in Dover. Our land joins it on the west and north. My own two little boys, 7 and 11 years of age walk into Dover school every morning, and they are compelled to meet the road full of negro [sic] children...Partly on account of this we put our farm in the agent's hands for sale. Two or three different parties have been out to look at the place and because of the negro [sic] school-house, would not have it any

Pierre S. duPont's Grand Experiment

price [sic]. You see it not only causes a depreciation in the value of our property, but knocks the sale of it entirely.¹⁸⁴

By the mid 1920s, the Auxiliary Association had completed fifty-three buildings with 156 rooms. The Auxiliary Association had under construction an additional twenty-nine buildings and sixty classrooms for both Euro-American and African Americans. During the 1920s, African Americans began settling into their new schools and began operations.



RAYMOND'S NECK COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.



Booker T. Washington

Chapter VII

Schools are in Session



CLAYMONT COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

By the end of the decade, the building program for African American schools was completed despite some opposition that threatened to burn down one unidentified school as reported in a newspaper article. It also reported that: "Today that model school could not be taken from those people except by strong armed force!"¹⁸⁵ Like the other schools, when it was finished, the Auxiliary Association turned it over to the state. By first focusing on the African American schools, it caused delays in completing the Euro-American schools. The Delaware Association was to spend about \$3.1 million for Euro-Americans. Because of reduced dividends on securities in the fund for Euro-American schools, this part of the building program progressed more slowly.¹⁸⁶ Still, Odell commented that by leaving only the Euro-American schools to build, it greatly simplified the task of building schools in the state. Odell reported that:

With the exception of the very few negro [sic] districts for which we have not been able to obtain suitable school sites, we have wiped the colored problem off the slate, and Delaware has now to face only the building of schools for its own white children.¹⁸⁷

In all, the Auxiliary Association spent \$2,157,547.22 for eighty-nine African American schools with 201 rooms. This included the construction of a new O.O. Howard High School (located at 13th Street and Popular Street) at a cost of about \$600,000 and other new buildings in Wilmington. In addition, the Auxiliary Association spent \$167,781.59 for buildings at the State College for Colored Students. In total, the newly constructed African American schools in Delaware could house a capacity of 7520 students. In addition, there were 175 teachers at these schools. The following list shows the African American schools that were completed between 1922 and 1925.¹⁸⁸

These buildings not only housed schools, but also served as community centers. In particular, Parent-Teacher Associations based their activities in the new schoolhouses. African Americans organized these

local school associations under the auspices of the Delaware State Parent-Teacher Colored Association. Kent and New Castle counties elected one representative and Sussex County elected two, representing eastern and western sections, to the statewide organization. The P.T.A.s were to use the schoolhouses to discuss educational problems and to raise funds for equipment such as furniture. One popular purchase was a victrola for the schools as recommended by Willis. In Milford, the P.T.A raised funds for a garden, privacy hedge, and shade trees. The janitor supervised students who planted them.¹⁸⁹

With the support of the P.T.A.s, schools served as health care facilities. The health of children was a problem in the state. It particularly was a problem in the African American community. Through the schools, many hoped to administer health care that was not available to many African Americans. They also hoped that this would extend into the homes of African Americans by offering health and nutrition instruction in the schoolhouses. Furthermore, healthier children would reduce absentee rates allowing them to attain an education.¹⁹⁰

Local P.T.A.s also helped raise funds for their local schools. In many instances, they raised funds to furnish the schools with victrolas and other items. They also helped raise funds to partially pay for the construction of their new schools. The Auxiliary Association in some cases did not pay the entire amount. For example, Seaford consolidated school, named Frederick Douglass School, located at the northern end of town near a large lumber yard in the African American section of town called Pea Liquor Town, was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$360,000. DuPont contributed only one half of the sum. Fundraising was only one problem for the P.T.A.s to face.¹⁹¹

Absenteeism was yet another of the educational problems that faced the P.T.A.s. The Service Citizens related poor school attendance and enrollments with school consolidations. The New School Code of 1919 established mandatory school attendance. This prompted the Service Citizens to hire Richard Watson Cooper and Herman Cooper to study the school attendance of African American children. The resultant study, titled *Negro School Attendance in Delaware*, illustrated that the attendance record of African American children was lower than that of Euro-American children.

Schools are in Session

African American Schools Completed 1922-1925 ^a		
New Castle County	Kent County	Sussex County
Name	Name	Name
Christiana	Blanco	Blackwater
Claymont	Dover High	Bridgeville
Delaware City	John Wesley	Frankford
Hockessin	Lockwood	Friendship
Marshallton	Milford	Hollyville
Matthews Corner	Raymonds Neck	Laurel
Odessa	Sandfield	Lewes
Port Penn	Smyrna	Millsboro
Kirkwood	Union	Milton
Middletown	Willow Grove	Nassau
Newark	Williamsville	Rabbits Ferry
Newport	Berrytown	Seaford
Summit Bridge	Blackiston	Selbyville
Ebenezer	Brownsville	Warwick #1
Green Spring	Clayton	Greenwood
Iron Hill	Dover	Williamsville
Lee Chapel	Harrington	Blocksom
Mt. Pleasant	Kenton	Concord
Taylor's Bridge	Parker's Chapel	Warwick #2
St. Georges	Reeve's Crossing	Georgetown
Buttonwood	St. Jones Neck	Portsville
Williamsville/ Bethesda	Viola	Ross' Point
Townsend	Mt. Olive	Slaughter Neck
	White Oak	Trinity
	Woodside	Ellendale
	Carlisle	Lowes X Roads
		Owens Corner
		Rehoboth
		Drawbridge
		Middleford
		Roxana
		Delmar
		Lincoln

^aDelaware School Auxiliary Association Progress of Schools, 1922-25, P.S. duPont Papers.

Still, the differences were minimal. The attendance difference between Euro-American children and African American in single teacher schools was 7.4 days in favor of Euro-Americans. For African American Special School Districts, the average attendance was seven days greater than New Castle Schools with grades 1-6. African American attendance was twenty-one days greater than Euro-American Kent County Schools with grades 1-6 and twenty-three days greater than those schools in Sussex County with grades 1-6. There was a difference of seven days between Euro-American single teacher and fully graded schools in favor of the fully graded.¹⁹²



NASSAU COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

One problem that the Cooper and Cooper study revealed was that the students who had a poor attendance record skewed the results. Many of these students started late and left early in the year. For example, Mt. Olive and Lee's Chapel schools had very poor attendance records. The reason was that these were rural schools located in agricultural regions. Many of the students did not attend school regularly, because they worked on farms. Cooper and Cooper cited this as the chief reason for poor attendance records for both African Americans and Euro-

Americans. More specifically, they referred to the State Board of Education exemption for "farm work and domestic service from the application of child labor laws" for noncompliance with the mandatory attendance law. Furthermore, the study cited that:

Low attendance averages and low promotion percentages are characteristic features of the record of: Pupils more than one and one-half miles from school...Farm tenant children live farther from school than any other parental group. Over one-half of them live more than one and one-half miles distant.¹⁹³

Other reasons cited for poor attendance included parental indifference, weather, quarantine, out of town, poverty, truancy, and illness. The Cooper and Cooper study reported that parental indifference was a major problem especially in Kent County. The Coopers could not offer any explicit information on parental indifference. Still, this has been used as a reason for poor performance and absenteeism among African Americans. Some explanations for using parental indifference as a cause of absenteeism may have involved parental illiteracy; they simply could not write a letter of excuse for legitimate absences. Furthermore, parents might not have known that they needed to write a letter of excuse. Their ability to skillfully manipulate the system in favor of their children may not have been equal to other more sophisticated groups who might have falsified excuses for their children.¹⁹⁴

Another factor in poor attendance was attributed to declining enrollments. More specifically, they cited that these rural schools had a higher percentage of students who had enrolled in schools, but had stopped attending class without formally withdrawing from the school. One reason given for this was the nature of agricultural work. Sussex County had the worst attendance record attributed to farm work. The migratory nature of much of the farm work forced families to move on a regular basis. It was difficult for them to send their children to school because of this. They most likely moved before formally withdrawing

Schools are in Session

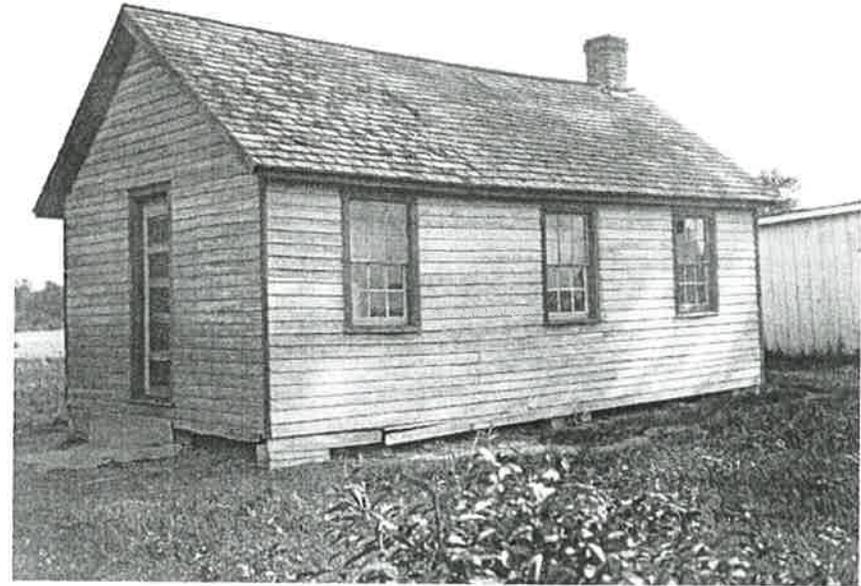
their children from school or may not have been aware of the powers to do so.¹⁹⁵

Furthermore, the African American population began to concentrate into more urbanized areas leaving some rural schools without students. State Superintendent of Public Instruction H.W. Holloway complained: "There seems to be a tendency for the colored people to move to the towns, in spite of all we have done to provide them with adequate educational advantages in the country."¹⁹⁶ Still, others left the state entirely.¹⁹⁷

The shifting and dwindling African American population created problems for school officials in Delaware during the 1920s and 1930s. The WPA reported during the 1930s that:

As late as 1920 most of the roads in Delaware south of Wilmington were bordered by Negro Settlements like this [New Discovery], but owing to the widening of the roads and the migration of the Negroes northward to the cities, comparatively few such roadside communities remain.¹⁹⁸

This was a challenging situation for education authorities. In some cases, they closed schools and consolidated them with others when they found inadequate numbers of children to keep schools open. For example, in 1920 the state closed Down's Chapel Colored School and consolidated it with Blanco School. The state also consolidated the Carlisle Colored School District with Dover because of the lack of students. Parents in Carlisle objected and resisted consolidation. Holloway explained the situation to duPont. He wrote that the parents feared consolidation would contaminate their children. Holloway believed that their real concern, however, was over providing their children with adequate clothing.¹⁹⁹



CARLISLE COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Del.

In the 1930s, a combination of factors led to further school closings and consolidations. One factor was the continued loss of African American population, which contributed to the second factor relating to the economic plausibility of maintaining some schools. By 1932, the number of children had decreased so low that Holloway added to the ones already closed in the 1920s by closing the schools at Odessa, Taylor's Bridge, Green Spring, Sandfield, Lowes Crossroads, and Brownsville/Hammondtown. He commented that:

It is impossible to foresee the trend of colored population. The situation with reference to the above schools is an evidence of that. We had hoped these [school] buildings would have a tendency to keep the colored people in

Schools are in Session

the country. This does not seem to have been the case, at least as far as the buildings above mentioned are concerned.²⁰⁰

Holloway further explained the situation to duPont writing: "The change in school population has brought about a situation whereby it has been found uneconomical to continue schools in certain colored school districts of the State."²⁰¹ By 1935, there were several more school closings, because the state could no longer justify keeping the following schools open.

African American Schools Closed, 1935*

New Castle	Kent	Sussex
Taylor's Bridge	Sandfield	Roxana
Odessa	Bmsvile-Hammdtn	Lowes X Roads
Green Spring	Carlisle	
	Downs Chapel	
	Blackiston	

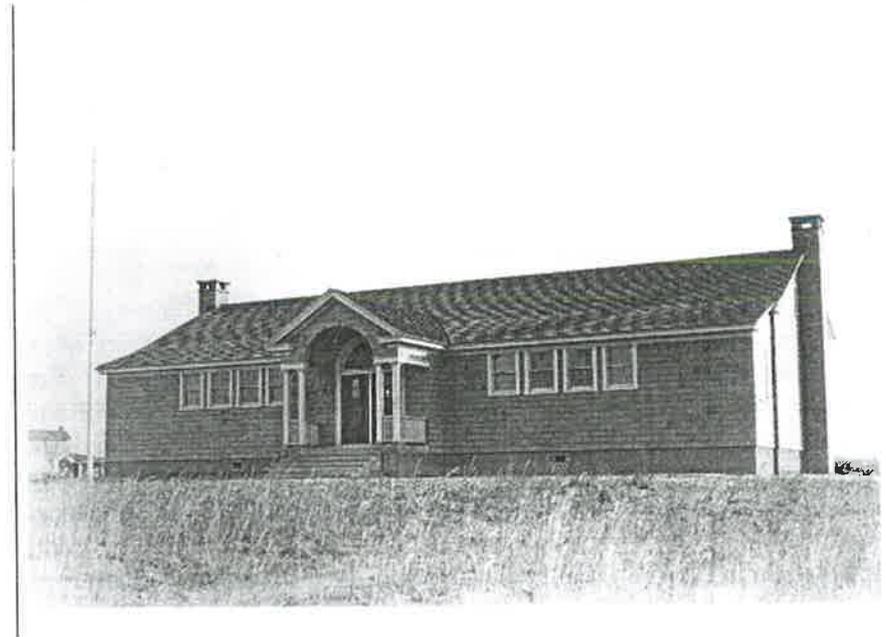
*H.V. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction to P.S. duPont, July 23, 1935



BROWNSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

The Harrington school reported overcrowded conditions following the closing and consolidation of the Brownsville-Hammondtown School with the Harrington school. They moved the closed school building to the west of Harrington. Holloway also planned to move two more school buildings, whose names he did not mention, to the area.²⁰²

Similar conditions existed in the Newport (Absalom Jones School) Colored School in New Castle County. In the early 1920s, the Auxiliary Association built a two-room schoolhouse in Newport. In the early 1920s, they added a third room. The school continued to grow in enrollment to the point that they decided to add a fourth. Odell reported: "Newport is growing more rapidly in negro [sic] population than any other place in Delaware."²⁰³



NEWPORT COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Schools are in Session

In 1938, the situation grew worse for African American schools to remain open. The state closed Matthews Corner between Townsend and Odessa in New Castle County and Berrytown near Felton in Kent County. This also presented problems regarding the future dispensation of the school buildings. Holloway reported: "The colored people having moved away in many instances, there is no demand for them as community centers for that group of people." In Sussex County, following its closure, Euro-American students began using the Roxana Colored School. The Lowes Crossroads Colored Schoolhouse was moved to the former Euro-American school site. Euro-Americans replaced their old school with it.²⁰⁴ In the case of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Colored School in Wyoming, Euro-Americans had displaced the African American population where it was located. George Lundgreen of Wyoming informed duPont:

The prsence [sic] of a colored school will mean the founding of a colored colony, thereby sadly depreciating property values...[and] already there is a considerable degree of friction existing between the white and colored children because of the proximity of their schools. Star Hill is an ideal location, and transportation could be paid for with less burden to the taxables [sic] of the state than the maintenance of two new schools.²⁰⁵

Thus, by the end of the 1930s, many of the schools built by the Auxiliary Association were no longer open. Also African American schools had achieved equity with their Euro-American counterparts by then. The Delaware School Law of 1921 required that the State Board of Education must maintain separate but uniform and equal schools. By the 1930s, duPont had received an appointment to become a member of the state tax commission. During his tenure, he collected unpaid taxes and insured their fair distribution. African American students benefited and actually received one penny more than Euro-American students in per

capita expenditure. African American students received \$129.51 per pupil while the Euro-American students received \$129.50 per pupil. Most likely, the work of P.S. duPont in his role as tax commissioner for the state played a part in the fair and equitable distribution of revenues. Furthermore, the consolidation of schools and lower student numbers also may have allowed for more efficient distribution of funds.²⁰⁶

In all, African Americans in Delaware achieved a degree of equity in education during the 1930s. Much of this success was attributed to the efforts of P.S. duPont. He did receive widespread acclaim for his efforts from African Americans. School children wrote letters to duPont thanking him for their new schools. They wrote poems and songs of appreciation also. In 1922 Ruth A. Colden from the Primary Education Department at the Lewes Colored School wrote the following hymn of thanks to duPont:

Can a little child like me
Thank the father fittingly
Yes, oh yes be good and true
Patient king in all you do.
Love your school and do your part.
Learn to say with all your heart.
Father we thank thee
Father we thank thee
Father in heaven we thank thee
For the school upon the hill
For the ones who helped to build
For the lessons of our youth
Honor gratitude and truth
For the love that met us here
For the school and for the cheer²⁰⁷

Robert G. Murray of Selbyville in Sussex County wrote a poem titled *A Tribute* in praise of duPont.

*A Tribute*²⁰⁸

The man who faint would hold his hand
From giving gifts to those who need,
Who benefits the world by such
A great, a grand and glorious deed,
is worthy of the praise of men,
And all that human souls can give,
His name should deep emblazoned [sic] be,
Upon the hearts of men to live.

The man who searches nature's mines
And gives the world her secrets rare,
Reveals the planets and the stars,
The mysteries of the atmosphere.
He paves the way on which shall tread
The forces summoned to his call,
Through him arts, science and literature,
Shall shed their blessings over all,
The man who educates the mind.

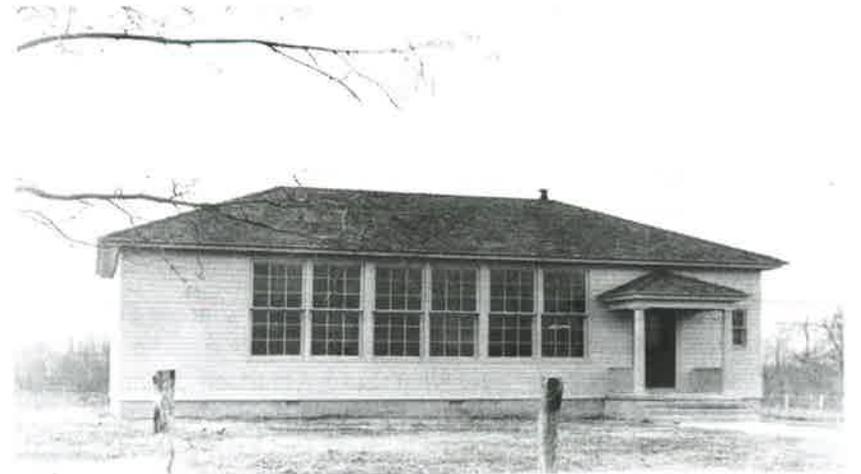
Supplanting light in darkness stead,
Who teaches men the way to think,
To act and live by precepts led,
That man though less rewarded here—
His worth not really understood,
Will someday reap a rich reward,
As those who justly merit should.

And he who points the way to God,
Who makes the path of men more clear,
Indeed inscribes his name on high,
Upon those pages bright and fair:
Aye, million souls redeemed from sin,
Shall call him blessed in that day,

Who served them in the time of need,
And always walked the narrow way.

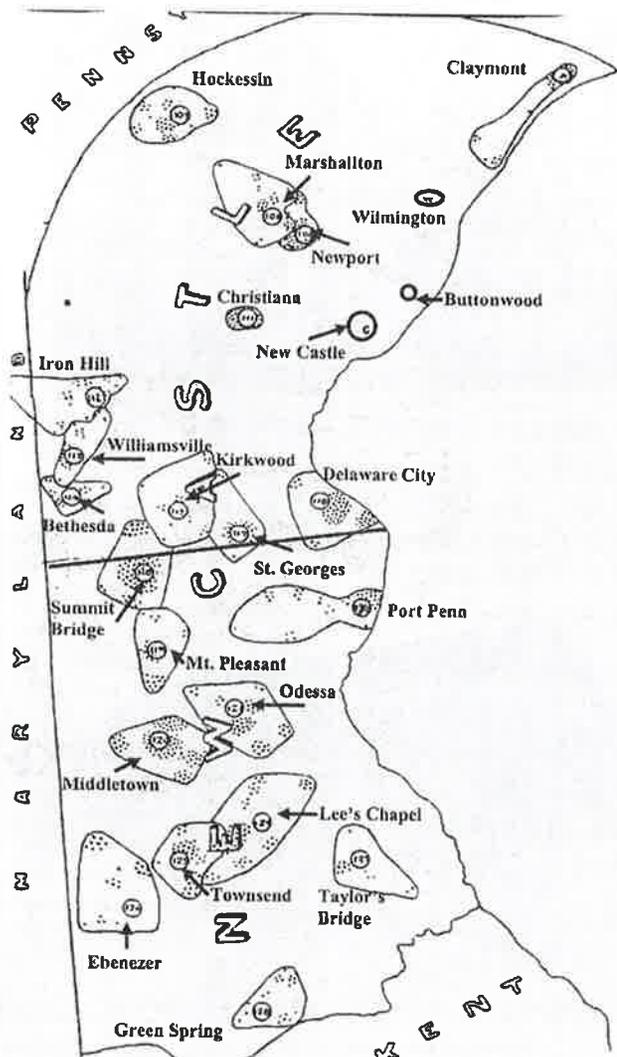
But he who helps a fallen race
To stand upon its feet once more,
And places means within its hands,
That it may open knowledge's door;
That man has surely done an act,
Which pleases God upon His throne,
Playing the Good Samaritan's part,
Has driven a great example home.

No compensation does he wish,
Or ever craves his praises sung,
Rejoices only just to know,
He's helped an oppressed and needy one.
And by twelve million grateful hearts,
Praises to him shall e'er be rung
His name in memory shall not be,
"Unwept, unhonored [sic], or unsung.



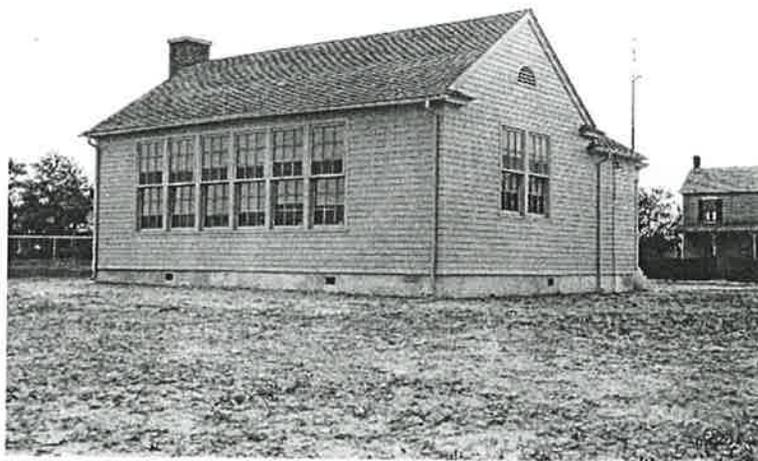
WOODSIDE COLORED SCHOOL., Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Map Showing the Distribution of African American Students and Schools in New Castle County, 1923*



*Richard Watson Cooper and Hermann Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1923), 10, map edited by author.

Map of New Castle County, Delaware, 1923



BUTTONWOOD COLORED SCHOOL, New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



NEW CASTLE COLORED SCHOOL
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Map Showing the Distribution of African American Students and Schools In Kent County, 1923*

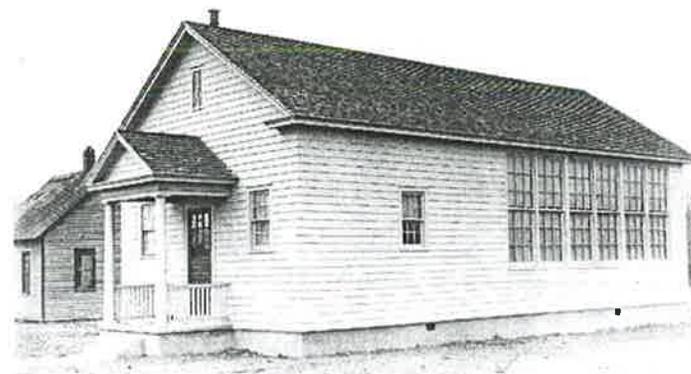


*Richard Watson Cooper and Herman Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1923), 10, map edited by author.

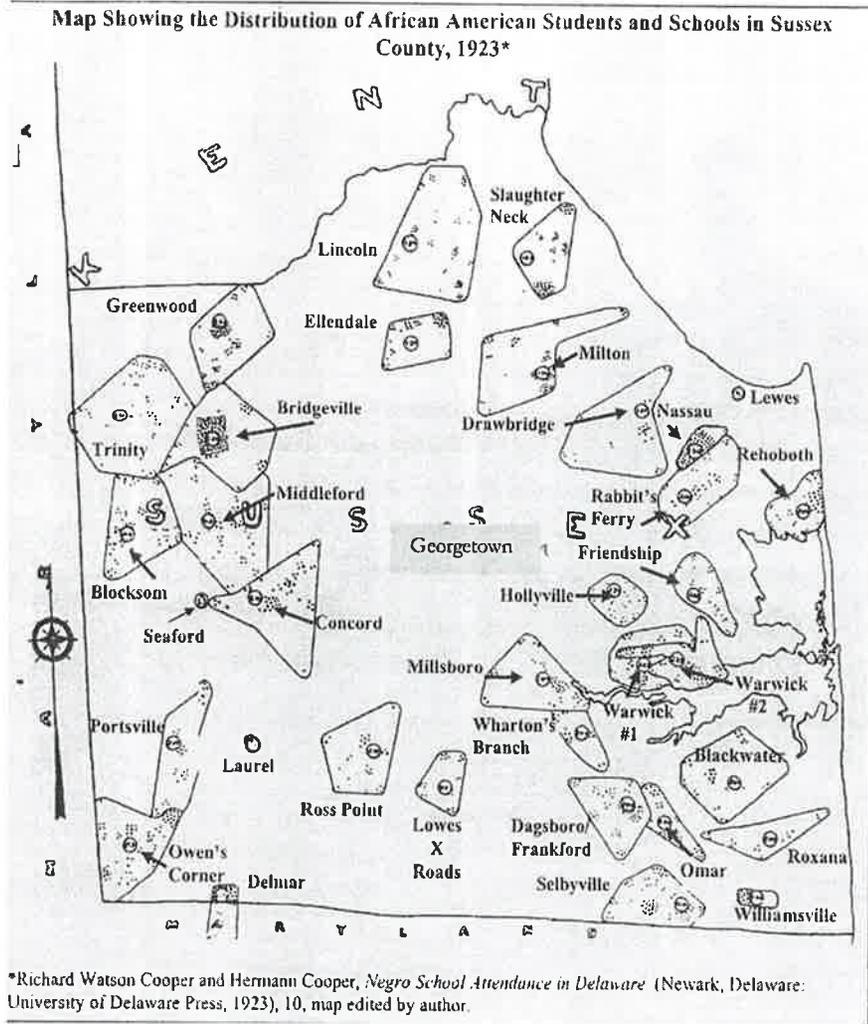
Map of Kent County, Delaware, 1923



STAR HILL COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
 Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



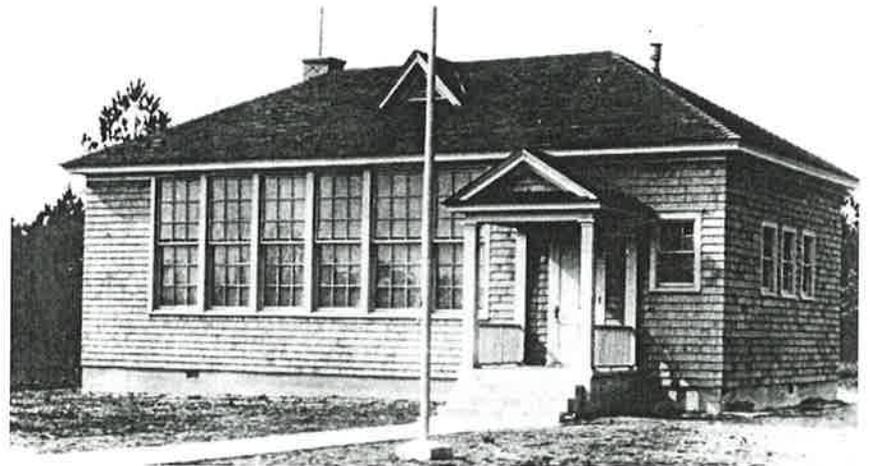
BLACKISTON (NEW) COLORED SCHOOL, Kent County
 Courtesy of Hagley Museum and library, Wilmington, Del.



Map of Sussex County, Delaware, 1923

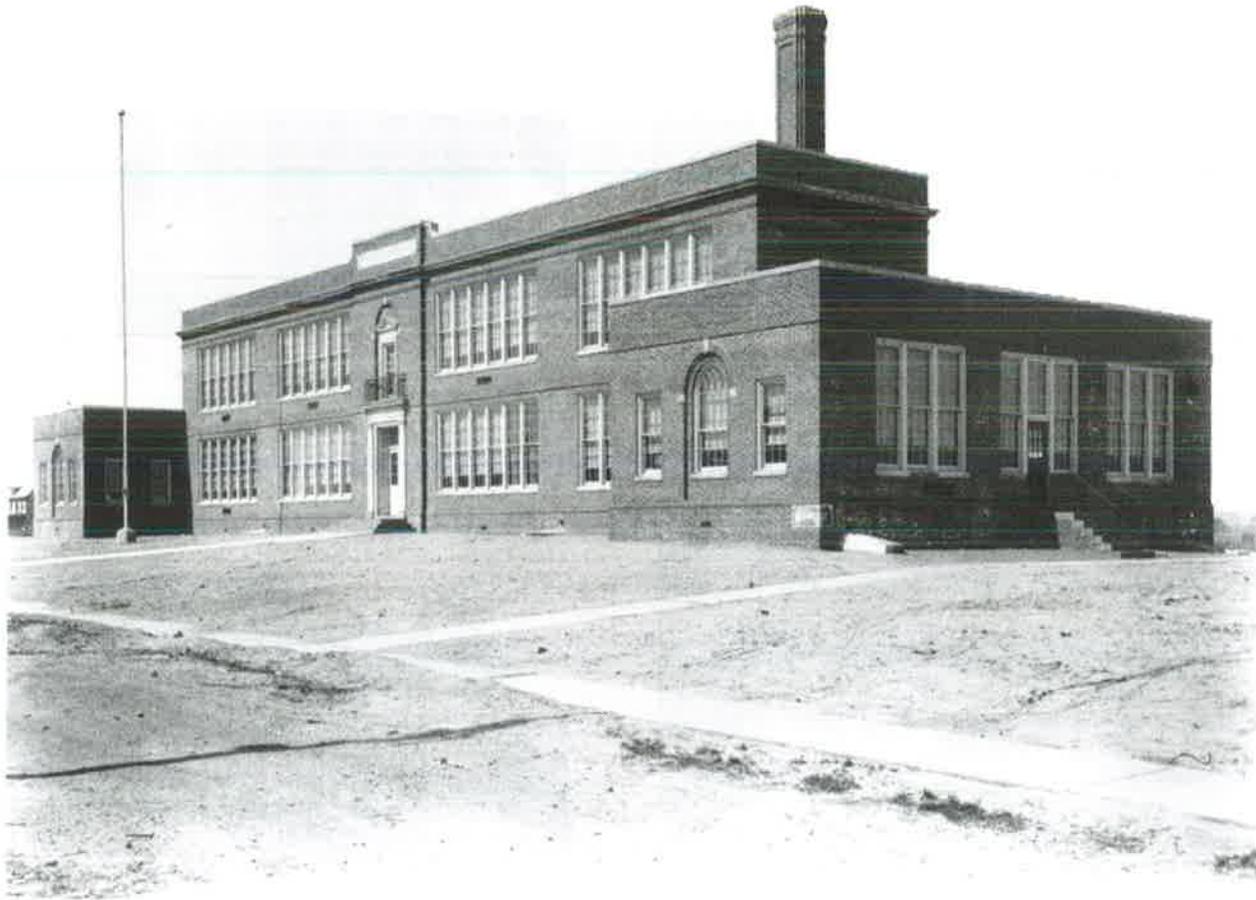


PORTSVILLE COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.



ROSS PONT COLORED SCHOOL, Sussex County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Epilogue



SAMUEL G. ELBERT COLORED SCHOOL,
New Castle County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

Since the end of the Civil War in 1865, African Americans in Delaware struggled for equal educational opportunities with Euro-Americans. They successfully established a system of public education that was separate, but not equal to the Euro-American educational system by the end of the nineteenth century even though this violated the United States Constitution. People like Alice Dunbar Nelson and Pierre S. duPont challenged the state to rectify this inequity, which it did. By the mid-1930s, the state of Delaware actually spent one penny more per African American student than it did for Euro-American students.

Still, inequities existed regarding equal access to higher levels of educational opportunities between African American and Euro-American students. African American students living in rural areas had limited access to an education beyond the sixth grade level following school consolidation concentrating higher graded schools in more populated areas. Students had to travel long distances to these schools in a time when transportation was difficult at best. African American students wanting a high school education no longer had to attend only Howard High School in Wilmington; they had an alternative following the opening of the high school in the early 1920s on the campus of the State College for Colored Students in Dover. Even with this new high school, students living in Sussex County still experienced difficulties attending it. They had to live with relatives in Dover or pay the State College for lodging on campus.

By the beginning of the 1940s, many of the duPont schools survived and remained open. Since they remained open, these school districts had maintained population and remained economically viable. These were the strongest schools. Yet, there was a movement growing around the country for integration of schools led by the N.A.A.C.P. Charles Houston, Dean of the Howard University Law School, directed the legal effort, which culminated in the *Brown* decision of 1954. Included in this case were the Hockessin and Claymont school districts in Delaware. In Delaware, attorneys L. L. Redding and Jack Greenberg argued for the end of segregation in these schools for the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund. Therefore, despite achieving equity in the funding of schools, many African Americans in Delaware still believed that there were inherent inequities in the segregated school systems that warranted

legal action. Legally, segregation ended with the *Brown* Decision in 1954. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, however, did not certify that Delaware had desegregated its educational system until 1968. Even with this, Delaware went on to face new challenges to desegregate when the federal courts ordered busing to achieve more equitable distribution of students based on race.



LORE HALL Female Dormitory at the State College for Colored Students, Kent County
Courtesy of Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

African Americans in Delaware played an important role in the overall history of education in the United States. Yet, until recently, little has been written about this struggle. With this small contribution, it is hoped that others will take up the challenge and continue to enlighten us with more books and articles on the subject. There are so many individuals who have gone nameless in this struggle and their stories should be recalled. The future challenge is for scholars to “go forth and serve” by recounting these important stories.

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- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
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- ¹⁵¹ Ibid., 49.
- ¹⁵² John G. Richardson, "Town versus Countryside and Systems of Common Schooling," *Social Science History* II (Winter 1987)4: 404; S. Bowles and H. Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books 1976), 131-141
- ¹⁵³ For further information of the connection between the school designs in Delaware and B.F. Willis' recommendations, see the P.S. duPont Papers where there is a copy of the full text of the speech presented by B.F. Willis, titled, "The Ideal Rural School Building," Address to the Four State Country Life Conference, Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, February 9, 1916. DuPont seemed impressed with Willis' description of an ideal country school and kept a copy of his speech in his files; Also see Susan Brizzolara, Department of Planning, New Castle County, Iron Hill School Number 112C, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, Dover, Delaware. Brizzolara also sees an important connection between Willis
- and the eventual designs that appeared in Delaware.
- ¹⁵⁴ Draft copy of Strayer, Englehardt, and Betelle's *Standards and Plans of School Buildings and Grounds for the Public Schools of Delaware*, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 49.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid.; Memorandum RE Colored School Buildings from James H. Dillard, Jackson Davis, and Frank P. Bachman to P.S. duPont, December 31, 1919, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 3; "Ideals and Achievements in Delaware," Report Made to the Annual Meeting of the Service Citizens of Delaware (May 6, 1921), 17, Purnell Collection-Service Citizens, RG 9200, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
- ¹⁶⁰ "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 6.
- ¹⁶¹ Carswell, "First in Community Work"; John Munroe, *History of Delaware* (Newark, Delaware: The University of Delaware Press, 1984), 200; An Agreement between P.S. duPont and Wilmington to Donate \$500,000 to the construction of African American schools, 1919, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ¹⁶² James O. Betelle, "New School Buildings, State of Delaware, Part I," *American Architect* 117 (June 16, 1920), 751-788; Betelle, "New School Buildings, State of Delaware, Part II," *American Architect* 117 (June 23, 1920), 785-788; Betelle, "Architectural Styles as Applied to School Buildings," *The American School Board Journal*

58 (April 1919), 25-28, 75-76; "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 4.

¹⁶³ "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 4.

¹⁶⁴ "Negro School Site Report," P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁶⁵ "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 5; Memorandum RE Colored School Buildings from James H. Dillard, Jackson Davis, and Frank P. Bachman to P.S. duPont.

¹⁶⁶ "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 4

¹⁶⁷ "The Educational Situation in Delaware," 5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.; Willis, "The Ideal Rural School Building."; Following completion of the Milford Colored School, a report showed that the custodian instructed students on how to garden. It reported that students had been very successful in their gardening efforts.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; Draft copy of Strayer, Englehardt, and Betelle's *Standards and Plans of School Buildings and Grounds for the Public Schools of Delaware*, P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.; Willis, "The Ideal Rural School Building."

¹⁷³ Charles Carswell, "First in Community Work: Service Citizens of Delaware Successfully Demonstrate New ideas in Educational Methods and Other Uplifting Activities," *Philadelphia Record Sunday Morning*, August 13, 1922.

¹⁷⁴ Joseph H. Odell, Director of Service Citizens of Delaware, to James L. Betelle, Guilbert & Betelle Architects, August 30, 1919, P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Margin comment notes on Draft copy of Strayer, Englehardt, and Betelle's *Standards and Plans of School Buildings and Grounds for the Public Schools of Delaware*, P.S. duPont Papers; G.F. Haak, Superintendent of Building and Supplies, School District of City of Scranton, Pennsylvania, to Joseph Odell, Director of Service Citizens of Delaware, November 4, 1919; Joseph Odell, Director of Service Citizens of Delaware, to Dr. George D. Strayer, Teachers College, Columbia University, September 30, 1919.

¹⁷⁷ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1984), 319-341; Draft copy of Strayer, Englehardt, and Betelle's *Standards and Plans of School Buildings and Grounds for the Public Schools of Delaware*, P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.; Photographs, Delaware School Auxiliary Association, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, De.

¹⁷⁹ "Ideals and Achievements in Delaware," 21-23; Presently, it is not clear regarding the discrepancy of expenditures for Euro-American schools in Sussex County. One possible explanation is that duPont first concentrated on school construction in Sussex County. Another is the number of buildings there were more than other areas because of the dispersed population among both Euro-Americans and African Americans.

¹⁸⁰ P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁸¹ Public Budget Commission Insurance Valuation Reports for the State of Delaware, 209.

¹⁸² Delaware State Parent-Teacher Association, "The School as a Community Center," Series IV (Wilmington, Delaware, April, 1924)6:10-11, Education: Public Schools, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

¹⁸³ "Co-operative Citizenship in Delaware," Report to the Annual Meeting of the Service Citizens of Delaware, (May 12, 1922), 74, Purnell Collection-Service Citizens, RG 9200, Delaware State Archives.

¹⁸⁴ Mrs. Nolan Steele, Dover, Delaware, to P.S. duPont, October 26, 1923, P.S. duPont Papers.

¹⁸⁵ Carswell, "First in Community Work."

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.; "Delaware's Adventures in Citizenship," 40.

¹⁸⁷ "The Development of Delaware," Report to the Annual Meeting of The Service Citizens of Delaware (May 4, 1923), 7, RG 9200, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

¹⁸⁸ P.S. duPont to Carter G. Woodson, Executive Director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, March 11, 1931.

¹⁸⁹ Delaware State Parent-Teacher Association Year Book, 1924-25, Bulletin of Service Citizens of Delaware. VI (1924-25)4:75, R306, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware; Carswell, "First in Community Work";

Delaware State Parent-Teacher Association, "The School as a Community Center," 11..

¹⁹⁰ Richard Watson Cooper and Herman Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1923), 370.

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- ¹⁹¹ Miller, "Adolescent Negro Education In Delaware," 132.
- ¹⁹² Ibid., 151-155; Service Citizens of Delaware, "Co-operative Citizenship in Delaware," 29-30.
- ¹⁹³ Cooper and Herman Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware*, 231, 371.
- ¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 261-62; Stephanie Shaw, "'We Are Not Educating Individuals, We Are Manufacturing Levers: Facilitating Social and Community Development, 1880-1940," a paper presented at "...Mind on Freedom" Conference held at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., February 1, 1996.
- ¹⁹⁵ Cooper and Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware*, 261-62.
- ¹⁹⁶ J. Herman Roach, President of Parent Teacher Association of Harrington Colored School, to P.S. duPont, May 6, 1930, P.S. duPont Papers; P.S. duPont to Delaware State Board of Education, May 14, 1930, P.S. duPont Papers; H.V. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, May 19, 1930, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ¹⁹⁷ Cooper and Cooper, *Negro School Attendance in Delaware*, 261-62.
- ¹⁹⁸ Jeannett Eckman and Henry G. Alsbery, eds., *Delaware: A Guide to the First State: Federal Writers Project* (New York: Hastings House, Revised Edition, 1955), 456.
- ¹⁹⁹ Minutes of Meeting of the State Board of Education Held in the Supreme Court Chamber, State House, Dover, Delaware (August 6, 1920), 340; H.W. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, November 2, 1923, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰⁰ H.W. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, September 30, 1932.
- ²⁰¹ H.V. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, July 23, 1935, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰² H.V. Holloway, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, September 4, 1935, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰³ James H. Odell, Director of Service Citizens, to P.S. duPont, undated memorandum, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰⁴ H.V. Holloway, Superintendent of Public Instruction, to P.S. duPont, June 17, 1938, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰⁵ George Lundgreen, Wyoming, Delaware, to P.S. duPont, April 24, 1926, P.S. duPont Papers.
- ²⁰⁶ Miller, "Adolescent Negro Education In Delaware," 177; Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 21.
- ²⁰⁷ Ruth a Colden, the Primary Education Department at the Lewes Colored School, Hymn of Thanks to P.S. duPont, 1922
- ²⁰⁸ Robert G. Murray, Selbyville, Delaware, *A Tribute*, undated, P.S. duPont Papers.

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There are a variety of good sources containing important information about African American education in Delaware. Much of the information can be found in archives located in Delaware. For example, information about the Delaware Association can be found in the manuscripts collection at the Historical Society of Delaware in Wilmington. Information about the Service Citizens of Delaware can be found at the Delaware State Archives in Dover as well as in the archives located at the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library located at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington. Those records also contain the P.S. duPont Papers and records from the Delaware Auxiliary Association. Some information about African American education, especially about Delaware State University, exists at the Jason Library on the campus of Delaware State University in Dover. The records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel of the Church of England in Foreign Parts are located in Morris Library at the University of Delaware.

Outside of the state, information can be found in archives also. The Friends Library at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania contains the Society of Friends records. Drew University holds information about the Delaware Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Delaware

and the educational activities. In addition, the National Archives in Washington, D.C. holds the records of the Freedmen's Bureau. Other possible sources of information may be Columbia University. P.S. duPont and the Service Citizens hired faculty members from there to provide advice and research on education in Delaware beginning in 1919. Also, Betelle, who designed the schools, taught architecture at Columbia University. The American Institute of Architects in Washington, D.C. also contains information regarding Betelle and school architectural design.

There exist some gaps in the information as well as some weaknesses. For example, the Society of Friends did not keep complete records before the Civil War regarding teachers, school locations or where schools were held, and who attended. The African School Society records are missing from this period also. There are also gaps in the records of the Female Harmony Society located at the Historical Society of Delaware. Records from African American A.M.E. Churches are missing also. There is no apparent central archive repository for these A.M.E. records.

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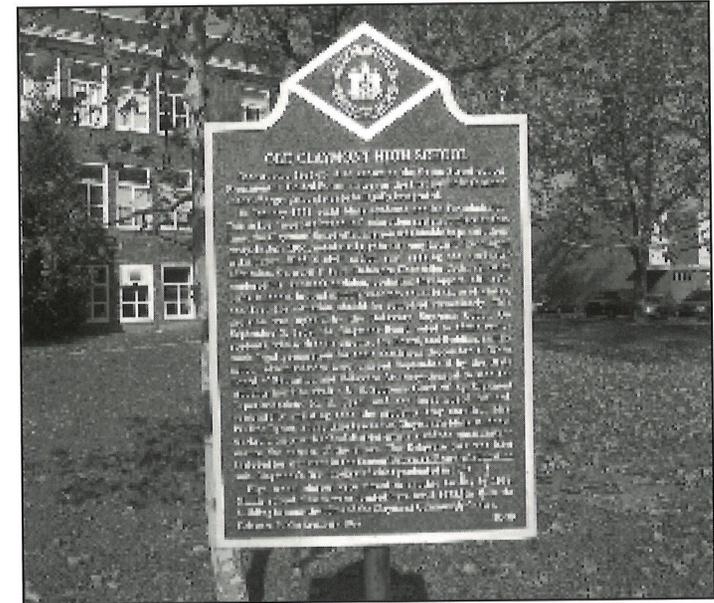
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OLD CLAYMONT HIGH SCHOOL

Constructed 1924-25. Also known as the Green Street School. Prominent in United States history as the first public high school in the 17 segregated states to be legally integrated.

In January 1951, eight black students applied for admission. Due to the "separate but equal" education system in place at that time, the Claymont Board of Education was unable to permit their entry. In July 1951, noted civil rights attorney Louis L. Redding of Wilmington filed a civil action suit seeking the students' admission. On April 1, 1952, Delaware Chancellor Collins J. Seitz rendered his landmark decision, declaring that opportunities for black students in local schools were not equal to those of whites, and that the situation should be remedied immediately. This decision was upheld by the Delaware Supreme Court. On September 3, 1952, the Claymont Board voted to admit 12 students, who with their parents, the board, and Redding, swiftly made legal preparation for their admission September 4. When school administrators were ordered September 5 by the State Board of Education and Delaware Attorney General to send the students home to await a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, Claymont Superintendent H.E. Stahl and the local Board refused, successfully insisting that the students stay enrolled. Mrs. Pauline Dyson, a long-time teacher of Claymont's black students, worked closely with school district officials and the community to ensure success of the effort. The Delaware case was later included for argument in the famous *Brown vs. Board of Education* suit. Claymont's first integrated class graduated in 1954.

High school classes were moved to another facility in 1969. Middle school classes were located here until 1978. In 1980 the building became the Claymont Community Center.

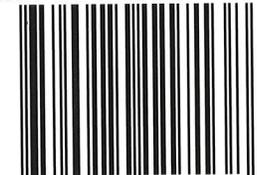


-Text from Delaware Public Archives Historic marker NC99
Marker located on the west side of Green Street near Lawson Street intersection



Delaware Heritage Commission
121 Duke of York St.
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www.heritage.delaware.gov

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