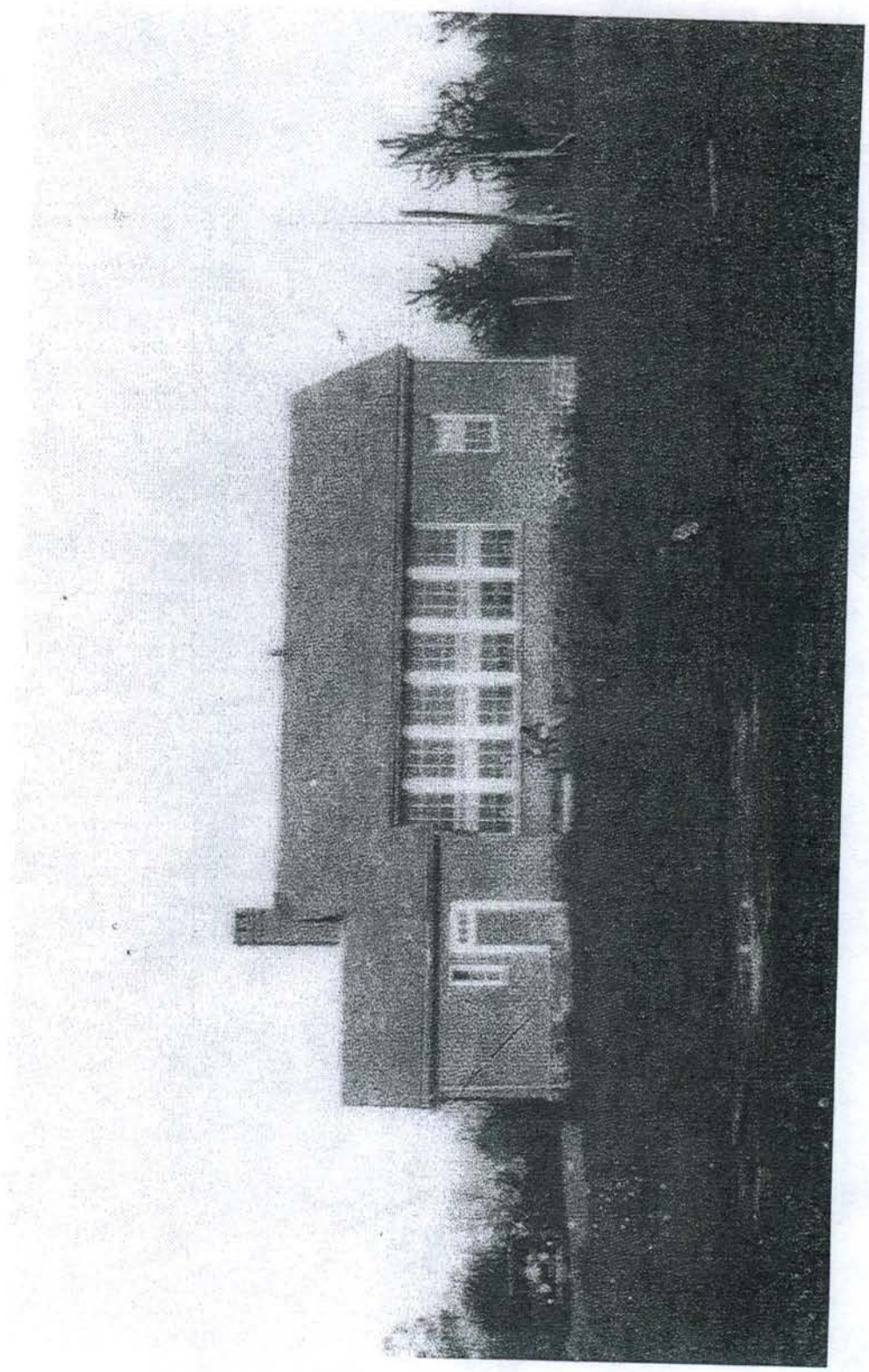


*Hockessin Community Center
Hockessin, Delaware*



HISTORY

Hockessin Colored School No. 107 began its existence on September 8, 1920. Prior to that, the colored children of Hockessin attended school on land which is now the residence of Margaret Poindexter and her late husband, Edward. The land was originally purchased in 1900 and on April 4, 1901, the land was conveyed to School District 107.

The new school was deeded September 9, 1920, to Hugh Rodney Sharp and the County Board of Education, which had recommended a public school for colored children in or near Hockessin.

The ceremonies began with an invocation by Reverend John T. Rector. Mrs. William K. duPont, on behalf of the Delaware School Auxiliary Association, presented the deed to the New Castle County Board of Education. She stated it gave her great pleasure to make the presentation.

George L. Medill, when accepting the deeds, commented on the beauty of the building and thanked Pierre S. duPont on behalf of New Castle County, and Hockessin, especially, for his generosity. He also stated that the children had an opportunity to strive for excellence.

Dr. Joseph H. Odell assured parents and other adults that he believed it was the best building of a one-teacher type ever built. He expressed the hope that the education the children would receive would make the parents proud.

Led by the teacher, Miss Rachel Asbury, the children sang "America the Beautiful". Reverend J. U. King pronounced the benediction.

Mr. Lewis Cornish was chairman of the School Board in 1951 and forty-six (46) children were enrolled. At the end of the school year, June 13, 1957, the school closed with ten (10) children enrolled.

Today, the building is the Hockessin Community Center, Inc.

STUDENTS 1920-50

Anderson, Barbara
Anderson, June
Banks, Katherine
Bantum, Laura
Bantum, Melvin
Battin, Arlene *
Battin, Ethel
Battin, Oliver, Jr.
Battin, Mary
Berry, Dorothy
Berry, Herbert
Berry, Robert
Blue, Henry
Boddy, Dorothy *
Bolden, Charles *
Bolden, William *
Brock, Beverly
Brock, Shirley
Bulah, Addie *
Bulah, Emily *
Bulah, Fred, Jr.
Bulah, Thomas
Butler, Reba *
Cannon, Carl
Cannon, Virginia *
Carter, Edna *
Carter, Herbert *
Carter, Joseph
Carter, Mary
Carter, Orville *
Casson, Norman
Chapman, Hilda
Coleman, Charles *
Coleman, Emma
Coleman, John, Sr. *
Coleman, Lottie *
Coleman, Marshall *
Conard, Sara *
Copper, Darryl
Copper, Dorothy

Copper, Richard *
Cornish, Irvin *
Davis, Gertalene *
Davis, James *
Davis, Lola *
Davis, Lorraine
Davis, Mitchell *
Denby, Joseph
Dobson, Charles *
Emory, Charlotte
Fleming, Jean E.
Folks, Percy, Jr. *
Folks, Robert
Gasby, Charles *
Gasby, Dorothy *
Gasby, Florence
Gasby, Ida Mae *
Gasby, Jacqueline
Gasby, Mabel
Gasby, Margaret *
Gasby, Robert
Gasby, Shirley *
Gasby, Sylvia
Gasby, Thomas
Gasby, Walter *
Gray, Ethel
Gray, Reginald
Gray, Romaine
Gray, Stanley
Gray, Wilmer, Jr.
Griffin, Maryanne
Harris, Andrew
Harris, Orville *
Henderson, Lillian
Henry, Sarah
Hickman, William
Hodges, Arthur
Hunter, Ethel
Hunter, Ernest *
Hunter, George *

Hunter, Jimmy
Hunter, Leon, Jr.
Hunter, Leon, Sr. *
Hunter, Vienna
Hunter, William
Jackson, Abe *
Jackson, Charles Lee *
Jackson, Clarence
Jackson, Elma
Jackson, James *
Jackson, Jerome
Jackson, Lottie *
Jackson, Mary Lizzie
Jamison, Clarence *
Jamison, Louise *
Jamison, Margaret *
Johnson, Charles H. Jr.
Johnson, Charles J.
Johnson, Earl *
Johnson, Lillian
Johnson, Lois Mae
Johnson, Leanna
Johnson, Margaret *
Johnson, Marie *
Johnson, Nancy
Johnson, Ralph, Jr.
Johnson, Samuel
Johnson, Velma *
Johnson, William
Jones, Alice *
Jones, Donald
Jones, Ruby
Knott, Bertha
Knott, James (Bunny)
Knott, Ella Mae
Knott, James (Sonny)
Layne, Thelma
Lester, Betty

Lewis, Edna
Lewis, John
Lewis, Lawrence
Lewis, Phillip
Lewis, Rose *
Logan, Delores
Macklin, Edwina
Macklin, Walter
Marshall, Ardella
Mathis, Alice
Maxwell, JoRita
McFadden, Ruth Lewis
Miller, Charles
Miller, Edward *
Miller, Etta *
Miller, Margaret
Miller, Richard *
Moore, Helen Wilson
Morris, Hilda
Nickens, James
Peterson, Dorsey E. Jr. *
Peterson, Lawrence *
Peterson, Leroy
Peterson, Lester *
Peterson, Linwood
Peterson, Louis
Peterson, Luther
Peterson, Orpha *
Peterson, Samuel
Plater, Walter J. *
Poe, Beatrice *
Poindexter, Bertwell *
Poindexter, Clifford
Poindexter, George
Poindexter, Margaret
Powell, Helen
Purdy, Dorothy
Raisin, Clara *

Raisin, Horace *
Rawleigh, Ella Mae *
Reid, Richard *
Skinner, William
Smith, Bertha
Smith, Chandler, Jr.
Smith, Lester, Jr.
Sterling, Bernice Johnson
Sutton, James *
Taylor, Earl
Taylor, Garfield *
Taylor, Isa
Taylor, Pauline
Taylor, Reba *
Taylor, Spencer
Thomas, Barbara Harris *
Thomas, Edna
Thomas, Joseph, Jr.
Threadgill, Berna
Tillman, Charles *
Tinnin, Victoria
Washington, Hestine
Washington, Lula
Washington, John
Washington, William *
Watters, Gwendolyn
Watters, Isiah
Williams, Cornelius *
Williams, Emanuel *
Williams, George
Williams, Irvin *
Williams, Prince *
Williams, Ronald
Williams, Theodore *
Williams, Thomas *
Wilmore, Rachel
Wilson, Alice *
Woodard, Beatrice

* Deceased

HOCKESSIN COLORED SCHOOL #107C

Segregation was defeated in Delaware at this school, Hockessin School 107C on Mill Creek Road in **Hockessin**.



1941



Today

Until 1952, public education in Delaware was strictly segregated. Since the late 19th century, property taxes paid by whites in Delaware had funded whites-only schools, while property taxes paid by blacks funded blacks-only schools. In the 1910's, P.S. duPont had financed the construction of schools for black children throughout Delaware, and effectively shamed the Legislature into providing better school facilities for whites as well. There was only high school for black children in the entire state - Howard High School. Persistent income disparities between blacks and whites insured persistent inequalities in public education.

In 1950 the Bulah family had a vegetable stand at the corner of Valley Road and Limestone Road, and Shirley Bulah attended Hockessin Colored Elementary School 107, which had no bus service. The bus to Hockessin School 29, the white school, went right past the Bulah farm, and the Bulahs merely asked if Shirley could ride the bus to her own school. But Delaware law prohibited black and white children on the same school bus.

Shirley's mother Sarah Bulah contacted Wilmington lawyer Louis Redding, who had recently won the *Parker v. University of Delaware* case forcing the University to admit blacks. In 1950, the Wilmington chapter of the NAACP had launched an effort to get black parents in and around Wilmington to register their children in white schools, but the children were turned away. Redding chose the Bulahs as plaintiffs in one of two test cases, and convinced Sarah Bulah to sue in Delaware's Chancery Court for Shirley's right to attend the white school (*Bulah v. Gebhart*). Parents of eight black children from Claymont filed a parallel suit (*Belton v. Gebhart*). The complaints argued that the school system violated the "separate but equal" clause in Delaware's Constitution (taken from *Plessy v. Ferguson*) because the white and black schools clearly were not equal.

Redding knew that a court venue on the Mason-Dixon Line, with its local legacies of slavery and abolitionism, would be most likely to support integration. He argued the cases *pro bono* and the Wilmington NAACP paid the court costs. In 1952, Judge Collins Seitz found that the plaintiffs' black schools were not equal to the white schools, and ordered the white schools to admit the plaintiff children. The *Bulah v. Gebhart* decision did not challenge the "separate but equal" doctrine directly, but it was the first time an American court found racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. The state appealed Seitz's decision to the Delaware Supreme Court, where it was upheld. The state's appeal to the US Supreme Court was consolidated into the *Brown v. Board* case, which also upheld the decision.

Hockessin Community Center

Founding and Early History Chronology

Kenneth L. Berry

On June 9, I called a meeting in the meeting house to discuss the proposal among members of Chippey Chapel A.U.M.P. church and Quakers. Present were: the Reverend E. T. Cannon, Louis Cornish, Edward and Margaret Poindexter, Dorothy Copper, Mary Woolfolk, Minnie Johnson, Eliza and Dorsey Peterson, Wendell Aldred, Sarah Harvey, Eleanor Marshall, Marguerite and Ken Berry. (Exhibit B)

It was decided:

1. To attempt to acquire the property for a Community Center.
2. The Quakers committed \$546.51 available income from the 1952 bequest of J. Warren Marshall to be used for the Negro community. (This grew to over \$712.00 at settlement). Chippey was asked to contribute whatever they could which was several hundred dollars.
3. A community-wide fund drive would be made in November - December. (Exhibit C). The tax exempt status of Chippey could be used. They netted approximately \$2,800.00. Major contributors were: Bertha T. Marshall, Eleanor Marshall, and State Senator Robert N. Downs. (\$500.00) On July 6, (Exhibit C) I talked with Fletch Walker, now President of A. I. Board and learned that they planned to sell 107C at public auction on September 30. I called attorney Carroll Poole to ask for assistance on legal matters. He eagerly agreed to help and subsequently:
 1. Searched the title.
 2. Determined from Dr. Thomas Howe, A. I. Superintendent, the minimum acceptable bid at \$5,000.00 and made the bid successfully at auction. It was the only bid.

Hockessin Community Center

Founding and Early History Chronology

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CHAPTER 1.

1952 By state law all Delaware public schools were racial segregated and under supervision of the Department of Public Instruction, Dr. Howe, Superintendent.

The Bula family, of Hockessin, with attorney Louis L. Redding, sued the department to have their daughter admitted to Hockessin Elementary School instead of attending the all-grades-in-one-room, 107C, (C for Colored) school on Mill Creek Road.

After all Delaware Courts rejected the suit, it was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court as part of a class action.

1954 The U.S. Supreme Court rendered the famous decision which struck down the "separate-but-equal" policy and integration of Hockessin Elementary School began with transfer of first grade from 107C.

1959 The one grade per year transfer of 107C to Hockessin was completed. Meanwhile the Hockessin Elementary School under the leadership of Board President, Dr. I. Fletcher Walker had consolidated with the encompassing Alexis I. duPont secondary school district. The 107C school was now vacant. In June, Mrs. Lillian C. Mitchell, a property owner and mortgagor in the 107C district, asked Dr. Howe the fate of 107C property comprising the 1-room brick building on approximately 5 acres, Dr. R. L. Herbst replied (exhibit A) that it would be turned over to A. I. district. Mrs. Mitchell handed the letter to me at Hockessin Friends Meeting with the suggestion that we do something about it. I proposed that we acquire for a community center and she agreed.

Hockessin Community Center

Founding and Early History Chronology

Kenneth L. Berry

3. Represented us at final settlement.
4. Assisted preparation of Constitution and By-Laws.
5. Prepared and filed certificate of incorporation. (Exhibits) All Free! as highly valued community service.

1960 On February 23, settlement on the property was made. A mortgage of \$2,200.00 was obtained and paid off completely in 1966.

1967 Incorporated.

1976 The property was leased to the New Castle County Department of Community Development and Housing under the direction of James H. Gilliam, Sr., for the purpose of making much needed repairs, renovation and improvements. Community and County support and State grant-in-aid made possible the employment of a director and assistant who landed many additional programs.

Newsletter of the Delaware Heritage Commission

Summer 2004

TWO NEW MARKERS TO COMMEMORATE BROWN

The Commission continues to support the efforts of our sister agency in the Department of State, the Delaware Public Archives. Working together, two new State historical markers were unveiled on May 17, the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board*. The first marker was unveiled in Hockessin. Later in the day a marker was unveiled in Wilmington in front of the New Castle County Courthouse. The text of the markers follows:

HOCKESSIN SCHOOL #107C

Also known as the Hockessin Colored School, this building was constructed in 1920 to serve the needs of the community's African American students. Funding for construction was provided by the Delaware School Auxiliary Association and its primary supporter P.S. duPont. Unlike white students, African American students in the community were not provided transportation to their school. After unsuccessfully attempting to convince officials to provide this service Mrs. Sarah Bulah sought the assistance of attorney Louis L. Redding, who filed suit on behalf of her daughter Shirley. The case was formally known as *Bulah v. Gebhart*. It was subsequently combined with a similar suit that had been filed on behalf of students in Claymont. On April 1, 1952, Delaware Chancellor Collins J. Seitz issued a decision declaring that the disparity between the white and African American schools was in violation of the United States Constitution. The ruling was later appealed to the United States Supreme Court where it was joined with others to become *Brown v. Board of Education*. On May 17, 1954, the court issued its historic decision declaring segregation in schools to be unlawful. Hockessin School #107C was closed in 1959. It was later converted for use as the Hockessin Community Center.

BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION

Delaware remained a racially segregated society until the mid-twentieth century. Though the segregation of public schools was supported by the doctrine of "separate but equal," the facilities and services provided for whites and African-Americans were hardly equal. Seeking to address this situation, citizens in the communities of Claymont and Hockessin solicited the counsel of Louis L. Redding, the state's first African-American attorney. In 1951, with the assistance of attorney Jack Greenberg, Mr. Redding brought suit against the State Board of Education in the Delaware Court of Chancery. Formally known as *Belton v. Gebhart* and *Bulah v. Gebhart*, the cases were combined. Redding argued that laws requiring schools to be segregated by race denied the African-American students their constitutional right to the equal protection of the law. The chief judge of the Court of Chancery, Collins J. Seitz, agreed, finding that segregation was inherently harmful to the students, and therefore unconstitutional. Integration of affected schools was ordered. The Chancellor's opinion was the first clear victory for opponents of segregation in an American court. The ruling was subsequently appealed and heard by the United States Supreme Court as part of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. On May 17, 1954, the court adopted the reasoning of Redding and Seitz in a decision that effectively ended the segregation of public schools throughout the nation.