



Howard High School



Hockessin Colored School #107C

**DuPont Colored Schools
Oral History Project**



Delaware State College
High School

**Colored Schools
in this Report**



Thomas D Clayton
School



Rabbit's Ferry School #201C



Richard Allen School

DuPont Colored Schools Oral History Project

Final Report

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DEDICATION

This oral history project is gratefully dedicated to all the former students of DuPont Colored Schools in Delaware who willingly gave of their time and memorabilia to help tell the story of a bygone era of forced school segregation that impacted the lives of so many. We would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who assisted in the acquisition of those meaningful and tell-tale interviews.

A special thank you is due to all who helped in the establishment of the project, the administering of the project, and the coordination of the project.

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FOREWORD

The history of education for African Americans in Delaware dates to the colonial period. Churches took the early lead in the education of African Americans both free and enslaved despite resistance among whites in Delaware. Whites thought this would lead to a rebellious population among a group of people who would believe themselves equal to them if educated. At one point, African American and white students attended some integrated public schools until passage of the 1829 New School Law. This law taxed Delawareans who owned property to support their schools. Many African Americans did not own property. Thus, segregation of schools was *de facto* at that time.

However, in 1897, the Delaware Constitution codified into law a segregated school systems for white and African American students. Thereby changing a *de facto* segregated system to a *de jure* segregated system. In 1935, the law was amended which provided for segregated schools for Native Americans as well. Still, none of this legislation led to equalized funding for the schools until P.S. du Pont became a member of the Delaware State School Board. While in public service, P.S. du Pont enforced the equalization funding laws in the state and forced corporations and others to pay their fair share. As a result, African American schools received one penny more per capita than did the white schools by 1935.

It is the focus of this study to conduct interviews of former students at DuPont Schools and to gather other research materials for a more in-depth understanding of African American experiences under “Jim Crow” segregated public education. The interviews conducted for this study revealed common themes that characterize much of the school experiences for African American students throughout Delaware. Still, the experiences varied depending upon which part of the state students attended. Students in New Castle County above the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal faced racism and discrimination, but not as severe as in southern Kent County and in Sussex County. Throughout the history of education for African Americans, teachers faced threats of violence. In the late 1860s soon after a construction of a school in Slaughter Neck located in Sussex County, a group of whites burned down the school prompting an investigation from the Freedmen’s Bureau. Demonstrating resistance to oppression and resilience, members of the community quickly rebuilt the school. When integration was challenged in Milford in 1954, the African American students who were admitted to the all-white high school there were expelled after a white boycott led by Bryan Bowles who founded the National Association for White People. Threats of violence to the African American community resulted in the community being plastered with anti-Semitic and racist literature. The international press especially from the Soviet Union covered the incident. It prompted Vice President Richard M. Nixon to plead with the white people in Milford to end the boycott and poor treatment of African Americans claiming this was fodder for the Communist propaganda machine.

Even in athletic competitions, there was more acceptance of integrated teams and competition against the segregated Howard High School that African Americans attended in New Castle County above the C&D Canal than in the rest of the county or in Kent and Sussex Counties. Segregation led to isolation for Dover, which had successfully begun integration soon after *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954. Schools in Sussex and Kent Counties forfeited and broke contracts to play Dover High School. The teams could only play teams in New Castle

County that did not object to integration. To the interviewees in this study, athletic competition did provide material evidence that the African American students attending Howard High School were faring as well as, if not better than their counterparts in white schools and integrated white schools.

Inferior facilities and equipment characterized the African American schools that led to challenges in Hockessin and Claymont in 1952. The essence of the school integration cases in Hockessin Colored School #107C, Claymont School, and Howard High School revolved around unequal school facilities, equipment, teacher to student ratios, salaries, teacher preparation, curricula, and transportation to and from school. Yet, in athletic competitions and in overall learning, African American students performed well and even better despite the inequities and the racism that surrounded them. Their resilience and fortitude were remarkable given the obstacles that they had to overcome. They generally defeated the teams that they played. The interviews clearly show that this gave them a sense of pride and verification they were doing well despite “Jim Crow” segregation.

The cases that led to the end of “Jim Crow” segregation in Delaware public schools were *Bulah v. Gebhart* and *Belton v. Gebhart*, 1952. In both cases, the courts in Delaware ordered immediate integration of Hockessin School #29 and Claymont High Schools. The State of Delaware appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and that case was folded into *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954. The result was the end of state sanctioned segregation in public schools in Delaware.

Common to the African American student experience in segregated schools was the emphasis on cultural pride and awareness. Each student was taught what they needed to know to be successful in their current social environment. Learning the song “*Lift Every Voice and Sing*,” or the *Negro National Anthem*, was a point of pride at that time and to this day. The significance of the words and the pride felt while singing it was a motivation for those students to become all that they could be. This was symbolic to their overall positive experience in school despite the inequities and setbacks from white people keeping them from achieving a meaningful education. It is remarkable that parents with the least education, understood the importance of a quality education for their children. It was the key to ultimate equality—economically, politically, and socially.

To conclude, this report is revealing through firsthand experiences representing the essence of the African American experience during the “Jim Crow” era in Delaware. It does so through people who lived and experienced segregation and discrimination in their daily lives. They faced it and dealt with it in their individual ways. In the end, they emerged as productive citizens from their communities with the support of caring and nurturing teachers and administrators who provided a safe school environment from the daily grind of “Jim Crow” state-sponsored segregation. It was an environment in which teachers of color believed in their students and knew that through study and hard work that they could succeed. This theme was common throughout Delaware. Those teachers believed that a quality and equal education was essential to students of Color in Delaware. It was a pleasure being a part of this important study.

PREFACE

Delaware is a state steeped in history. But whose history? What places define our history? What voices from the past comprise our history? Too often, in years gone by, whole swaths of our citizens have been left out of our shared stories. Preservation Delaware is determined to give a voice to those underrepresented in Delaware's history. We have found a partner in this effort in Timothy A. Slavin, Delaware's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), who assisted in securing funds for this project through the National Park Service (NPS). This project of oral histories associated with the DuPont Colored Schools is literally an effort to give voice to those often-overlooked stories in Delaware history. It struck me some months ago that the opportunity to hear the stories from those who attended DuPont Colored Schools were passing away, which gave a sense of urgency to this project.

Dr. Abdullah R. Muhammad and his collaborators, Dr. Bradley Skelcher and C. Dan Parsons, along with a handful of energetic interns, led this groundbreaking project. Backed by Preservation Delaware's African American Task Force, they designed and carried out a project to preserve the voices of those who attended and taught at the DuPont Colored Schools. In this same timeframe, the University of Delaware's Center for Historic Architecture and Design (CHAD), is pursuing a study which will examine every existing and past building comprising the DuPont Schools. That study is expected to conclude at the end of 2021. These parallel projects represented the first all-encompassing effort to document both the buildings and the people associated with DuPont Colored schools. While the work accomplished so far and represented in this report is significant, there is much more to be done. Preservation Delaware hopes to continue and expand on this project in the future.

In this report, you will get a glimpse into a part of Delaware's history that was such a key part of the development of Delaware but is known by so few. I trust that in this report we have shared a slice of that history, the voices of Delaware's past, and have allowed you to see up close and personal the experiences of the individuals who attended DuPont Colored Schools. As a result, we have gained an insight into the communities and schools that shaped so many African American and Native American lives.

These shared stories of our past, our history, in Delaware must be inclusive. I hope that this report on our project's work begins to move all of us in that direction. Please listen carefully to these voices from the past. They tell us of a history that we all share as Delawareans. As we listen to these voices, our shared history becomes more complete. When new light reveals more of our history, we all benefit. Our history, represented in our buildings from the past as well as the voices from the past, inform and enrich our present day. But perhaps even more importantly, these shared stories can guide us to a more inclusive, just, and complete Delaware. We who represent Preservation Delaware hope that our future work in Delaware will be shaped by the culturally diverse and shared stories of our past.

I. Introduction

This DuPont Colored Schools Oral History Project is the result of several months of a concerted team effort of the African American Cultural Resources Task Force (AATF) that was conceived and formed by Dr. Abdullah R. Muhammad in March 2020. The formation of AATF under the auspices of Preservation Delaware, Inc. created an opportunity to examine African American historical sites and places and bring them to the attention of the public. The first meeting of the AATF on April 29, 2020, set the parameters for on-going discussions to follow. Our discussions uncovered two prominent features of African American culture in Delaware—African American churches and schools. Of the two, we all agreed that African American schools played a prominent role in our state and in our nation’s history due to the connection to the landmark Supreme Court decision of 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*.

With that in mind, and considering the social climate prior to 1954, we turned our attention to the most conspicuous of African American schools in our state—the DuPont Colored Schools. Not only were the 80 DuPont Colored Schools that were built or significantly renovated in the 1920’s an overwhelming change in African American education in this state, but also they succored substantial social and economic improvements for African American communities throughout Delaware. Nothing has added to the betterment of a community like an improved educational opportunity! History has shown time and again that education is the great equalizer for those seeking equality and equal rights. With this social construct as our guide and a good working relationship with the State Historic Preservation Officers, we were able to find our footing and establish a base from which to move forward. Working from this base, we agreed to pursue a project to document the history, the people, and the stories of former students of DuPont Colored Schools before they were lost to the vastitude of time.

In addition to the good fortune of timing and placement, we benefitted from the professional assistance of PDI’s Executive Director, Jay McCutcheon, who helped arrange our access to Zoom.com for video interviews and Rev.com for digital transcriptions. Many thanks also for assisting with meetings, PDI documents, and feedback regarding ongoing work efforts.

Finally, for historical accuracy, the term “Colored” is used throughout this report with no deliberate attempt to use it as a substitute for African American or Native American. It was a general term used to identify schools and/or institutions for non-white Americans.

II. Purpose and Goal of Project

This project represents, what we hope is Phase 1 of an overall multi-year project being undertaken by AATF under the aegis of Preservation Delaware, Inc. (PDI). The purpose and goal of this project were to collect oral histories from former students, teachers, and other members of the DuPont Colored School community. Those oral histories were collected from a random pool of individuals connected to the alumni associations or community groups of selected DuPont Colored Schools from all three counties in Delaware. Due to the severity of the coronavirus pandemic, we found it necessary to use an online approach in conducting our interviews, by utilizing popular online platforms such as Zoom.com, FreeConferenceCall.com, and Rev.com. All interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis using a standardized list of

open-ended questions. These questions formed the basis for obtaining useful information, but they allowed participants room to expound on their experiences and recollections.

Additionally, we collected photographic and written materials—journals, diaries, letters, posters, local newspaper articles, etc.—related to the respective schools and the lives of the people who attended those schools. This work is intended to complement and link with the survey work being completed by the University of Delaware’s Center for Historic Architecture and Design (CHAD), documenting both existing school buildings (in whatever form) and those places where schools once stood, with the communities and the histories that are part of each school.

While our project is faced with the immediacy of mortal demise of potential informants, the CHAD effort is faced with the structural demise of those few remaining DuPont Colored School buildings that have long been neglected and/or poorly maintained. For these and other reasons, the project has been approached with a clear sense of urgency due to the aging factor of the people to be interviewed and their potential memory loss. We are convinced of the imperative need to collect these personal histories and long held memorabilia before time robs us of the opportunity.

When this project was undertaken, AATF identified 20 DuPont Colored Schools that were eligible candidates for collection of oral histories representative of major African American communities located in key areas around Delaware. A limited budget and time constraints meant considering a much smaller initial pool of schools. We decided to select six schools (two from each county) and collect six interviews from each school. After only a couple of months into the project when it was evident that securing six interviews from six schools was more than we could achieve with the initial delay in proper staffing and an initial hesitancy among potential informants, we reduced the number of interviews per school to four.

During the month of February 2021, we discovered that several interviewees had attended more than one of the six selected DuPont Colored Schools included in the Project. Therefore, we took advantage of that fact and conducted the interview to purposefully collect testimony about both schools. What we found were informants who had attended a DuPont Colored grade school (generally, a school from 1st-6th grade or 1st-8th grade) and then a DuPont Colored high school—Howard High School or Delaware State College High School. This information became a significant game changer for moving forward with the Project. It enabled us to secure more interviews from fewer people.

From a list of 45 potential informants, we successfully interviewed 26 individuals with a total of 33 interviews. Of the 26 individuals interviewed, all were former students, 10 of them had become teachers; however, none of the teachers taught at any of the six schools we had selected for this project, and none of the 26 were community members from the DuPont Colored School communities we had targeted. Nevertheless, with additional funding and time, we can tackle the 14 remaining eligible schools that were initially identified for this oral history project, plus increase our interview list to six interviews per school rather than four.

III. Project Design and Execution

As the Project took shape, it became apparent that those standard forms and templates available from other programs and projects of this nature were not so standardized, nor were they

generic for the scope of this project. After we recognized the uniqueness of this oral history project, it was evident that it would require drafting and tailoring forms to fit the scope of what needed to be done. The initial task was advertising for and setting criteria for selecting two parttime student interns.

A. Hiring process for student interns

The search for two parttime student interns included contacting professors in History, Anthropology, and Preservation at Delaware State University (DSU) and the University of Delaware (UD). Those professors circulated our inquiry within the departments and posted on Facebook. Respondents who met our hiring guidelines were interviewed and over the course of the project, a few students were selected to join our project team.

B. Establishing volunteer support staff

Organizing activities for the Project were happening simultaneously since all were connected. In fact, volunteers were being recruited simultaneously with the drafting of the proposal for the project. Initiation of the project required individuals to help with the training of interns and the gathering of interviews. To that point, we were extremely fortunate to have two well-qualified professionals to assist with both the training and the interviews: Dr. Bradley Skelcher, who literally wrote the book on the history of education in Delaware¹, and C. Daniel “Dan” Parsons, a professional oral historian and Historic Preservation Planner with Sussex County government. These two individuals became our most dependable and consistent volunteers throughout the Project. Along the way, we were able to garner the support and assistance of several members from the AATF, as well as a few from the PDI Board of Trustees.

Nearly all the support the Project received from Task Force and Board members was task oriented. Some assisted with suggestions for selection of our target schools, many assisted with drafting and framing the questions for the interviews, a small number aided in finding willing participants who attended our target schools, while others provided helpful suggestions. Most importantly, those colleagues provided us with the necessary moral and positive support that was needed to weather trying times and formidable challenges presented by the pandemic. Through it all, if not for the reliable and consistent help and support from Michael McGrath, Dr. Bradley Skelcher, Dan Parsons, and Jay McCutcheon the Project would have suffered some serious setbacks.

C. Oral history project themes

A significant contributing factor that helped this project establish itself and stay on course were the regular monthly meetings of the AATF. At these regularly held meetings, there were updates, assistance, queries to members for their opinions and guidance, and a shared

¹Skelcher, Bradley A. *African American Education in Delaware: A History through Photographs, 1865-1940*. Wilmington: Delaware Heritage Press, 2006.

responsibility for the success of the Project. It was during the September 2020 meeting that the question was raised regarding the themes for the Project in support of the questions to be used for interviews. Three proposed themes based on the goals and deliverables were shared with the group. The three themes are:

1. Daily routines of a student's life at a DuPont Colored School,
2. The relationship between school and community,
3. A comparative examination of attending segregated DuPont Schools versus later integrated schools.

When these themes were shared with the Task Force, the majority response accepted those themes as presented. Two feedbacks that were received suggested we add more details about what was taught to students and what subjects received the most attention, and what was taught in their social studies/history classes that focused on African American history. As a group, it was agreed that both those concerns could be covered under the theme of "daily routines of a student's life at a DuPont Colored School." It was further stated that those concerns should not be the focus of specific interview questions.

D. Drafting interview questions

It was clearly understood by the Task Force that synthesizing the interview questions was a key component to the success of the Project. Each member was challenged to draft a list of standard questions that the group could evaluate and compile into an effective list of questions able to expound upon the three themes. A subcommittee comprised of 12 of the active 16 members agreed to evaluate and compile the questions.

After meeting for a few weeks, the subcommittee drafted a total of 65 standard open-ended questions under 3 categories—students, teachers, and community members—and successfully combined many into one multi-line question, while others were eliminated based on redundancy. Our final product consisted of an interviewer's introduction, 26 student questions, 16 teacher questions, and 5 community member questions for a total of 47 open-ended questions. It is important to note that when these questions were being drafted, we expected to interview former students, former teachers, and community members of DuPont Colored Schools. We were able to interview the students and teachers; however, all the community members we were hoping to interview were no longer living. (List of questions in Appendix J.)

E. Selection of technologies

Another task was the selection of audio and video online recording platforms. It proved a challenge to adopt online interviewing methods. What was not a challenge was the ease of sending recordings to interviewees, as well as the ease of making, reviewing, and editing digitized transcripts of the recordings.

A very timely 2-day workshop, *Introduction to Oral History*, presented by the Oral History Association (OHA) of Middle Tennessee State University, helped fill in a lot of blanks and provided many answers to questions about completing oral history interviews online. Having that information for online oral history interviews was extremely timely, considering the

adverse conditions of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic². In addition, the course presented detailed descriptions of the most affordable types of online recording platforms (audio and video) that provided the best recording clarity and the best transcription services. Based on the recommendations from this workshop, it was decided to use Zoom.com for video recordings and FreeConferenceCall.com for audio (phone recordings) with the option to video record. Fortunately, the frequent use of these online platforms (especially Zoom.com) by the public and many companies and organizations helped provide a familiarity with this technology for our target participants.

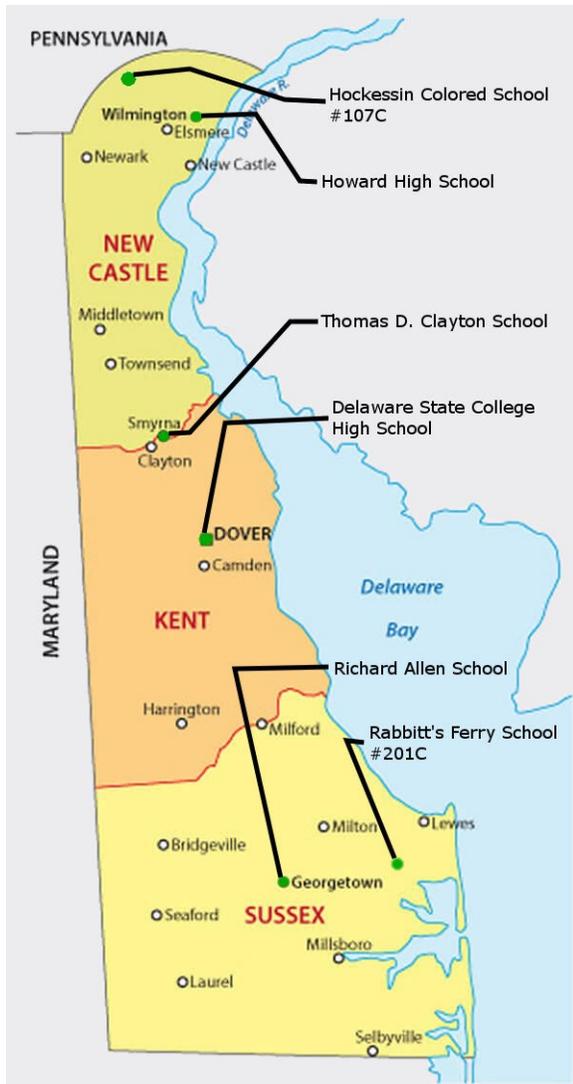
F. Selection of DuPont Colored Schools

As part of our second milestone for the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs (HCA), and a necessary step in assigning our newly hired interns to their target schools, we had to select six of the 20 eligible² DuPont Colored Schools for the Project. We adopted stringent criteria to reduce the pool of eligible schools from 20 to six (6). In a small group discussion of five (5) Task Force members with knowledge of DuPont Colored Schools, we established a 5-point criteria for school selection.

1. Is the original school building still architecturally sound and in current use?
2. Is the building being used as a school, museum, or community center?
3. Does the school have an active and interested school or community group?
4. Has the history of the school impacted Delaware history?
5. Does the school have available former students, teachers, or community members able to share their memories of the school?

The six schools selected were: Howard High School and Hockessin Colored School #107C (New Castle County); Delaware State College High School and Thomas D. Clayton School (Kent County), Rabbit's Ferry School #201C and Richard Allen School (Sussex County). Here are the six (6) schools shown on the map of Delaware.

²**Corvid-19** – A new severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in late 2019, is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. This infectious and communicable disease became one of the major public health challenges in the world. The clinical management of COVID-19 has been limited to infection prevention and control measures associated with supportive care such as the wearing of masks, social distancing, supplemental oxygen, and mechanical ventilation. At the start of this project, there was no effective treatment for the virus; however, an effective Pfizer vaccine was approved for treatment in January 2021, followed by other vaccines from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.



G. Design of forms

While it was thought there would be templates available for the recordkeeping and formatting needed to complete the work of this Project, there were few and even those needed modifying. This circumstance was primarily due to the unique multi-location feature of the Project, the distinctive manner used to collect the oral histories, and the nearly exclusive online method of communicating with project participants. Ultimately, everything from timesheets to transcript summary forms were newly designed. Having to design all the forms needed for this project makes it a model for future multi-location oral history projects. The forms that were designed:

1. Rubric for selecting student interns.
2. Timesheet

3. Criteria for selecting qualifying DuPont Colored Schools
4. Weekly and monthly report forms for student interns
5. DuPont Colored School Participant spreadsheet
6. Interview summary forms
7. Guidelines for editing transcripts

H. Training interns

As stated earlier in this report, training was mandatory for all student interns. Training consisted of three main topic areas: 1) introduction and review of the history of education in Delaware, 2) introduction to oral history, and 3) the techniques for completing an oral history interview. The mandatory training period entailed three 4-hour days of virtual classes consisting of lectures, videos, PowerPoint presentations, written exercises, and role-playing. There were 5 instructors—Project Director, Dr. Abdullah R. Muhammad, Dr. Bradley Skelcher, Dan Parsons, Flavia Rutkosky, and Alfred “Dave” Tuttle—each presented one segment of the training syllabus, and all participated in the role-playing involving sample interviews.

The basic training was supplemented by several Zoom mini-training sessions focused on specific work-related areas. Several phone conference workshops were conducted as needed and weekly meetings with interns were scheduled during the latter half of the Project. These training methods proved to be the most effective, along with periodic written exercises to review key learning content.

IV. Oral History Interviews

*Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.*⁵

A. The interview process

The interview process consisted of three primary steps:

1. Contact a potential participant for the Project either by phone or email and ascertain their interest and eligibility in being interviewed.
2. Next, conduct a pre-interview to confirm eligibility and to schedule a date, time, and platform for conducting the interview. (See Appendix for list of pre-interview questions.)
3. Email or mail the scheduled date, time, and platform for the interview; the list of questions, and a Consent Form to be completed, signed, and returned.

On the day of the interview at least 30 minutes prior to the interview, the interviewees were either called, texted, or emailed to remind them of the interview. If no response was received 15 minutes before the scheduled interview, a phone call was made to confirm the interview. At the time of the interview, informants were reminded to complete, sign, and return the Consent Form,

if they had not done so. Also, they were asked if they were willing to participate in the interview.

In addition to the recorded audio or video recording, each recording link was sent to Rev.com for transcription. The transcription was used to write a 2-page summary of the interview. One of the most difficult aspects of this Project has been the completion of the 2-page summaries. Collaboration with Dr. Thomas A. Guiler, Assistant Professor of History and Public Humanities at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, who was conducting a class on African American History at the University of Delaware, was a tremendous asset to the Project, especially the completion of the summaries. Dr. Guiler volunteered himself, as well as his entire oral history class at UD, that enabled us to complete several summaries. Some early summaries that had been completed were rewritten to conform to the uniform format. Those assisting in the completion of the summaries, in addition to Dr. Guiler and his class, were Dr. Muhammad, Dr. Skelcher, Dan Parsons, the interns—Ranita Ganguly and Justin Alexander, and a Delaware Historical Society parttime employee—Carolanne Deal.

The first oral history interview was with Dr. Reba Ross Hollingsworth, a Task Force member and former student of several DuPont Colored Schools. She was interviewed as a former student and as a former teacher. Dr. Hollingsworth, like 9 other interviewees, was asked about her teaching experience in segregated DuPont Colored schools. However, neither her teaching experience, nor that of the other teachers interviewed, occurred at one of the schools selected for this Project. Several of the teachers taught at DuPont Schools, as well as other segregated Colored Schools, which is included in their summaries. However, the decision was made to include only those interviewees with experience at one of the Project's selected schools.

B. What Made for a Great Interview?

Every oral historian or interviewer lives for that moment when the interviewee gives in-depth answers to questions which provide a fuller view of the mental picture the interviewer is trying to capture. Nevertheless, it is ultimately the job of the interviewer to understand when they don't have a complete narrative. When that is the case, they must ask follow-up questions, probe further to uncover those nuggets of valued information, fill in the blanks of a by-gone era needing to be told. Opportunities to obtain additional details were missed in some interviews.

Informants were often willing to give more details, but they were sometimes stopped short of expanding on answers by interviewers adhering strictly to the scripted interview format. The need to follow the flow of questions sometimes took precedence over the fuller story of school life. This hesitancy was due to a lack of background information on the schools and the school communities.

So, what made for a great interview for this project? Former students with great memories, a passion for the school community they were once a part of, and a willingness to share those fond memories of their accomplishments and memorable moments. Several of our participants were not willing to share much information until we asked about their teachers or about the activities they remembered most while attending their school. In some cases, mentioning the names of former classmates or other alumni of their school opened a doorway into more memories that had been hidden away.

Several great interviews involved memorable cases from Howard High School alumni who were members of the same graduating class or within a few years of each other. The catalyst for those cases began with the interview of retired principal Maurice Pritchett, who single-handedly provided the names of nearly all the interviews we conducted for Howard High. He is one of those active alumni who has the “inside track” on several outstanding graduates of Howard High. He was not only familiar with his contemporaries, but also those who graduated long before him. Even more importantly, he knew how to contact those he referred. Referrals always made for a great interview! Why? Because it let us know that the individual was pleased to be interviewed and wanted others whom he admired and respected to have that same opportunity.

C. The Interviews

The best way to present some of the interviews we captured is to review them by school. By presenting the schools in alphabetical order, the focus remains on the schools and their former students. Every interview will not be presented in this section; however, several which are representative of others will be. Of the six schools selected, we will begin with Howard High School, the oldest high school for African Americans in the state of Delaware. It was built as a small, five-room building in 1867,⁴ at a different location from the present school. Until 1922, Howard was the only high school in Delaware for colored students.

Hockessin Colored School #107C



Hockessin Colored School #107C was a one-room, one and a half story brick building with an entrance hallway, a coatroom, and a room for the stove that heated the building. (Courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives)

Hockessin Colored School #107C represented what was typical of a non-urban DuPont Colored elementary school. What was atypical of this school was its national status as one of the successful cases for school integration, and one of the five cases decided by the Supreme Court in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954. Our informants from this school included not only neighbors of the well-known Shirley Bulah, the student who was denied school bus privileges on a bus that passed her house every day, but also Shirley’s adopted sister, Hilda.

Hilda stated in her interview that her step-grandmother, Sarah Bulah, “really wanted transportation for the girl [Shirley] to go to school. That lawyer Redding said, “No, that's not what we want. We want them to be able to go to school together, I guess. And they get the education that the whites were getting in the elementary schools and have the same kind of schools and not segregate the children.” She added that her step-grandmother and some of the other neighbors did not like the idea that all their children after 6th grade and as far away as Middletown and Delaware City had to go to Howard. She stated, “We had to go to Howard, the ones down in Middletown and Delaware City and all, they had to be bused to Howard because they were not allowed to go to the white high schools.”

But according to Mr. Knott (91 years old), many of Mrs. Bulah’s neighbors were not supportive or in favor of her legal battle with the school district. He said bluntly, “That lady caught the devil, from both sides [blacks and whites]!” He went on to say:

“Don't forget, now, this is back in the early 1950s, this is back then. And a lot of people of color had a lot of fear embedded in them, okay! So, they had this stigma of, ‘We're all getting along, why are you starting trouble?’ Because they were comfortable with the way we were living. And I even had my parents tell me, ‘You can't do what they do, because you're not white.’ So, they accepted it. But Mrs. Bulah, all she wanted was for that bus to stop, pick her child up, and it went right past 107 school.”

After Lawyer Redding successfully argued the case (*Bulah v. Gebhart*) and won the right to have Colored students in that school district attend the white schools, it signaled the end to School #107C. By 1959, only 5 years after the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision, Hockessin Colored School #107C closed its doors.

Before its closure, due to dwindling enrollment and reallocation of resources, #107 was considered “the best one-teacher school ever built.” This is according to Dr. Joseph H. Odell³, the head of the organization through which Pierre S. DuPont worked. At the school’s dedication, he further stated that School #107 “compared well with contemporary white schools, such as the #33 Brandywine Springs School, and is better than pretty much any of the older white schools.” That may have been the opinion of the white establishment at that time; however, that’s only half the story if you listen or read what interviewees had to say.

The most oft-repeated complaint from that group was the old, used books they were forced to read and study from. Sonny Knott, who was very vocal on the matter, made these comments in his interview:

“I would read page three and turn to four, and I wouldn't have it. Because you see, we never got new books. We got old books from the white school up on the hill. And by the time we got it, there were names in that book.”

When he was asked how it made him feel to always have used books, he gave this observation:

“You know, it didn't affect us, because we didn't know that much about racism. We didn't know. We played all day with the white kids. White kids right next door to me, and I was in and out of their house, and they were in and out of mine. And it was just a way of life. Your parents told you that, “Well, son, that's the way things are.” So, I never gave it a thought.”

When Hilda Bulah Morris was interviewed, she stated plainly and bluntly about getting old books. She said, “We had the same curriculum that they had in the white schools, but they would

“Hockessin Colored School #107C,” The Mill Creek Hundred History Blog; May 17, 2012, <http://mchhistory.blogspot.com/2012/05/hockessin-colored-school-107c.html>

send us all their old books. We never got a new book!" When the interviewer seemed amazed that she never received new books, she added:

"No, we got hand-me-downs until some of the teachers would not accept them because they were written in, pages torn out of them and what have you, and they wouldn't accept them. So that's the only way we got a new book and then only a few of us got the new books."

Naturally, being in a one-room school with one teacher, you would remember your teacher. As expected, they all had the same teacher, and they did remember her name; however, only one remembered how she spelled her name, Mrs. Beaujon. Jean Fleming was the only one from the group who remembered how she spelled and pronounced her name. She mused that the kids would call her Boejon. Jean got to know her teacher well, because she lived only a short distance across from the school and always waited for the teacher to arrive before going to school. Jean said it this way, *"Never late, that's right. I'd see the teacher coming because she came from Wilmington, she lived on Clayton Street. And she would come in the car, and when we saw the car, then I'd run over to school."* Those in the group confirmed that Mrs. Beaujon was the only teacher for the school for at least 30 or 40 years until her sister came as a second teacher in the late 40s.

Howard High School



Howard High School was rebuilt in 1927 by P.S. du Pont and it was touted as "a new magnificent school for colored pupils." The school is named for General Oliver Otis Howard, who headed the Freedmen's Bureau after the Civil War. Howard High also played a key role in the Gebhart v. Belton case, one of five cases of the Brown v. Bd of Education. The case in Delaware involved Claymont parents suing to have their children attend the nearby Claymont High School, rather than being bused 10 miles to Howard High.³ (picture courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)

⁴"History of Howard High School, Wilmington, Delaware [Video Documentary]," in Children and Youth in History, Item #260, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/items/show/260> (accessed August 12, 2021). Annotated by Kelly Schrum and Susan Douglass.

Howard High School was a *state-of-the-art* school. It was beautiful, spacious, and well-equipped. It housed regular classrooms and vocational training facilities, a library, and an auditorium. Howard High School alumni (the largest group of interviewees) spoke almost as a chorus, singing the praises of their “magnificent building” and its outstanding teachers and administrators.

The first Howard grad interviewed was Ms. Clara Ingram (96 years old), who was asked to talk about her school days at the Richard Allen School. During the interview, Ms. Ingram found herself recalling her days at Howard rather than at Richard Allen. In one exchange with her interviewer, she was asked, “*What do you remember about the school [Richard Allen School] that changed your outlook on life?*” Instead of talking about the subject or teacher at Richard Allen that had an impact on her life, she answered in this way:

“Well, I tell you, I wish I could have gone to Howard at an earlier age because of a loss of subjects that I could have gotten there that I didn't get here [Richard Allen], and then it made me fall back (held back a grade). I'm going to tell you the truth, I didn't really know how to use a dictionary properly till I went to Howard High School in Wilmington, and a very good history teacher.”

Again, she was asked by the interviewer, “*So anything that impacted you in your school, the Richard Allen School?*” And yet again, she answered, “*Oh, yeah. Yes. I guess, the teachers at Howard High, because they were very interested in you. I really enjoyed them. I just wished I could have gone there at an earlier age.”*

Mr. Maurice Pritchett was the first person who was interviewed for attending Howard High School as his only DuPont Colored School. His interview came on the heels of Clara Ingram’s interview and gave even more emphasis to the admiration and high esteem Howard students had for their teachers. When he was asked to describe his typical day at Howard, this was his response:

“It was a great experience for me, number one. Number two, I think we went in probably around eight something. We would go into the building, and everybody entered into the building. And it was just an opportunity where you went in and were greeted by the Administrative Dean. You had teachers who were right there. They were so nice and kind and very serious and well dressed. They exemplified professionalism on a daily basis. And that's why I remember so much about the school. Even the men wore ties. They were neatly dress. And that was very inspirational to me. They cared about you.”

Another remarkable trait of the Howard alumni was their ability to remember so much about their teachers, including their names. What was impressive was how so many were able to remember both first and last names! For Maurice Pritchett (78 years old, a youngster compared to Ms. Ingram), he could not stop talking about how great his teachers were at Howard. When asked which lessons gave him the most satisfaction or had the most lasting impact on his life, he was quick to give this response:

“Yeah, I think my language arts teacher. I think about her a lot, Mrs. Sadie Jones. And she really turned my life around, because she took an interest in my strengths and my weaknesses, and she spent a lot of time with me. And it made me feel more secure about myself, and what I could do. I was no honor student, but it made me realize that I had abilities, and she would single that out to me. That's what I remember.”

What an impressive memory that stayed with him for over 60 years! But he was not alone. Several others, including Ms. Ingram, shared those character-building memories.

There were others like Mrs. Delores Walker-Blakey (83 years old) who remembered the “crush” she had for her chemistry teacher, Mr. Taylor, whom she thought “taught chemistry lessons remarkably well.” She talked about her English teacher, Ms. Gwendolyn Redding, who read poetry and conducted “such an interesting class” that she enjoyed going to every day. As she continued to recall her Howard High teachers, like her typing teacher who made it possible for her to get a job as a clerk typist at the Pentagon, her Home Economics teacher, Ms. Ally Holly, who taught and equipped her well to sew clothes for her children, and her theater and chorus teachers, Ms. Jenson and Mr. Anderson, who she credit for her 40-year career in theatre and singing, she was overcome with emotion.

Several Howard grads talked about the “iconic” English/literature/drama coach Mrs. C. Gwendolyn Redding, sister to Lawyer Louis L. Redding, who taught English to all Howard students at some point in their years there during her lengthy teaching career at Howard. All the Howard interviewees remembered her as a stern and compassionate teacher who cared deeply for all her students. When they spoke of her, they spoke with almost a reverence of her, because of the way she carried herself and her impeccable manner of dress. She was a role-model even for the fellows! Many of her former students lavished praise on her for doing a great job preparing them for the outside world.

Here are a few of those praises. Delores said of her, “*Now, she was rough, we had to really learn the correct English. She would teach it and we had to really know all the tenses and verbs etc. She was quite an English teacher.*” Major Hairston (84 years old) described her as a “very influential teacher” who prepared him on his path as a public speaker. This is what he had to say:

“She was my English teacher. One thing that she got me started... I can remember this very... I think I was in 10th grade. She made me make a speech in the assembly, and at that particular time, I was scared to death, but I had to make a speech in front of all the students about how you watch a football game, how you watch a basketball game. I was nervous as ever, but that's how I got started speaking publicly through Miss Redding.”

Howard High was a “larger-than-life” type building for several incoming students, because they had come from one and two-room small school buildings. For them, this was a massive building with so many classrooms, an auditorium, a cafeteria, a library. It was much different from what they had become accustomed to! In his interview, Sonny Knott’s comments represented what others thought when they started at the school:

“the most exciting thing to me at Howard School was this massive building with all these rooms. Don't forget, I came out of one room and six grades. Now, a school with multiple rooms, and every room had its own grade, and that just blew me out of the water. I had never seen long hallways and all, I had never seen nothing like this.”

In addition to the grandeur of the building and its teachers, there were the sports teams! Howard High dominated in baseball, basketball, and football. The school’s dominance in sports allowed the students to hold their heads “high” whenever they ventured to a white school. For decades, there were no schools in Delaware that could compete with them. Consequently, when white schools were forced to integrate, the first students they actively recruited were African American athletes.

Rabbit's Ferry School #201C



Rabbit's Ferry School #201C was a 1-room schoolhouse built in 1919 by P.S. du Pont to educate Native American and African American students in the Robinsonville area of Sussex County. It had wooden siding, a brick chimney, and a covered entrance supported by columns. On a side wall, there was a large bank of six windows next to a smaller window. The original school building is visible to the right of the new building. (Courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)

Unlike the other Colored schools, Rabbit's Ferry had a majority population of Native Americans and their descendants, rather than African Americans, as referenced by Dr. Fern Bliss-Morgan. The students that attended the school were part of a close-knit community where nearly everyone was related or had some type of family connection. Case in point, several of those interviewed were related to the teacher of this one-room schoolhouse, Ms. Hilda Norwood. Many of those interviewed were related to each other, with some not learning of their family ties until they were interviewed. Other key characteristics of this school community were the similarity of family surnames, the ages of the interviewees (much younger than other interviewees), their close ties to the community church, and the distinction of having multi-generations of family members attend the same school.

A noted dissimilar characteristic from other Dupont Colored School communities was the distance most of the students lived from the school. This was a farming community with larger farms than those situated in Hockessin and other New Castle County farming areas. Many of the students described their long walks to school or how they were driven to school. Mr. Anthony "Tony" Streett (68 years old), one of the first former students to be interviewed, described his 5 to 6-mile trips to school in this way:

"Sometimes we walked, most of the time our mother carried us in her Coupé de Ville. It was a Cadillac all right, or our teacher sometimes when it was inclement weather, she would come and get us and sometime even take us home. So, we'd walk in good weather. Most of the time, yes, but a good portion of the time when our mother was not working, she would carry us and pick us up in many instances. Especially during the good weather, when it was inclement weather [and] she was working, and our teacher would carry us home or we'd walk home of course."

By mentioning the type of car his mother drove was a way to announce that they were not poor or in need, which was another characteristic of this group not observed among the other school groups.

Paul Selby (67 years old), who had three generations of family members attend Rabbit's Ferry, confirmed that he lived about three miles from school and his teacher, Ms. Hilda Norwood, was also his aunt. When he was asked how he got to school, he said, "*My Aunt Hilda drove me to school from where I lived with her and my grandparents.*" By the way, Mr. Selby had a most unusual school career. He lived with his teachers (all family members) from 1st to 12th grade. When he was asked about it, this is how he described it:

"Did I ever. All of my teachers, I lived with. All the way up through high school primarily. Well, my aunt taught at [William C.] Jason [High School] and I would periodically go and stay overnight with her, particularly since there might have been some activities within the Rabbit's Ferry community where she lived, so that also took place in my life."

Paul is probably an exaggerated example of those key characteristics of this school community that were mentioned earlier. To explain, his grandfather, Clarence Norwood, was the first person from his community to go to college—Howard University. He had four daughters; all became teachers. Paul's mother taught in Laurel and her sisters (his aunts) taught in and around Georgetown. Furthermore, Mr. Selby was the only former student of a DuPont Colored School who declared that he never had to work with old or used books. His aunts were always able to go directly to the school district and get new books for him.

Dr. Fern Bliss-Morgan (77 years old) was the only student interviewed who lived within two miles of the school. Even though she said she walked to school, she further explained her trips to and from school in this way:

"We walked to school. And then maybe if it was raining, my cousins would, as they took their sisters and brothers to school, we would get a ride to school. And then on other days the teacher, when she was coming through, because she lived down the road from where we lived. And as she was on her way to school, she would sometimes stop and load us all in her car and we would ride to school together with her."

In that statement, Fern gave a very brief glimpse of the family environment that existed in her school community. When she was asked to further explain the family and social ties in the community, she had this to say:

"We all lived in the same community and every one of us, everyone that lived in the community, were family. Because my aunt lived down the road, that's the cousins I would get a ride with, and she had about seven or eight children so that was a good little lump. Then the next house was our house and it was my sister and I. Then we would go down the road to our aunt and uncle's that lived there and we would pick up maybe two children there if they were staying with their grandmother. So, it was just like we were a big family. We would go to church, and we all went to the same church. And if she [Ms. Norwood] wasn't singing in the choir, I sat with Ms. Norwood in church. So, it was like she was our big sister and our mother. But when we were in school she was our teacher."

As mentioned previously, nearly everyone in this school community was related. The three interviewees just mentioned were all cousins, and each of them was related to their teacher, Ms. Norwood. The closeness of this community may be the reason this schoolhouse was the longest serving one-room schoolhouse in Delaware. It did not close until 1965, which was long after many others had closed in early to mid-1950s. The late closing of the school may also

account for the younger ages of the former students. Furthermore, all of them continued their education at non-DuPont Colored Schools.

A noticeable detail observed among these informants was their attention to detail. Nearly all of them recalled and described details of the school and of their daily activities in greater detail than informants from the other schools. Many of them gave detailed accounts of their daily routine after arriving to school, as well as the classroom morning rituals. An example of that discussion was provided by Fern Bliss-Morgan (who gave a great interview) when she was asked to describe her daily routine after arriving to school:

“I think school started at 8:30. And when we got to school we would of course hang our coats and hats in the coat room and leave our lunchboxes in the coat room. And then come out and take our seats and prepare for the opening exercises. [Those exercises] consisted of saying the Lord's Prayer, saluting the flag, and singing a song or so, sometimes a little song, I don't recall the songs, though. And then sometimes Ms. Norwood would read one or two verses from the Bible to us. That's when religion was still in the school.”

One final note worth mentioning about these former students was their level of pride and self-worth. Many Howard High former students had the same level of pride and self-worth, but it was induced by their teachers and the culture of the school. In this Rabbit's Ferry school community, it was embedded in the culture of the community.

Richard Allen School



Richard Allen School was built on the same site of the original school in 1927. The school was named for the freed slave, Bishop Richard Allen, who founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1794. For years, the Richard Allen School was a hub of learning and community in the early and mid-1900s. (Courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)

The interviews from this school revealed a sense of tension while attending the school than what had been observed at the other DuPont Colored Schools. There were no rave reviews of the teachers, or glowing admiration for studies taught there; instead, there was a real sense that students felt neglected, marginalized, and simply going through the expected normal routine of

school. Many of their interviews disclosed a real sense of racial tension and strife, which was uncharacteristic of the other DuPont Colored Schools.

In the interview with Clara Ingram (96 years old), the first informant from Richard Allen, she gave no indication that she wanted to talk about her time at the school. In a statement during her interview, when she was asked to describe how Richard Allen School helped change her life, she had this to say:

“Well, I tell you, I wish I could have gone to Howard at an earlier age because of a loss of subjects that I could have gotten there that I didn't get here, and then it made me fall back. I'm going to tell you the truth, I didn't really know how to use a dictionary properly till I went to Howard High School in Wilmington, and [had] a very good history teacher.”

When she was asked the question a second time with slightly different wording, she responded in much the same manner as before: *“Oh, yeah. Yes. I guess, the teachers at Howard High, because they were very interested in you. I really enjoyed [them]. I just wished I could have gone there at an earlier age.”*

Ms. Peggy Ann Trott (76 years old), the second interviewee from the school, talked about the teachers having an interest in their students. When she was asked to describe how the school changed her life, she had this to say:

“Well, the teachers. They were always interested in what you wanted to become. And I was a student, but I really didn't have my mind set on going to college. But they were always asking and my first guess was just to get out of school. ... They tried not to fail you. When you fail, that's because you didn't really do your homework, you didn't really reach out to the teachers.”

The difference between her interview and that of Ms. Ingram illustrated how different children can have very different experiences from the same teachers and school environment. Ms. Trott loved math and that skill was nurtured in her at her school; however, we did not get a sense that Ms. Ingram had a particular skill that was nurtured. Also, in Ms. Trott's interview, she recalled an interest in math that she developed while attending Richard Allen. She recalled how she was asked to help other students while at Richard Allen. This is what she said at that time:

“I loved Math, and I was good at Math. It helped me to help others. And I used to have to tutor some of my classmates in there. I also did that when I went to High School. So, I had a good Math background.”

Then there was Mr. Solomon Henry (88 years old), who was asked to describe how the school changed his life, he had this to say:

“Well, let's see. No, we had good home training, and what we brought from home, we had to bring to the school, and what we left with the school we had to do because the teachers at that particular time, if you did wrong, they would stop by the house and inform the parents if they had a real problem with you. So it wasn't much of a problem going to school for us back in those days.”

When he was asked to name the skill or topic that he acquired while attending Richard Allen School that had the greatest impact on his personal and professional development, he simply answered, *“History and agriculture.”* Then he talked about attending Ben Franklin High School, but never indicated where he attended the school (it is a fair assumption to say that he attended the school in Philadelphia). When he talked about attending Ben Franklin High School, he recalled what he needed to do at the school to graduate.

“Well, when I went to Ben Franklin High School, I didn't need no more science. I didn't have no chemistry. I had no geometry, and no trigonometry, and I needed two units of foreign language

before I could graduate. I had to do most of those things in that last year. Because well, most of the things we got from Richard Allen School was like, an academic course.”

In that statement, he credits Richard Allen School for giving him what he needed, academically, to allow him to graduate from Ben Franklin high school. When asked about his teachers at Richard Allen, he not only remembered their names, but also much of what they taught him in being a better person and the classroom lessons that they taught.

“My teachers were very good teachers. They disciplined the children well. Once we went in the classroom, we almost had to look after the classroom, like you were home. Pick up and make sure everything was in the place where it was supposed to be. [They] were very interested in the students and I guess, the 1st grade, like it was, always like to bring an apple to the teacher because she looked so pretty to [me]. My 1st grade teacher, I think she had just graduated from Delaware State College, at that particular time, her name was Ruth K. Moore. [My teachers were] Mrs. Ruth K. Moore, Mr. Anthony Sharply, Mr. Arthur Elliot, Mr. John Parker, [and] Mr. Aubrey Jeter.”

State College for Colored Students High School-1922 (Delaware State College High School-1945)



State College for Colored Students High School-1922 (Delaware State College High School-1945) – 2-room brick school building near or associated with the State College for Colored Students. The building has a center front arched entrance supported by columns. Each classroom had a large bank of six windows on the rear wall. The photo to the right is of the rear and side. (Courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)

State College for Colored Students High School, which in 1922, became the second high school in Delaware for Colored students. The name was changed to Delaware State College High in 1945 when it lost its certification and had to be re-certified. Howard High School, students who attended this school generally on campus and they had to pay to go to school. In addition, State High School was much smaller than Howard High, which meant that enrollment was limited, particularly for those staying on campus.

first person interviewed for the Project, Dr. Reba Ross

Hollingsworth (96 years old) enrolled in State College for Colored Students High School in 1943 and graduated in 1945, the same year the name was changed to Delaware State College High School. She recalled paying \$30 per month to attend the high school. That fee covered her



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tuition, room and board, and some class workbooks. She indicated that this was the second time in her school career that she lived on her own away from home. The first time occurred when she attended 10th grade at Booker T. Washington School in Dover. When she was asked about the sacrifices her parents made for her to go to school, she referred to the times that she was away from home.

"I suppose the sacrifice they made was not (as a 10th grader through the rest of my schooling) having me available to help to contribute much to the household because I had to live away from home at that time. I had to move away from home as a 10th grade student. I lived on my own with two other classmates, and I never lived home any time after that full year. So, I know they had to make that sacrifice, but I had younger brothers and sisters who were, I guess, kind of taking my place."

As she reflected on her answer, she indicated that most African American students stopped at that last grade of their local school, because their families could not afford to have them leave home to go to a distant school. They could not afford to pay the extra expense of them going to school away from home or to lose the value of their labor. She gave an example of her own father's situation when he wanted to attend the State College High School.

"...my dad was a math wizard even though he only finished eighth grade. But he wanted to go to college. As a matter of fact, he went to State College High School as a 9th grade student and was there for a month when his dad wrote a letter to the president and said, 'Send my son home. I need him to work on the farm.' My dad really never fully forgave my grandfather for that."

Furthermore, she added, *"this was the way the system was set up. They only intended for Black folks to have 'enough education to read, write, and count a bit'. In fact, it was in the law!"*

Mrs. Susan Young Browne (103 years old) attended Delaware State College High School when it was still known as the State College for Colored Students High School in 1933.



But before she could go to the school, she had to wait for an open room to be able to stay on campus. She remembered staying out of school for an entire school year before she could go to 9th grade. She explained that one of her sisters was living on campus but decided to move in with their other sister who was working in Dover and had her own place. That move enabled Susan to matriculate into the school. She remembered paying \$25 per year (a lot of money at that time) for her room and board, which her parents paid for her first year. Afterward, she worked in a canning factory during the summer and on campus during the school year to make enough money to pay the fee and buy pencils, notebooks, and some clothes for herself. She graduated from the school in 1937.

Ms. Browne had a lot to say about of living on campus during her high school years. She described it as a "lovely place," because she had running water, electricity, heat, and prepared meals 3 times per day! She said she did not have those things while living on the farm.

"At that time, most of us in high school had come from the country and we did not have electricity, and we did not have running water, and we did not have heated houses, so boarding school was really a lovely place for us to be."

Susan spoke of the duties and responsibilities they were given while living on campus. She talked about the dorm Matron who would assign certain duties and responsibilities to each student.

“Well, of course your first thing you had to make sure your room was clean. You were responsible for keeping your room clean and on the weekend, of course, you had to scrub the bulk of your floor and change your bed. You just [had] to make sure you have a clean room. And then also, different ones worked in the dining hall. Some of them were working as waitresses, and then some worked in the kitchen. And those were some of the duties that you had to do. At first they didn't pay you but later on, I think they would give you a little bit of cash for working in the kitchen and being a waitress.”

High School after recalled his first guiding phrase that he read on a sign on enter, enter to learn, was his motivation to

It is worth attended and State College High Unfortunately, none Project. In each of for their teachers.



When I spoke with Mr. William “Bill” Evans (87 years old), who entered State College graduating from Thomas D. Clayton School, he impression of the school. He shared with me a helped him through high school and college that the pathway to the school. It read, “*All who and go forth to serve.*” He said that message become a teacher. noting that those who were interviewed that graduated from what was known as Delaware School all went on to become teachers. of them were teachers at the schools in this their interviews, they spoke of their admiration They complimented the teachers’ manner of dress, their professionalism, and their status as real role-models in the community. Each aspired to be like them, even though some had aspired for other careers. It was their deep desire to “be somebody respected” that was their driving force for developing their careers as teachers. Each came from a meager childhood existence and burdened with petty racism, but with their minds set on who they wanted to become, not who they were.

The interviews from this project have allowed us to get a glimpse into what motivated these few select individuals as they journeyed from 1st grade to adulthood never letting the obstacles of racism, discrimination, or labels of inferiority keep them from moving forward and achieving better for themselves and for their families.

Thomas D. Clayton School (Smyrna Colored School - 1921)



This 2-story building with wood siding and with one-story extension is as it appeared prior to being replaced by a new building in 1921. (Courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)



Smyrna Colored School (1921) - *This one-story brick school building featured covered arched side entrances and five classrooms. Each classroom had a large bank of six windows. The location was in an expanding community area for African Americans in Smyrna, Delaware. Construction started on January 21, 1921, and was completed on October 1, 1921. (Courtesy of Hagley Digital Museum)*

The most unique characteristic of Thomas D. Clayton School (originally called the Smyrna Colored School) was its size. This was the largest and most modern-designed DuPont Colored elementary school built during the early 1920s. Its brick exterior walls, five classrooms, and long hallways were built more on the scale of white school buildings rather than your average Colored elementary school. This feature alone, added a degree of pride and dignity for the students who attended this school. T.D. Clayton (as it was affectionately known by former students) was the only school in Smyrna that Colored students could attend. A fact that was not lost on those who agreed to be interviewed for this Project.

The first interviewee from the school was Mr. William “Bill” Evans, Jr. (87 years old), who attended the school during the 1930s. According to Mr. Evans (who preferred to be called Bill), he completed grades 1 through 9 before having to leave Smyrna, where he was born and raised, to attend Delaware State College High School in Dover. When Bill (who gave a great interview) was asked to describe his daily school routine, he was incredibly detailed, as were many of his cohorts. His level of detail showed a level of interest that stayed with him more than 74 years. Here is what he recalled:

“Each morning, we had to stand, and each person had to recite a verse from the Bible. And then from there, we said The Pledge of Allegiance, and shortly after that we started [class]. [The teacher] would actually then give us direction for the day. And on the blackboard, which was all the way around [the room], you had each one of the subject areas that we would be involved in that day, and we had to write in the composition book. And that was more or less our guide to guide us through the day. And that was done every day for each subject. And she would tell us the reason why it was important to make sure we paid attention and learned the information and how it was going to help us in the future.”

Also, he gave a detailed description of the lunch period. He said that lunch was prepared by the parents of the PTA, that was funded by the community, and served to them in their classrooms. Bill was careful to add that grace was said before anyone began eating. His level of detail and

recall of events was as if he was reading it from a script! Also, it was representative of the other interviews completed from this school.

When Bill was asked to share his memory of how T. D. Clayton impacted his life, he took the opportunity to share some words of wisdom from his uncle and his friends. They told him, *"One thing, make sure that you read to learn, and you learn to read, because you need to know the history. And if you don't do that, you can't go forward."* He followed that by saying that he was just a child when they told him that; however, it stuck with him, and he used those words to help guide him through the rest of his studies. As he continued to recall how Clayton School impacted his life, he described his love of history, math, and science.

Another unique aspect of the interviews from T. D. Clayton was the completion of three separate interviews from three brothers who were all related to the man for whom the school is named, Dr. Thomas D. Clayton (1905-1995), an African-American physician who attended local schools and later practiced medicine in Pennsylvania. Three successful interviews from the Thomas brothers—David (74), Lonnie (71), and Ronald (76)—were three of the best interviews completed for the Project! Their interviews were special not only for the details of their school days they provided, but also the history of the school and the community that they provided.

An added fact that made their interviews special was their unique juxtaposition between a segregated DuPont Colored school and integrated white schools. Even though there were segregated Colored schools for them to attend after leaving Clayton, all of them had the option of attending an integrated white school during their high school years. Both David and Lonnie (the two younger brothers), went to the integrated John Bassett Moore High School (Smyrna High School) at the urging of their mother who was a teacher. David was more than reluctant to leave William Henry, but his mother impressed upon them that she was paying taxes for them to attend the local high school and not to have them travel to Dover to William Henry High School.

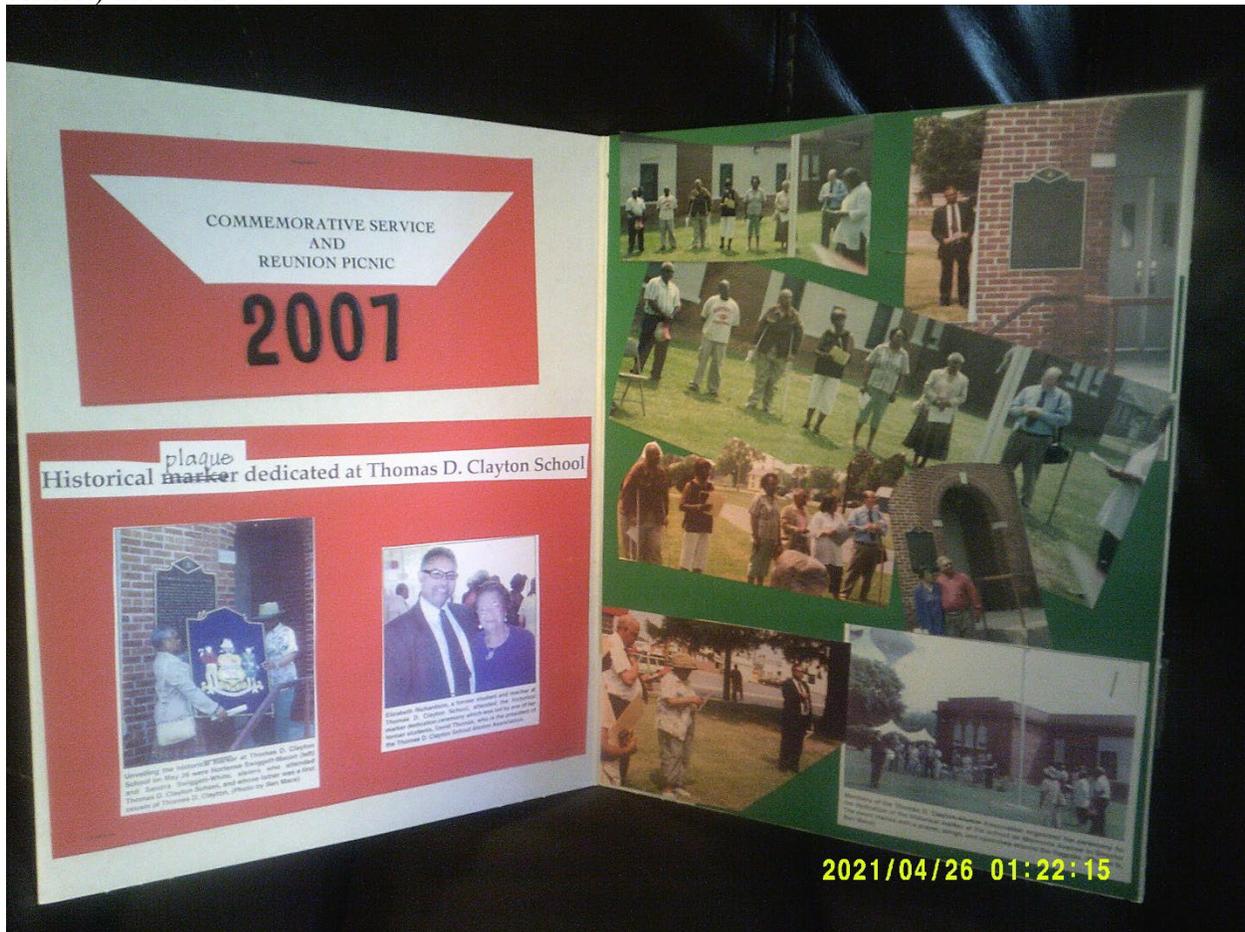
Not unlike other DuPont Colored school communities, those who attended T. D. Clayton had to walk to school. According to the Thomas brothers and confirmed by the other informants, walking was the only way to get to school, unless you were fortunate to get a ride to school from a family member or a friend of the family. One exception to those who had to walk to school was Alice Coleman who lived outside of Smyrna on a farm and was bused to TD Clayton.

Ms. Alice Coleman (76 years old), a classmate of Dr. Ronald Thomas, came to the area as a child of migrant workers from North Carolina. She started at school in 2nd grade with clear intentions of the family moving back to North Carolina. Alice admitted to being a shy girl who was very self-conscious, which she claimed made her a very studious and hardworking student. Even though she felt special to ride the bus to school, (with other kids having to walk) moving from place to place and having parents as migrant workers made her very self-conscious.

Alice also described two incidents that made her cry while a student. One occurred in the classroom when she lied to her teacher, Ms. Richardson, that the dog had eaten her book, because she did not have her book or the assignment that was due. She said the teacher made her come in front of the class while she lectured "me to the point that I was crying." The other incident occurred while on a field trip to town. A female classmate saw this woman that she called ugly, and then turned to ask Alice if that was her mom. Alice said it upset her so much that she started crying. She explained that her mother was in the hospital undergoing treatment for tuberculosis, so it was very hurtful for that girl to say that to her. When her teacher saw her crying, she went to Alice and told her something that completely "flipped the switch" from what

the student had said and made Alice feel much better. She told me that story to highlight the level of compassion and caring the teachers TD Clayton had for their students. Then she made the comment, *“So, the teachers, they served a lot of purpose in our lives. And I think structuring the way we felt about ourselves [was one of them].”*

Mrs. Sandra “Sandy” Swiggett-White (79 years old) was the last person interviewed from TD Clayton and the last person interviewed for the Project. Her interview and the photographic items she donated truly captured the essence of all that was good about attending the Clayton School. All of TD Clayton’s alumni took pride in their Alma Mater, especially the teachers, and Sandy was no exception. In fact, Sandy and her sister played an important role in the dedication ceremony for the renovated school (now used as an administrative building for the school district) in June 2007.



Sandy made sure that I understood that TD Clayton had great teachers! She said, *“our teachers were always neatly dressed and respectful and caring, and I think that’s something children really need early in life.”* One of the most impressive facts about children honoring and respecting their teachers is when they remember their teachers’ names. Sandy remembered the names of all her teachers from 1st grade to high school. She not only remembered their last

names, but also their first names and middle was asked to talk about her teachers at TD how she responded:

“The 1st grade, my teacher's name was Simmons. My 2nd [and] 3rd grade Elizabeth Richardson, who was also my we had to call her Mrs. Richardson in teacher's name was Ida Inez Burton from used to stay in Smyrna during the week and weekends. Fifth and 6th [grades] was Seventh grade was taught by a veteran that from World War II, I guess. His name was Powell. I forgot to say that we did have a visiting music teacher that probably went around to all the schools maybe once a month. Her name was Mrs. Drain.”



names. When she Clayton, this is

Lorraine Jackson teacher was Mary aunt, but we knew class. My 4th grade Philadelphia. She go home most Geneva Wood. had just returned Willis E.

Sandy was not alone in her ability to remember her teachers by name, but remembering their full names, that put her in a class of her own!

Both Alice and Sandy paid worthy tributes to the teachers at their school that were representative of the overall sentiments of the former students who agreed to be interviewed. In addition to Sandy's comments about the teachers, Alice had this to say:

“Well, the teachers at that point always dressed really nice. And they carried themselves in, I call it professional. They looked good. They spoke well. And they were good role models. Earlier I had wanted to be teacher and I think it was because actually they were the only professional people that I knew about at the time. And you didn't see them talking loud even among themselves. It seemed that they were always very, very professional. I remember well there was one from Philadelphia. I remember all their names even pretty much.”

It was quite evident that all the former students from TD Clayton remained loyal to the school several decades after leaving as students. David Thomas is the President of the Thomas D. Clayton School Alumni Association & Friends, and his brother Dr. Ronald Thomas works with him on programming. Both Sandy Swiggett White and Alice Coleman stayed in touch with their former teachers and attended all the alumni gatherings for many years after leaving as students. And Bill Evans, who moved to Las Vegas, NV in 1963 still stays in touch, which is how he became involved with this project.

D. Common Themes and Shared Memories

There were several common themes that formed the backbone of these oral history narratives. One of those themes that was highly anticipated, and came as no surprise, was the repeated discussion from all former students (except for one) of having to use second-hand books and other used classroom materials. They lamented and often questioned why (if their education was so important) did they have to use books and materials that had the appearance of things to be discarded. Nearly all those students who bemoaned the use of second-hand/used books were quick to add that their teachers did not allow them to use that as an excuse for failing to learn.

On the other hand, one student, who had fond memories of having new books to use during his time in school, attended a segregated DuPont Colored School for only 3 years (1960-

63). Then the school closed due to integration and merging of Colored students and segregated schools into the white school district. As he explained, his classes received new books because his aunt was his teacher and she had been teaching at the school for decades. She was able (at that time) to go to the white school district to get new books for her students.

Here are some of the other themes that were discussed and at times, with considerable emotion. Many of the former students in their elementary school years (1st to 8th grades) had to walk to school, with a few exceptions, because busing from the school district was not available to them. Most of the students who had to walk lived near their schools; however, those who lived in the outlying areas on farms had the longest and most difficult walk. Several spoke of having to watch yellow school buses taking white kids from their community to school. This occurred most often in Kent and Sussex counties. However, the most well-known case of school buses passing walking Colored students occurred in the Hockessin community of New Castle County. In fact, two of the individuals we interviewed are related to the two girls who were at the center of the court battles for ending discriminatory school busing practices.

Even though several of our interviewees shared their memories of discriminatory practices and racist acts that involved themselves or others, there was always a blind acceptance of those practices. Often we were told that despite those actions, white and colored people got along. Despite the obvious inequities and inequalities, Colored people (African and Native Americans) willingly or unwillingly accepted those behaviors as part of life for them. A surprising sentiment, even though it was a common theme, was their ingrained cultural response of not questioning obvious discriminatory practices. That mindset among our informants was more prevalent among those who attended school from the mid-1920s to the late 1940s.

Very enthusiastic discussions of the treasured memories many former students had of teachers was such a contrast to today's teacher-student relationships. The narrative heard repeatedly in describing their teachers was admiration, confidence, respect, and pride. In addition, they described their teachers as well-educated, caring, nurturing, stern but loving, and understanding. Several shared memories of being driven to school by their teachers, sharing a meal at home with them, running errands for them, sitting with them in church services, and having them play games and sports with them in the playground during recess. In fact, this closeness between Colored students and teachers was best demonstrated when those students were given the option to attend white schools.

Colored students who were finally given the opportunity to integrated white schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s often refused to leave their segregated school communities. Those few who did leave to integrate white schools, spoke of their regret for leaving. The regret most felt was directed toward their white teachers, who did little to help them succeed, and showed an outward dislike of them for who they were. The edification that Colored students received from their Colored teachers transcended what was in their schoolbooks and written materials. Those teachers understood them and cared about them. This was not the case in the integrated schools from white teachers or white administrators.

An oft-repeated common theme was the lack of focus or emphasis on Negro (Black) history. When asked about their lessons in Black History, none of the former students remembered any structured lessons while in elementary school, and only a few could recall being taught the words to the Negro National Anthem, "Life Every Voice and Sing." Those who spoke of learning the words and singing the song spoke of learning it in high school or hearing it sung

in church or at community events. Most who recalled discussing any aspect of Black History noted that it was not from their textbooks, instead, it came from their teachers. Teachers would talk about notable Black leaders in the community, as well as well-known Black historical figures like Frederick Douglas, Dr. George Washington Carver, W. E. B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Benjamin Banneker, and Carter G. Woodson, to name a few.

Another common theme that echoed through much of our conversations with this group was their unanimous affirmation of receiving a quality education irrespective of the stark differences that existed between white and Colored schools. Those we spoke with either lived in segregated black neighborhoods or countryside areas where they were a considerable distance from their nearest neighbor. In both living situations, these students were isolated and insulated from the everyday harshness of institutional racism and white privilege due to the protected presence of their parents, teachers, and other nurturing adults in the family or community where they lived. Except for the occasional visits to rival white school sports teams, few, if any, Colored students interacted with white students or thought much about what type of education white students were receiving. Furthermore, our narrators confided in us that they had everything they needed within their segregated communities. They shared that their sports teams were always able to defeat the white school teams which made them enormously proud and confident.

A different common theme that resonated amongst a select group of students who became teachers was the level of discrimination they endured from their white colleagues and administrators. Even though many in this teacher's group did not teach at any of the colored schools in this project, most did teach at a segregated colored school. Their shared experiences punctuated the distinct differences that existed between segregated colored schools and the recently integrated white-only schools.

Finally, the most common theme that can sum up all the other themes was the genuine respect and caring the school community shared with the broader community, which was anchored by the church community. Nearly all the interviewees shared their memories of their teachers attending church with them, participating in community events, and living close to them in the neighborhood. Several shared memories of church and community events being held at the school, and school events like the May Day Festival, inviting the community into the school to join in the festivities. In addition, there were Parent-Teacher Dinners, fundraising banquets, and awards banquet that brought entire communities together. Also, there were field trips taken that invited family and community members to participate with the school. Those were the kind of events that kept the school and the community closely-knit.

E. Unexpected memories

Unlike the themes discussed, there were individual moments of unexpected memories that were “eye-opening”, very memorable, some pleasant, and some unpleasant. Nevertheless, all are worth sharing and they made for some interesting conversations. Many of those memories were the product of experienced interviewees providing a comfortable and open atmosphere for sharing.

While interviewing Dr. Hollingsworth, it was surprising to hear that elementary school teachers trusted some of their students to leave school to run errands, including cashing their payroll checks. Dr. Hollingsworth shared this information along with being asked, as a student, to teach the class when a teacher had to relieve herself. Some former students shared their romantic love for some of their teachers. Others shared incidents that have stayed with them all their life when they were embarrassingly disciplined by a teacher. Some talked about famous and notable African American luminaries they met, knew, or lived with. Like Carter G. Woodson (who started Negro History Week and was known as the father of Negro History), who visited the elementary school where his niece (Ms. Emma G. Woodson) taught in Milford DE; Alice Dunbar Nelson (the ex-wife of Paul Laurence Dunbar) who taught at Howard High school for nearly a decade; Gwendolyn Redding (sister to Lawyer Louis Redding who lived in the Howard High School community), who taught English to nearly all of our alumni from Howard, and one of our Howard grads who cared for William “Judy” Johnson (famous Negro Baseball league player) in the final years of Judy’s life.

We had the honor of interviewing relatives of Dr. Thomas D. Clayton, the namesake of the Smyrna elementary school of the same name. They shared several memories of their famous relative in ways that delighted and amazed, even though during his lifetime, Dr. Clayton maintained a very low-key presence in the community. According to those interviewed from Hockessin #107C, relatives and community members of Shirley Bulah and her family did not welcome the unwanted attention they were receiving during the lengthy court battles over discriminatory busing practices by the school district in those days. In fact, two interviewees stated that many African American Hockessin community members and Bulah neighbors considered her and her mother as troublemakers who had unsettled the peace of their close-knit community. One of the school’s alumni stated that he regretted that his community was willing to leave well-enough alone and not fight for equal treatment.

V. Dupont Colored School Ephemera and Artifacts

Fundamental to this project was the need to safeguard and preserve the past. We have secured the narratives from several aging former students from DuPont Colored Schools (our oldest participant turned 103 on April 24, 2021), and have successfully collected story-telling artifacts of this bygone era from a few interviewees.

Although it was not a formal interview question, interviewees were asked if they had memorabilia from their time at school that they would like to share. Several interviewees shared representative photos, documents, display boards, student work, and loose-leaf notebooks. These are filled with pages of memorabilia representative of student work and play at school, community programs at the schools, and Colored teachers who taught at segregated Colored schools. Many of the items are one of a kind and are irreplaceable.

PDI’s Project Director facilitated meetings between potential donors and curators from HCA’s Delaware Center for Material Culture (CMC) in Dover. Thus far, Mrs. Susan Young Browne has formally offered to donate her diplomas and several important photographs, and HCA’s Collections Committee has approved the donation. Discussion of how best to document

or preserve other shared items is ongoing. Many items will likely be copied or photographed and returned to the interviewee.

We are eternally grateful to those who have chosen to share their physical memories with this project and the people of Delaware. Such items complement the oral histories collected. With an average age of 82 years old, it continues to be imperative that we work as diligently as possible to collect the best of their physical memories while they are still here to authorize that to happen.

VI. Lessons Learned

One important lesson learned in working with this project was the necessity of a skilled and reliable group of professionals supporting every effort. It was a group effort to get all the moving parts to come together and function as one unit. Now that the mechanics of the Project are in place, there is confidence that, with the right personnel, much can be accomplished efficiently in future efforts. Future work will have an established foundation from which to start. There will always be challenges, it is best to have a well-developed contingency plan in place.

Another key factor is the need for redundancy. Every form created, every interview recorded, every transcript produced, every summary written, and every report completed is in at least two places. Recorded interviews were archived at the cloud location of all three online formats —Zoom.com, FreeConferenceCall.com, and Rev.com. Links to the recordings were emailed to each informant within 1-3 hours following their interview and maintained on the Project Director's external drive. The same was true for digital transcripts, with the added location of the individual computers of those staff charged with writing the 2-page summary. Those individuals were given limited access to the transcript's link to make necessary corrections, changes, and/or additions.

Summaries, on the other hand, were kept only in OneDrive cloud locations and on the Director's external hard drive. This level of redundancy was required to make last-minute edits and revisions to the summaries completed by individuals in various locations. Due to required edits and revisions, none of the summaries submitted are in the exact form that has been archived.

Drafted forms and written reports were uploaded to OneDrive, downloaded to an external drive, and sent to individual email accounts of those needing to use a form or submit a report. Additionally, all completed weekly Project status reports were sent to Michael McGrath, Jay McCutcheon, Bryan Hudson (timesheets), and SHPO. Therefore, completed reports have multi-layered redundancy. Ease of access to forms, documents, and reports has been important. Additionally, having nearly everything the Project would need to use quickly accessible by computer has been a valuable asset.

Fundamental to this project was the need to safeguard and preserve the past. We have secured the narratives from several aging former students of the DuPont Colored Schools (our oldest participant turned 103 on April 24, 2021), but we have not successfully collected a large volume of story-telling artifacts. However, we did collect several representative photos, documents, display boards, student work, and loose-leaf notebooks. These are filled with pages of memorabilia representative of student work and play at school, community programs at the schools, and Colored teachers who taught at segregated Colored schools.

VII. Conclusions

The goal of this Project was to collect narratives that revealed the life of Colored students attending DuPont Colored Schools during a period of forced segregation. Within these narratives, we heard stories that highlighted the quality of the education received by these students, the high standards maintained by their teachers, and the life lessons gained. In addition to stories, several pieces of memorabilia and ephemera provide an accurate backdrop for their memories of the period. Biased and prejudiced “historical” accounts of African American and Native American education can now be replaced by these recorded accounts, in the student’s own words.

History would sometimes have us believe that Colored schools were inferior schools, therefore, providing an inferior education to those students. These narrated accounts of years of schooling in vastly improved facilities, provided by Pierre S. DuPont, are clear proof of what was, in fact, achieved. Perhaps, even more could have been achieved had quality learning materials and equipment been provided to these schools. Using only what they were given, used and secondhand books and materials, these educators and students proved their ability to learn and learn well.

The other goal of this project (which we hope will be done in phases) is to make the collected oral histories and artifacts available to the public online, as displays at museums, and as part of visual presentations and lecture series. These forms of public sharing will represent a major step in publicizing a disregarded segment of Delaware’s educational history. They will tell a well-connected narrative of Delaware’s long history of educational inequities that led to the Brown vs. Board of Education landmark ruling and the triumphs despite inequalities.

It is our intentions to make the online sharing of information from the oral history interviews available by late 2021. We aim to share summaries of each interview, with online links to the interviewee’s picture, the full recorded interview, and a transcription. We are planning to show the locations of these schools on a digital map of Delaware and to allow a user to click on a school icon to see information about the school, those who were interviewed, and their interview information. Ultimately, we are looking to connect these school narratives with a more sophisticated GIS mapping program that will link the information from the CHAD project with the information from this project.

VIII. Appendix

A. Job criterion for selection of student interns

1. Cover letter or introductory email
2. Resume
3. Experience as an interviewer
4. Supervising professor’s name and email address
5. Availability and willingness to work up to 20 hours per week

B. Job interview questions for student applicants

1. Why do you want to participate in this project? What do you know about African American history in Delaware?
2. What skills do you have that will help this oral history project be successful?
3. This project involves gathering oral as well as physical historical information from mostly elderly African Americans at their convenience, how flexible are you in accommodating interview times that will be convenient for those individuals? Explain.
4. Nearly all our contact with participants in this project will be via some type of video or call conference format. How familiar are you with this format and can you give some examples of your experience working with them?
5. Part of your job will be to gather as much information as possible within a 2-hour time frame or less. What examples can you give us that you are able to be thorough and at the same time courteous and respectful?

C. Scoring rubric for student interns

1. Experience as an interviewer
2. Understanding the culture and history of African American communities
3. Ability to articulate and “think on their feet”
4. Strong written and verbal skills
5. Strong interpersonal skills
6. Professional work ethic and independent time management skills
7. Prioritizing and concisely summarizing complex information
8. Recommendation and supervision from a current professor
9. Ability and availability to work up to 20 hours per week
10. Substantive work experience

D. Student Intern Contract

October, 2020

Board of Directors

Freelance Contract Agreement between _____ and Preservation Delaware Inc.

Michael H. McGrath, AICP

President

This freelance agreement is entered into and made effective as of October, 2020, by and between _____ (Contractor), and Preservation Delaware, Inc, [PDI].

Barbara Warnell

Vice President,

Sussex

JOB DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Contractor will serve as student oral historian for the DuPont Schools Project (Project) as a part-time position that reports to the Project Director, president of PDI, and the Board of Directors. As a student oral historian, she will follow the directions and guidance of the Project Director in scheduling, interviewing, and editing oral and/or video interviews from selected individuals willingly participating in the Project. In addition, she will be required to complete weekly, monthly, and a final report as part of her assigned duties.

James Wolfe

Vice President,

Kent County

TERM:

Bryan Hudson

Treasurer

The agreement will be in effect beginning October 4, 2020 and will terminate upon either a written notice from the Project Director, the Contractor, or at the conclusion of the Project, unless otherwise extended.
by the Project Director. Contractor will document out of pocket expenses and provide a report to account for the expenses.

COMPENSATION:

PDI will pay Contractor \$20 p/hour, as set forth in the project proposal. This agreement will serve as a standing invoice. Payment shall be completed by PDI in the amount based on work completed and reported every two weeks in accordance with the rate contained in the project program agreement.

OTHER EXPENSES

PDI will reimburse contractor for any expenses relating to work on the Project as allowed in the project program agreement. All expenses must be approved in advance by the Project Director. Contractor will document out of pocket expenses and provide a report to account for the expenses.

REPORTING:

Contractor shall provide periodic updates on work completed as specified in the Job Duties and Responsibilities section.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR:

Contractor is independent and not considered an employee of PDI and not liable for any third-party damages, including lost profits, lost savings or other incidental, consequential or special damages, even if advised. If any provision of this agreement shall be unlawful, void, or for any reason unenforceable, then that provision shall be deemed severable from this agreement and shall not affect the validity and enforceability of any remaining provisions.

COPYRIGHT:

PDI will own any and all materials generated by Contractor for PDI under this agreement.

TERMINATION:

This agreement may be terminated with 14 days written notice by either party.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, by their respective signatures below, the parties have caused the Agreement to be executed and effective as of the Effective Date.

_____, Student Oral Historian

Freelance Contractor

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Dr. Abdullah R. Muhammad, Project Director

Signature: _____

MH McGrath, President
Preservation Delaware, Inc.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Michael H. McGrath, AICP



President

Jay W. McCutcheon



Executive Director

E. Student timesheet

PERSONNEL TIMESHEET

Project Name: AATF DELAWARE SCHOOLS PROJECT

Contractor Name: _____

Pay Period: _____

Employee Email: _____

Date	Start Time	End Time	Total Hours	Rate	Total	NATURE OF WORK/NOTES
TOTAL				\$20	\$.00	

Contractor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

F. Weekly and monthly student report form template

My DuPont Schools Project Weekly Report for xx/xx/20 – xx/xx/20

(This is only for illustrative purposes)

11/6/20: Total hours - 3

- Spoke with Dr. Skelcher about details on Richard Allen School
- Made a list of important details pertaining to the opening of the school
- Recorded the first administrators and teachers for the school

11/7/20: Total hours – 1

- Called and spoke with staff at DSU regarding the effective date of the opening and the closing of Delaware State College High School
- Downloaded several archive photos of the opening of DSC High School

Respectfully submitted,

G. Interview summary template

Summary of Interview (*Dr./Mr./Mrs./Ms. First Last Name*)

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

DuPont School(s) attended:

Form of interview:

Date & Time:

Duration of interview:

School Years

Family Life

DuPont Colored Schools versus White/Integrated Schools

H. Guidelines for formatting summary document

Please adhere to the following formatting for summary submissions:

1. Margins: Top and Bottom: ".05"; Left and Right: ".08"
2. Font - Times New Roman; size - 12
3. Body - Left Alignment
4. Two spaces after periods to start new sentences.
5. Indent first line of paragraph
6. Line spacing 1.5
7. No extra spacing between paragraphs
8. Bold and underlined for section headings i.e. **School Years**

I. Guidelines for editing transcripts

Required Edits:

1. Make sure preferred names show for speakers, e.g. when the interviewee says call me "Ned" then show Ned and not his or her full name. Same goes for the interviewer.
2. Remove all [brackets] replace with either understandable words or remove entirely.

3. Correct all spelling errors, especially of spoken names.
4. Remove all repetitive words and expressions.

Recommended Edits:

1. When “yeah” is written as a response, try to see if “yes” is not a more appropriate term for that particular moment.
2. When a speaker is cut-off by another speaker, end the phrase with three dots ...
3. If you know what a speaker meant to say, but left out a word or two, then put the word(s) in [brackets].
4. When a speaker is only expressing that he or she did not hear or understand what was said, instead of showing that segment in print, delete and only show what was asked and what was answered.
5. When a person uses the wrong verb tense or wrong word, correct it only if it helps clarify or makes it easier to read the “sentence or phrase, e.g. “she *don*’t go there any more,” can be changed to “she *doesn*’t go there any more.”

J. List of Oral History Questions

AATF DuPont Schools Project Oral History Questions

My name is _____, and I am collecting oral histories in connection with the DuPont school project sponsored by the African American Task Force of Preservation Delaware Incorporated. Today’s date is _____ and the time is _____. I am speaking today with _____. Good afternoon Mr/Mrs. _____. Is this how you would like me to address you during this interview? Or is there a name that you prefer I use? Before we begin, are you participating in this interview of your own free will?

A. Students

1. What grade(s) did you attend at _____ School? Do you remember the year you started at that school and the year you left? How old were you when you started and finished school? Did you return to school as an adult?
2. Did you live in the community where you attended school? If not, how far away did you live?
3. How did you get to and from school?
4. Did your community help you in any way to get to and from school? If so, how did they help?
5. Can you describe for me what a typical day was like for you at your school?
6. What subject(s) received the most attention or was given the most emphasis in your schoolwork?
7. What do you remember about the school that changed your outlook on life?
8. What sacrifices did your parents and family make in order to give you the opportunity to get this education?
9. What skill or topic that you learned from school had the most profound impact on your personal/professional development?
10. How do you think your education differed from that offered in “white” schools? Why?

11. Talk about your teachers. Which of your former teachers made an impact on you? How? Why?
12. Which aspects of Black History did you learn in school? What do you most recall? Which Black History topics most inspired you?
13. When and how did you learn “Lift Every Voice and Sing”? What were you told about the song’s significance and meaning? Was it sung in classes or at school events?
14. Much has been written and discussed about the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board case that ended legal segregation in public schools. What do you recall about the NAACP’s role in that case? (i.e. In 1949, the Wilmington Branch of the NAACP petitioned Governor Elbert Carvel and the State Assembly to support the passage of the Delaware Civil Rights Bill)
15. What did you think and how did you feel upon hearing or reading about it? (i.e. Recall the conversations about it at your school; home; church)
16. Did you ever purchase or raise money for your own school supplies? Did you share your supplies with other students?
17. What role did your guardian/caretakers/parents play in your education? Did your guardian/ caretakers/parents explain why it was important to go to school? If so, how did they emphasize that importance?
18. How many students were in your class(es)?
19. Did you have siblings attending school along with you? Did they attend the same school? Was their school day or education different from yours? If yes, how so?
20. What do you remember about how racism and discrimination affected your life as a student?
21. Did you attend an integrated school during your school career? Which one? Please describe some of your experiences.
22. Did any of your brothers or sisters, or other members of your immediate or extended family attend a DuPont School in Delaware or what was known as a colored school? Can you give me their names? Are any still living? Can you provide me with contact information so I can talk to them?
23. Do you know any other people in your community who attended a DuPont School in Delaware or what was known as a colored school? Can you provide me with their names and contact information?
24. Was there anything that I did not ask you would like to comment on?
25. Are there any questions you were not asked that you feel should be a part of this interview?

B. Teachers

1. In which DuPont school(s) did you teach? When did you start and when did you leave? Which grades did you teach? How many grades did you teach? How many teachers taught at the school? How many grades did you have in your classroom? How many students?
2. Did you ever teach in any other school? Which schools did you teach in?
3. How long were you a teacher? Were you ever at student at a DuPont School before becoming a teacher? If so, what influenced you the most to becoming a teacher?

4. Did you live in the community where you taught school? If not, where did you live and how far was that from the school?
5. As a teacher at what was known as a colored school, were you mandated to emphasize certain subjects over others? If so, what subjects and why?
6. Were you ever forbidden or told to keep away from teaching certain topics or discussing certain issues in class? If so, can you remember any of those topics or issues?
7. Did you ever purchase or raise money for your own school supplies? Did you share your supplies with other teachers?
8. Did white teachers or administrators work at any of the schools where you taught?
9. Did you teach aspects of Black History in your classes? If so, what topics did you teach? What materials and resources did you use? (i.e. Negro History Bulletin, Black newspapers, etc.)
10. How did your students respond/react to learning about Black history?
11. Did you participate and engage your students in the observance of Negro History Week? How?
12. In what ways or to what extent did Black teachers and principals have input into the curriculum?
13. Was “Lift Every Voice and Sing” sung in classes or at school events? If so, who introduced or approved it?
14. Much has been written and discussed about the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board case that ended legal segregation in public schools. What do you recall about the NAACP’s role in that case? (i.e. In 1949, the Wilmington Branch of the NAACP petitioned Governor Elbert Carvel and the State Assembly to support the passage of the Delaware Civil Rights Bill)
15. Back to the 1954 Brown v. Board decision, what did you think and how did you feel upon hearing its announcement? (i.e. Recall the conversations about it at your school and among your educator colleagues)
16. Was there anything that I did not ask you would like to comment on?
17. Are there any questions you were not asked that you feel should be a part of this interview?

C. Community Members

1. Did you or any member of your community have a role to play in how _____ school functioned?
2. Did you or any member of your community have a role to play in how students traveled back and forth to school?
3. Was there an amenable working relationship between the school and members of the community? Were members of the community welcomed into the school and were there joint programs and projects initiated? (i.e. sororities, fraternities, clubs, etc.)
4. Were parents and influential community members given a voice in what and how students were taught?
5. Did community social events, festive gatherings, or civil rights gatherings ever affect the opening or closing of the school? Explain.
6. Were there protective associations in the community? Do you have any memory of an associate rallying to protect a school or students?

7. Was there anything that I did not ask you would like to comment on?
8. Are there any questions you were not asked that you feel should be a part of this interview?

K. Project Director’s weekly Excel report form

DuPont Schools Oral History

WEEKLY REPORT

Dr. Abdullah Muhammad □

Preservation Delaware, Inc.

DATE: Week Ending January 29, 2021

PROJECT DETAILS							
SCHOOL	PLANNED INTERVIEWS	INTERVIEWS COMPLETED	TRANSCRIPTIONS COMPLETED	SUMMARIES COMPLETED	SCHOOL REPORT COMPLETION (%)	INTERVIEWS SCHEDULED	NOTES (25 words)
WEEKLY RESULTS							
HOCKESSIN							
HOWARD HIGH							
THOMAS D. CLAYTON							
DEL. STATE H.S.							
RABBITS FERRY							
RICHARD ALLEN							

L. Participant Excel spreadsheet

AATF DuPont Schools Participants	Age	DuPont School Affiliation & County	DuPont School Years	Grades	Recording	Potential Donation	C & R Form	Transcript	Summary	Writer
(DSP-001)	93	Lincoln Sch, Milford Colored Sch 3-C, Delaware State College H.S./Kent	1932-1945	1st to 12th	Zoom	YES	YES	complete	complete	
(DSP-002)	96	Richard Allen School/Sussex; Howard High School/NCC	1930-1945	1st to 12th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	ARM
(DSP-003)	76	Richard Allen School, Georgetown/Sussex	1951-1957	1st to 6th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-004)	88	Richard Allen School, Georgetown/Sussex	1939-1948	1st to 10th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	UD
(DSP-005)	77	Richard Allen School, Georgetown/Sussex	1950-1956	1st to 6th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-006)	72	Rabbit's Ferry School, Georgetown/Sussex	1954-1960	1st to 6th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-007)	102	Williamsville, Delaware State College HS/Kent	1924-1937	1st to 12th	phone	Yes	Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-008)	78	Howard High School/New Castle County	1959-1961	10th - 12th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-009)	87	Thomas D. Clayton Sch, Booker T. Washington, DE State Coll H.S./Kent	1938-1947	1-9 & 11-12	FCC		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-010)	68	Rabbit's Ferry School, Georgetown/Sussex	1957-1964	1st to 6th	Zoom	no	Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-011)	67	Rabbit's Ferry School, Georgetown/Sussex	1960-1963	1st to 3rd	Zoom	no	Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-012)	83	Howard High School/New Castle County	1943-1949	7th to 12th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-013)	83	Absolum Jones Colored Sch, Howard High School/New Castle County	1955	1st to 12th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-014)	72	Rabbit's Ferry School, Georgetown/Sussex	1954-1960	1st to 6th	Zoom	no	yes	complete	complete	ARM
(DSP-015)	84	Howard High School/New Castle County	1949-1955	7th to 12th	FCC	Yes	Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-016)	90	Hockessin Colored School 107C, Howard High School/NCC	1937-1942	2nd to 6th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-017)	77	Rabbit's Ferry School, Georgetown/Sussex	1949-1955	1st to 6th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-018)	85	Hockessin Colored Sch, Howard High School/NCC	1939-1946; 1946-1953	1st to 12th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-019)	94	Howard High School/NCC	1940-1945	7th to 12th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-020)	74	Thomas D. Clayton Sch, Smyrna/Kent	1952-1959	1st to 7th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-021)	71	Thomas D. Clayton Sch	1956-1961	1st to 5th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-022)	76	Thomas D. Clayton Sch	1951-1956	2nd to 7th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-023)	76	Thomas D. Clayton Sch, Smyrna/Kent	1950-1957	1st to 8th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-024)	97	Hockessin Colored School #107C, Howard High School/NCC	1929-1934	1st to 6th	FCC		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-025)	91	Hockessin Colored School #107C, Howard High School/NCC	1936-1944	1st to 9th	Zoom		Yes	complete	complete	
(DSP-026)	79	Thomas D. Clayton Sch, Booker T. Washington	1948-1955	1st to 8th	FCC	Yes	Yes	complete	complete	

M. Blank Consent Form

DuPont Schools Oral History Project Permission and Release Form

I, _____, am a willing participant in the **DuPont Schools Oral History Project**, (hereinafter “*the Project*”). I understand that the purpose of this Project is to collect audio and/or video recordings and selected documentary materials (such as photographs, manuscripts, artifacts, and other memorabilia) that may be deposited in the collections at the *Delaware Historical Society*. The deposited documentary materials may be used for scholarly, educational, and other purposes that will advance the historical awareness and significance of DuPont Schools. I understand that the *Delaware Historical Society*, including the *Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage* (hereafter “The Mitchell Center”) plans to retain the product of my participation as a part of this collection and that materials may be used for exhibition, publication, online presentations, and any successor technologies, for the promotion of the institution and its activities in any media.

I hereby grant *the Project* and *Preservation Delaware, Inc.*, (hereafter PDI) ownership of the physical property delivered to their representatives and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview, photographs, written materials, and other memorabilia) as stated above.

By giving permission I understand that I do not give up any copyright that I may hold. I also grant *the Project* and *PDI*, my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) provided by me or taken of me in the course of my participation in *the Project* to be used, published, and copied by *the Project* and *PDI* in any media.

I further permit copies of the above listed materials to be made available to local, state, and national archives, websites, or databases at the discretion of *the Project* and *PDI*.

I further agree that *the Project* and *PDI* may use my name, video, or photographic image of my likeness, statements, and voice reproduction or other sound effects without further approval on my part.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Abdullah R. Muhammad, project director at: a.muhammad3@gmail.com or call (302) 565-7879.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____ Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Mailing address: _____

_____ Zip: _____

Project Director: _____ Date: _____ 49

President of PDI: _____