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### Mr. Baxter's School

Marion T. Wright

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## MR. BAXTER'S SCHOOL

BY MARION THOMPSON WRIGHT, MONTCLAIR

THE JAMES M. BAXTER TERRACE, a housing project for colored people, now under construction in Newark, serves as a very potent reminder to several inhabitants of that city and its environs of the school which they attended under James M. Baxter's leadership. Until very recently little has been known of the Colored School in Newark prior to his coming in 1864, but old records have recently yielded interesting data concerning the origin and development of this institution which nurtured so many of the Negro inhabitants of nineteenth century Newark. From 1828 to 1909 this school did much to assist its pupils in acquiring the rudiments of learning that are so essential to constructive social living. Let us consider then, first, the origin and development of this school prior to 1864 and second, its subsequent history under the incumbency of Mr. Baxter.

It was on April 14, 1828, that Abraham and John King, two colored men, made application for assistance towards the education of poor colored children in the town, amounting to the number of fifty.<sup>1</sup> The Town Fathers responded to this plea by immediately resolving that "the sum of one hundred dollars be raised for the poor coloured children's instruction in the township, to be paid out at the discretion of the town committee."<sup>2</sup> The following year a similar amount was raised for this purpose.<sup>3</sup>

But during this same year, 1829, the following letter to the editors of the *Newark Sentinel of Freedom* indicated that all was not going well in the matter of educating Newark's children of color:

Messrs Editors—As there are no regular schools for the colored children in this town at present, one of your subscribers is willing to give ten, or if required, twenty

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes of the Township of Newark," 4/14/1828.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* 4/12/30.

dollars towards the establishment of one or more schools, as soon as some of our enterprising citizens will attend to it.

In reply to which the editors made the following comment :

Our correspondent above appears to feel a lively interest in the education of colored children—and it is certainly a matter of great importance, both as respects their morals and their usefulness to society. Until lately, the Rev. Mr. Anderson, (a colored preacher)<sup>4</sup> has had charge of the African School; and to encourage which the Township appropriated and paid one hundred dollars the last year. The same sum for this object, was again voted at the last Town Meeting. If there is now no colored school in operation, we should say there is culpable neglect on the part of the colored people, many of whom are able, and ought to take a deep interest in the education of their children—They are, however, very lax on this subject. The school, to be efficient, ought to be organized and superintended by an active and benevolent committee of white people.<sup>5</sup>

But a much more encouraging picture of the educational opportunities for Negro children was presented when a committee consisting of William T. Hamilton, Theodore Frelinghuysen, and L. A. Smith reported that they had attended the examination of the colored school, conducted by the Reverend Mr. Hughes, their teacher, a colored man, in the African Church in Academy, back of Washington Street on Friday the 23d, of the same year. They stated that they “were most agreeably surprised by the order and good conduct, and good scholarship of the children; who, if they did not read quite so fluently, or answer questions in geography and arithmetic quite so promptly as others who have had superior advantages, gave convincing proof of attention to their studies, and of solid, nay, even rapid improvement. In spelling and in writing, as well as

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<sup>4</sup>The Reverend Mr. Anderson was pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church which was the first Negro Church established in Newark. See *Newark Daily Advertiser*, 8/9/1897.

<sup>5</sup>*Newark Sentinel of Freedom*, 6/16/1829.

in the neatness of their books, and their persons, the children of this school would suffer in comparison with but few of their age.”<sup>6</sup>

Continuing, the committee related that “in the evening, the children recited pieces committed to memory, in the presence of a large assembly, chiefly of their own color. Perfect good order reigned in the house—the singing by the choir of colored people was good—and the whole exercises highly gratifying to every intelligent spectator—to every friend of humanity. It is hoped, they insisted, that “this enterprise so happily commenced will be persevered in, that the colored people will strain every nerve to avail themselves of the opportunity of having their children well instructed in the more needful branches of learning, and in correct morals,—and that a generous Christian community will hold out the hand of patronage to this portion of their fellow men, beginning to shake off the lethargy of ages, and to open their eyes to the advantages of knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

Yet this school, which had so favorably impressed the committee, was having a very real struggle in continuing its existence as is evidenced in the following report made to the Town Council on April 12, 1830:

To the Inhabitants of the Township of Newark, In Town Meeting Assembled,

The subscribers being a Committee appointed at a meeting held on the evening of the 29th ult. by the people of colour of this town, to devise means for a more efficient support of the Coloured School, beg leave, respectfully to offer the following statement.

Fully convinced, that there is nothing more essential to the well-being of the rising generation of our race, than education; and whereas, experience has taught us, that except a more liberal appropriation should be made by the Township, on behalf of our school, its existence cannot but be of very limited duration, we would humbly state its present embarrassments and pray you for relief.

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* 11/10/1829.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

The Public are, perhaps, not aware that the people of colour of this Township are, without exception, poor, and some of us very poor. They have been accustomed to estimate our condition, by the barely genteel appearance which some of us, by persevering industry, endeavor to make. When we are necessitated to solicit aid to our Institution, we have often received this reply,—The Coloured people ought to support themselves.—But were you conversant with our real circumstances, you could not but deeply sympathize with, and hasten to our relief.

The pressure of the times, has in all certainty, operated heavily on us. Individuals, scrupulously punctual in meeting engagements have of late, from this cause, been unable to answer just demands. In proof of this, we have to refer you to a statement made by the Teacher in February past, to the Town Committee: by which it appears that there were forty children attached to the school—and the quarterly amount, expected to have been received, averaged \$35.—the receipts of the Teacher, however, for the last five months and upwards have not exceeded \$13.

There are, to this date, upwards of forty children of both sexes connected with the school; and could we obtain a competent support, we judge from special observation on this important subject, that to this number there would speedily be added, from sixty to one hundred children of the township.

Confident that on deliberation, the subject will be favourably disposed of, we cheerfully submit it; and have the honour to subscribe etc. etc.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this plea, the Town Fathers increased the appropriation of the two previous years from one hundred dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars.<sup>9</sup> At the same time the town council resolved that the school committee consisting of Silas Condit, James Bruen, Ellison Conger, and C. H. Shipman, take charge of the money and superintend the coloured school.<sup>10</sup>

The following report of the teacher of the school for this same

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<sup>8</sup>“Report of Coloured School” Filed with Township Papers 1829-1830, City Clerk's Office, Newark.

<sup>9</sup>“Minutes of the Township of Newark,” 4/12/1830.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

year tells us something about the curriculum and the progress of the pupils:

The third quarter of my services, having expired, I beg leave to render the committee the above bill accompanied with a brief statement of the present condition of the school.

The whole number of children at present attached to this school, is forty-eight; three of whom are taught Grammar and Geography; twenty, including the above three, writing; nine, likewise including the above three Arithmetic; and all of these are daily exercised in Spelling and Reading.

Of the remaining twenty-eight—eight are learning the alphabet; eleven are advanced to Spelling in words of two syllables; and nine, to three syllables.

But little can with certainty be said of the quarterly amount to be derived from the School, the calculation made in my last statement of \$35.00 p quarter, has not exceeded \$5.

With regards to the improvements made and making, I have to refer you to the School Committee of the Township.

A second, and what appears to be, final report made by the Negro representatives, throws additional light upon the problems of the school, the enrollment, the curriculum, the texts used and the progress of the children:

Newark,<sup>11</sup> April 1831

To the Citizens of Newark  
In Town-Meeting Assembled }

The Committee of Coloured Schools beg leave to represent to Town Meeting, that amid many serious difficulties, the School yet exists. To sustain it till the present date, all the energy of the Committee and of the Teacher have been brought into requisition. Notwithstanding, its embarrassments have been of so formidable a nature, that during the late season of inclemency, it was near to its dissolution.

During the past Summer, nearly ninety children have been, at once, taught in the School; and had the Teacher

<sup>11</sup>“Statement from Col. School To Township Committee,” Filed with Township Papers 1829-1830, City Clerk’s Office, Newark.

been in possession of information which at a late period he received, his bills would have very considerably overreached the Township appropriation of last year, in as much as no remuneration has been received for the mass.

The School at present number fifty-two children, from two to fourteen years of age. The branches of instruction in which they are instructed, are Spelling, Reading and Writing; Arithmetic, English Grammar and Geography. Murray's Grammer and Woodbridge's Geography are the systems used. Hazen's symbolical primer has of late been introduced by the Teacher; this has very materially advanced the improvement of the lesser children.

The general progress of the scholars afford matter of encouragement.

To the first inst. total of receipts from

Do.	parents	\$51.25
Do.	Do. from Township	139.83

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\$191.03 (sic)

Could an adequate support be obtained, very many children of the helpless poor, might be added to the School and be benefitted by a participation in the ordinary privileges of a Christian Community.

The Committee would therefore, most respectfully submit this statement to the candid consideration of their fellow citizens; and praying them for further assistance.

John C. King, Chairman  
Jno. D. Clossom, Sec'y<sup>12</sup>

To the appropriations from the township were added the fees of \$1.50 per child a quarter<sup>13</sup> that could be collected. Another appropriation of \$150.00 was made for the year 1831.<sup>14</sup> The following year the allotment was increased to \$200.00<sup>15</sup> while in 1833 the amount was \$250.00.<sup>16</sup> That others besides the Negro sponsors of the schools realized the inadequacy of the financial

<sup>12</sup>"Report of the Colored School" Filed with Township Papers 1831-1832, in City Clerk's Office, Newark.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>"Minutes of Township of Newark" 4/11/31.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* 4/9/32.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.* 4/8/33.

support rendered the institution is evidenced by the following editorial comment of the *Newark Sentinel*:

We learn that the School Committee for the Township of Newark have made a quarterly distribution of the school fund for the quarter ending July, as follows:

To the Female Union School	\$89.37½
To 643 Scholars taught in the several schools, reported to the Committee a dividend of 78 cents each	501.54
To 106 Colored Children, taught in two schools, a dividend of 55 cents each	58.30
	\$649.21½

From the above statement it appears that the specific appropriation made for the colored schools, owing to their increase does not afford them a dividend equal to the white children, and from the fact of the extreme poverty of the parents of the colored children, the Teachers are able to collect but very little from them. The Teachers of the schools should be further remunerated, their present allowance will not support them.<sup>17</sup>

An increased sensitivity to the educational needs of the colored children appears in a report of the school committee in 1836, when Newark became a city. The report stated that "The school committee are required to take up the colourd (sic) children in the city and make provisions for their education either by establishing one or more separate and distinct schools or other wise according to their discretion."<sup>18</sup>

John J. Miter, in an article, reveals that the schools established for the colored children were separate ones. After mentioning the fact that the Negro population, which numbered between eight and nine hundred, was divided between the Zion's Methodists and the Presbyterian denominations, Mr.

<sup>17</sup>*Newark Sentinel of Freedom* 7/28/35.

<sup>18</sup>Report of School Committee, July 1, 1836." Filed under Common Council Street and Highways Committee Rep. Reso. 1836-1850, City Clerk's Office, Newark.



Miter, describing his visits to the colored schools, made these interesting remarks :

On the next day, I spent the morning in visiting their schools. One is taught by the Rev. Mr. Drayton, a colored brother. I found the children well dressed and orderly. They listened with great eagerness to my remarks. Their bright eyes, and joyful countenances, at the sound of a white man's voice, bespoke both their gratitude and their ability to appreciate my remarks—When I sat down they sang an appropriate hymn. The number of scholars is 30.— The other is taught by Mr. *Wood*, a colored young man preparing to preach the gospel. In my presence, he examined a class of twelve scholars in geography and the promptitude, and accuracy, with which they answered, did honor both to themselves and teacher. I was very favorably impressed with the peculiar skill which he manifested in the management of his school. He has taught the school but three weeks—has 50 scholars, and is daily receiving new accessions.<sup>19</sup>

The next interesting and informative statement, made in the ensuing year, 1837, leads definitely to the inference that the schools mentioned above were divided on the basis of sex and that women were being allowed to teach these colored children.

The Examination of the Colored Female School of Newark took place on Friday Sep. 1, 1837. The School is under the instruction of Miss Sawyer a lady of ample qualifications. The pupils were examined in reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, and geography. The Mayor of the city attended the examination, and pronounced it to be as good as he ever witnessed, for the time they had been under instruction. It is important to be known also, that the Mayor, the Hon. Mr. Frelinghuysen, made some remarks for the encouragement of the school. He alluded to the great fact that God has made of one blood, all nations, and reminded us that the elevation of our race depends upon the instruction of our daughters. There were present a goodly number of the ladies, who expressed themselves to be highly pleased. The exercises were closed with prayer by Rev. T. P. Hunt.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>*The Emancipator* (New York) December 22, 1836.

<sup>20</sup>*Colored American* (New York) September 30, 1837.

In 1839, the annual report of the trustees of the school fund of the State of New Jersey reveals that the Male African School on Academy Street had one building, one teacher and sixty-eight scholars on roll with an average attendance of thirty-nine. At the same time, the Female African School on Plane Street had one building, one teacher, and fifty scholars with an average attendance of thirty.<sup>21</sup>

These provisions for the education of Negro children continued until 1845 when the Board of Education resolved "that the appropriation at present paid to Junius C. Morel for the Colored School in Plane Street cease after the first of October next, and that the Secretary be instructed to pay no more money to the said Teacher or School after that date until further order of this Committee."<sup>22</sup> A year later the Board appointed Dr. Congar and Mr. Whitehead to "enquire into the propriety of reopening the Colored School."<sup>23</sup> This committee subsequently informing the Board that the upper room of the Colored Presbyterian Church could be obtained for \$40.00 a year, recommended the employment of a teacher at a salary of \$200.00 a year, the room and fuel to be furnished by the committee.<sup>24</sup> In October of that year the school was reopened with Mr. Samuel Tomkins as the teacher.<sup>25</sup>

The following year, 1847, brought a recommendation that the fee system, which had caused the original school sponsors so much difficulty, be abolished. At the same time the Board instructed Miss Weeks and Mr. Whitehead "to inquire the wants of the Colored School in respect to books and maps."<sup>26</sup> At the next meeting not only did the Board accept the recommendation to abolish entirely the pay system but increased the salary of the teacher to \$300.00 per annum.<sup>27</sup>

Citizens who believed that the ends of the education could

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<sup>21</sup>*Annual Report of the Trustees of the School Fund of the State of New Jersey*, (Trenton), 1839, p. 23

<sup>22</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education" 8/25/45.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* 6/17/46.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* 8/3/46.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.* 10/2/46.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* 4/23/47.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.* 5/10/47.

best be served through a separation of the sexes encountered defeat when they petitioned for another colored female school. The school committee reported against the petition for such a building because the school moneys had been expended for the year.<sup>28</sup>

In 1849, Article XII of the School Regulations appears to have placed the status of the Negro school upon a firmer basis. It provided that "there shall be a Public School for Colored Children, to be located in the upper rooms of the Brick Church in Plane Street to which colored children of both sexes, residing within the limits of the city, will be admitted on application to the teacher. And the said school shall be conducted in conformity with these regulations as far as they are applicable."<sup>29</sup>

In 1851, Mr. E. H. Freeman took over the school<sup>30</sup> when Mr. Tompkins resigned because of ill health.<sup>31</sup> But Mr. Freeman evidently did not remain in the good graces of the parents of his pupils because six years later, the colored people presented a memorial to the Board of Education requesting his removal.<sup>32</sup> Mr. Freeman tendered his resignation and was succeeded by Mr. Wilbur Strong.<sup>33</sup>

In the years that followed the parents of the children continued to evince their interests in the welfare of their children through requests for a female assistant teacher,<sup>34</sup> a suitable school building,<sup>35</sup> and for the appointment of a teacher to instruct their girls in plain and ornamental needle work during school hours.<sup>36</sup>

A new note was injected into the policies of the school administration when a resolution that the colored schools coming under the public school system shall be entitled to all the benefits and privileges arising therefrom, yielded to the adop-

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<sup>28</sup>Minutes of the City Council, 11/6/48.

<sup>29</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education," 6/27/49.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.* 5/31/51.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* 5/9/51.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* 4/24/57.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* 6/26/57.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* 1/13/58.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* 1/28/59.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.* 9/30/64.

tion of another resolution to the effect that the subject of amending the Regulations, so as to provide for the admission of colored children into all the schools under the care of the Board be referred to a special committee.<sup>37</sup> But the committee finding itself unable at this time to support such a radical procedure reported that they had carefully considered the subject referred to them, and were of the opinion that no amendment of the regulations relating to the public schools of the nature above specified ought, under existing circumstances, to be recommended or adopted.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, the committee insisted that it felt a deep interest in the education of the colored children. The Board of Education, it said, had established a public school for their special benefit, which was then in successful operation under efficient and competent teachers. If additional means of instruction therein were necessary for the more advanced pupils, the committee was of the opinion that they should be supplied by the Board, as its funds may allow or the exigencies of the school might require.<sup>39</sup>

The Board adopted the report by a 12-5 vote but Mr. Gould gave notice that at the next meeting he would move to amend the regulations so as to provide that the teachers of the colored school should receive the same salary as the teachers in the grammar schools.<sup>40</sup> It was nine months later before the Board referred to a committee the following resolution—"Resolved that the Rules be so amended as to allow the Board of Education to raise the Col'd School in this city to the Grade of the Grammar Schools and that the salary of the teacher be made equal to other teachers of the same grade."<sup>41</sup> Since the expediency of making such increases depended upon the finances of the Board, the resolution was subsequently referred to the Committee on Finance.<sup>42</sup>

In 1862, Mr. Wilbur Strong resigned as principal of the

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* 3/25/59.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.* 5/8/59.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.* 7/29/59.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.* 4/6/60.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

school.<sup>43</sup> The next meeting announced the appointment of Mr. Allen M. Bland to this position.<sup>44</sup> At the same time Miss Pierson, chairman of the Committee on the Colored School announced the removal of the school from Plane Street to Fair Street.

It was years later that the parents of the children asking for the removal of Mr. Strong pledged themselves to send one hundred pupils to the school. But the Board decided that the school be closed for the time being, because of the small attendance.<sup>45</sup> In a little more than two weeks the Board received a communication from a group of "citizens interested in the colored school, expressing their desire for a continuance of the educational advantages heretofore enjoyed and a determination to use the means necessary to secure a full attendance upon the school."<sup>46</sup> The Board then accepted the resignation of Mr. Bland and reappointed Mr. Wilbur Strong in his stead.

Mr. Strong served only one year following this action. But the frequent turnover in this position ended when Mr. James M. Baxter taking over the leadership of the school in 1864 served in that capacity until 1909.

During Mr. Baxter's incumbency several objectives which had been recommended or suggested became a reality. The quality of the work done was improved; an evening school was established; the school was moved to improved quarters; Negroes were admitted to the high schools, and all the schools of the city were opened to Negro children.

In the years that followed many favorable comments were made concerning the progress of the school under its new and progressive principal. In 1868, the superintendent of schools in his annual report declared that this school had done a good year's work, and that the attendance had been better than for many years.<sup>47</sup> Two years later, the United States Commissioner of Education made the following comment:

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<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.* 7/25/62.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.* 8/29/62.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.* 8/10/63.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.* 8/28/63.

<sup>47</sup>*Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Newark.*

This school has done a good year's work. The attendance has been better than for many years, and yet there ought to be more colored children in school. The school-house is not large, but if put in good repair and well furnished would well accommodate all who attend. The average attendance last year has been greater than in any previous year since the organization of the school, which is 81. The building has capacity for 100 pupils, but it needs thorough repairs.

The principal is a good teacher, and the pupils are well taught. The evening school for colored youths has been held in this building, and well attended by young persons of both sexes. While the school was established at the request of a large number of young men and for their benefit, I regret that so few have availed themselves of its advantages. The great majority of the evening pupils were females. The prevailing complaint of this, as of other evening schools, is irregularity.<sup>48</sup>

In regard to the evening school mentioned above, it was in 1860 that Mr. Gould sponsored a motion requesting the Committee on Evening School "to inquire into the expediency and practicability of opening an Evening School for the benefit of the colored citizens of the city."<sup>49</sup> A spokesman for the committee later reported that having learned that the Board had not sufficient funds he did not think it expedient to open such a school and so had not called a meeting of the committee.<sup>50</sup> A minute of 1868, however, mentions the existence of an evening school for colored youths in the Fair Street School with Mr. Baxter as the teacher.<sup>51</sup>

During all the previous years of the school's existence and during the life of the high school which was opened in 1838, no Negro child had been permitted to enroll in the secondary schools. As seen above, the attempt in 1859 to open all the schools to colored children had failed. In May 1871, Mr. Sayre's resolution "that at the approaching examinations for

<sup>48</sup>*United States Commissioner of Education Report*, 1870, (Washington, 1870).

<sup>49</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education," 10/11/60.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.* 11/7/60.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.* 8/28/68.

admission to the High School, candidates from the Colored School if properly qualified shall be admitted to examination with a view to admission" was laid on the table.<sup>52</sup> When at the next meeting Mr. Sayre successfully moved that his motion be taken from the table, the following substitute motion passed: "That the resolution be referred to a select committee to report upon the propriety of introducing into the Colored Public School, as they may be required, such studies as are now found in the high school."<sup>53</sup>

But Mr. Taylor gave notice that at the regular monthly meeting in June he would move to amend Regulation 48 by inserting at the end thereof the words, "And that in its relation to the High School, and for the purpose of furnishing candidates for admission thereto, the Colored School shall be deemed and taken for a grammar school."<sup>54</sup> The motion was finally carried the following September,<sup>55</sup> and the first colored pupil to be admitted under the new ruling was Mrs. Irene Pataquam Mulford.<sup>56</sup>

Another problem which provoked much discussion were the difficulties arising from the location of the school. The Board declared that "Whereas, By the removal of the Public Colored School from Fair Street to State Street it is rendered impossible or very inconsistent for the colored families living in the lower part of the city to send their children to the said school to acquire the education necessary for the proper performance of their duties as citizens;

Resolved, That the Committee on School Houses be and they are hereby instructed to select a suitable site on which to build a public school house for colored children."<sup>57</sup>

But insufficient funds prevented further action at this time.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.* 6/1/71.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.* 6/1/71.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.* 9/29/71.

<sup>56</sup>*Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education for 1872* (Newark, 1872) p. 52. Mrs. Mulford is still living and her daughter, Mae Mulford, is now teaching in the Newark Public School System.

<sup>57</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education," 8/25/71.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* 9/29/71.

Two months later the Board recognizing that it was its duty "in connection with the Common Council of the City of Newark to provide suitable accommodations for the education of the colored children appointed a committee to select a lot in a proper location for a school for colored children."<sup>59</sup>

In his annual report for this same year Superintendent George Sears addressing himself to this vexing problem opened the way for a consummation of policy which had been suggested several years before :

The Colored School has had a very prosperous year, notwithstanding the disadvantages under which it labors in regard to the great distance most of the pupils are obliged to travel. As a school I believe it takes rank with any of our schools of a corresponding grade. The school is under excellent discipline, and I have never heard a complaint from those living in the vicinity, that the pupils were not orderly or polite. During the ensuing year I have no doubt but that some different arrangements will be made for the colored children, and it will probably be one of the three following: providing a central school, providing three or four schools in different sections of the city; or requiring all to attend the schools provided for white children.

Which of these will be best for the colored children is the difficult question. I believe one central school would be better for the colored people than three or four smaller schools. Let the small children under 8 or 10 years of age, attend the Primary Schools in their respective districts, and all above that age be required to attend the central school, where they may pursue studies adapted to their capabilities, and I believe the colored people would be satisfied. If the small colored children were permitted in the Primary Schools already established, as they are in the High School, prejudices of color would be softened, and the people would gradually become prepared for the time that is surely coming, and I believe is near at hand, when no distinction in regard to public school accommodations will be made on the basis of color.

While I would not hasten this state of things, to the prejudice of either the white or the colored citizens, I

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.* 11/24/71.



believe it is wise for all to prepare their minds for such an event, and I sometimes think it is hardly worth the while to build separate school-houses. Our prayer is that the Board may have the wisdom to do that which is right and expedient in regard to both these perplexing questions relating to the German and colored school population.<sup>60</sup>

When in the following year, 1872, Mr. Jenkinson moved "that colored children when applying to the Principals of the Primary or Grammar Schools in any district where they reside, shall be admitted to the school under their charge subject to the Regulations of the Board," Mr. Taylor successfully sponsored the following substitute motion, "that Colored children are, and are hereby declared to be, entitled to admission to all public schools of the city on the same terms and conditions as other children."<sup>61</sup>

In his annual report for that year, Superintendent Sears paid high tribute to the colored pupils and to Mr. Baxter, Miss Marcia King, and Mr. O'Fake, their principal and teachers when he said that :

Another important item in our year's work is the opening of the doors of all grades of our schools for the admission of colored children. Not very many colored children availed themselves of this privilege though there are some in all grades of schools from the Normal to the Primary, and to the credit of teachers and scholars it can be said that their entrance produced hardly a ripple upon the atmosphere of the schools. Out of 10,000, at least, in the schools I do not know of *ten* children who were withdrawn in consequence. There are probably sixty colored children in these schools. The greater portion of the colored children remain in colored school. It is due to the teachers in the colored school to state that in most instances where the inquiry has been made it has been found that the colored children have taken their place in the other schools upon the same grade of studies corresponding with the same grade

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<sup>60</sup>*Fifteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education in the City of Newark* (Newark, 1872) pp. 65-66.

<sup>61</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education," 2/23/72.

in the white school. That is those who were in the B class in the colored school have sustained themselves in the B class in the other schools. On the score of instruction the scholars have gained nothing by the change, in regard to distance, however, the advantage to many has been great. So far as color, race, or nationality is concerned our schools are emphatically free schools."<sup>62</sup>

Although colored children were now admitted to all schools, "Mr. Baxter's School" still continued its existence. In 1880, the chairman of the Colored School Committee moved that the committee be abolished since its existence was no longer necessary and the wants of the school were being taken care of by other committees.<sup>63</sup> It was not until May 1893, however, that this committee was actually dissolved.<sup>64</sup>

In the subsequent years, the school was moved to Commerce Street<sup>65</sup> and finally to Market Street where it remained during the remainder of its life span.<sup>66</sup> Before it was transferred to the Market Street site, the Committee on Colored Schools had called attention to the limited accommodations afforded the school. It stated that in the four small class rooms containing 230 scholars from fourth grade primary to first grade grammar, "success was very much impeded by mixed grades studying in the same room and by requiring from one teacher instruction in two or three grades."<sup>67</sup>

On May 27, 1909, the following resolution testified to the culmination of the splendid services rendered by Mr. Baxter as principal of the Colored School:

Whereas, James M. Baxter, who has served as principal in the public schools of the City of Newark, New Jersey for a full period of forty-four years and eight months, has made application to be retired from active duty upon half pay; therefore, be it

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<sup>62</sup>*Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Newark for the Year 1872.* (Newark, 1873) pp. 32-33.

<sup>63</sup>"Minutes of the Board of Education," 5/28/80.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.* 5/3/93.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.* 10/30/74.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.* 2/26/84.

*Resolved*, That in accordance with the provision of Chapter 121 of the Laws of 1907, entitled, "An Act providing for the pensioning of school teachers in this State," approved May 7, 1907, the said James M. Baxter be and he is hereby retired from active duty upon a yearly pension of one-half the average annual salary paid him during the last five years of service (\$806) per annum, dating from July 1, 1909.<sup>68</sup>

And then, seven months later, the following entry in the minutes told of the final act of the man whose memory has been honored through the naming of a housing project designed to promote better living conditions for present day citizens:

"The Committee regrets to report that James M. Baxter, formerly principal of the Colored School, who retired July 1, 1909, died December 28, 1909."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.* 5/27/1909.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.* 12/30/1909. Mr. Baxter's daughter, Grace Baxter Fenderson, is a teacher in the Newark public school system; a son Dr. Leroy Baxter, has served in the New Jersey Legislature while a grand-daughter, Julia Baxter was the first of her race to be admitted to the New Jersey College for Women and graduated with general honors.



## THE ROCKAWAY AND WHITE MEADOW FORGES

BY MOSES BIGELOW, NEW YORK CITY

THE ROCKAWAY RIVER formed the boundry between Hanover and Pequannock, two of the original townships of Morris County. The village of Rockaway situated on that river, eight miles north of Morristown, was the centre of an important iron district in 1776; the Presbyterian Church of Rockaway was the only church in the district at that time.

The first forge at Rockaway was built by Job Allen about 1730, and in 1748 Jacob Ford of Morristown "became the owner of land on both sides of the river at Rockaway, including the Allen Works." Green Pond brook flows into the Rockaway river about four miles west of Rockaway village and on this brook were Mt. Pleasant, Middle and