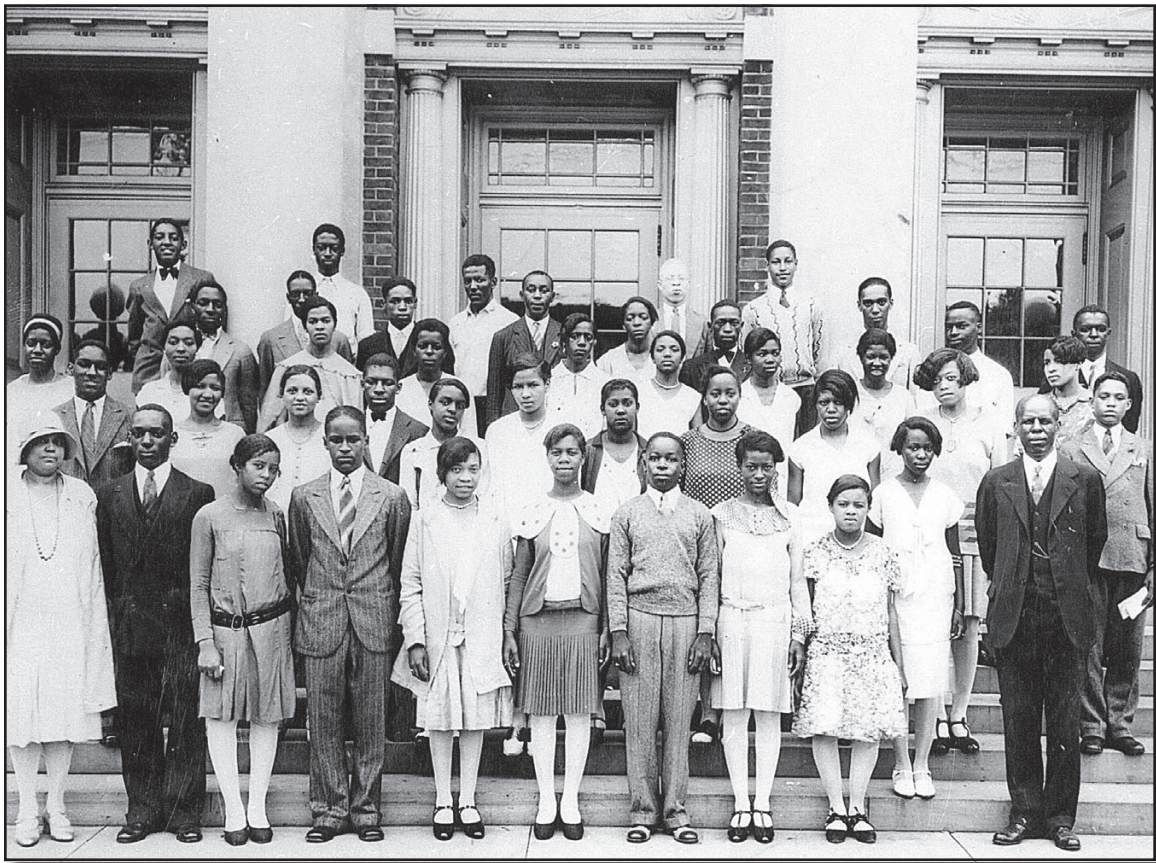




A SEPARATE PLACE

(THE SCHOOLS P.S. DU PONT BUILT)



Cover: First graduating class of the new Howard High School, 1929, George A. Johnson principal (bottom right). Courtesy of Samuel Peterson.

A SEPARATE PLACE
(The Schools P.S. du Pont Built)
Hagley Museum and Library

Information and Materials

I.	Introduction to the Resource Materials.....	2
II.	Background Information..... <i>Adapted from a summary by Michael Nash, Former Chief Curator of Manuscripts & Archives, Hagley Museum & Library</i>	4
III.	Primary Source Documents.....	8
IV.	Photos of Schools <i>Both before and after renovations. Both African American and white schools.</i>	27
V.	Suggested Classroom Activities Using These Materials	41

A Separate Place: The Schools P.S. du Pont Built

Overview of Resource Materials

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in this special program on African American education in Delaware during the early 20th century. The Hagley Museum & Library is fortunate to have a rich collection of photographs and papers that document P.S. du Pont's effort to reform the school system in Delaware and, in particular, to refurbish segregated school buildings. This project began with the research of one person, whose father was a long-time teacher at Absalom Jones in Newport, into her own family history and grew into a video documentary and these educational materials. We are thrilled to be able to share this fascinating and important information with you.

Goals and Objectives

Goal: To teach students and teachers about African American schools in Delaware during the early 20th century and the role that P.S. du Pont, then head of the DuPont Company, played in refurbishing those school buildings.

Objectives: After viewing the video and completing related classroom activities, the students will be able to:

- q Compare and contrast their own school experiences with those of students in segregated schools early in the twentieth century.
- q Interpret the effect of P.S. du Pont's contributions on both African American schools and communities throughout Delaware.
- q Identify one or two causes of the poor state of public education in Delaware during the first half of the twentieth century for African American students specifically and all students generally.

Materials

This packet contains an assortment of materials you may find useful in leading classroom activities on this subject. The materials include:

- ü Information on P.S. du Pont's involvement in reforming the education system in Delaware after the turn of the twentieth century. The summary provides background information that helps illustrate why the head of the DuPont

Company chose to spend \$6 million dollars of his own money to renovate school buildings all over the state.

- ü Selected excerpts from among the hundreds of thank you letters that school children sent to P.S. du Pont after their schools were renovated. They were chosen because they highlight issues that were important to African American communities at the time. They also provide a glimpse of what these schools were like to attend, both before and after the renovations, and of some of the lessons and activities students participated in. The letters are accompanied by suggestions on how to use them as part of lesson plans for different age groups.
- ü Copies of photographs of both segregated and white schools that P.S. du Pont had renovated and suggestions for using them in class.
- ü Instructions for doing hands-on activities that attempt to replicate lessons from these early twentieth-century African American schools. The lessons cover penmanship and citizenship, which were taught in most schools at the time. There are also activities specific to these Delaware schools--planning a school garden and creating an acrostic word puzzle to celebrate "DuPont Day." The included worksheets can be reproduced for classroom use.
- ü Evaluation forms for the program as well as for these materials. Your feedback will give us important data and help us maintain quality educational programs. Please mail or fax the completed evaluation forms to:

Coordinator of Education
Hagley Museum & Library
P.O. Box 3630
Wilmington, DE 19807

Fax: (302) 658-2230

Thank you for your help!

Pierre S. du Pont and African American Education in Delaware

Michael Nash
Former Chief Curator, Library Collections
Hagley Museum and Library

Between 1919 and 1940, Pierre S. du Pont donated more than \$6,000,000 to modernize the Delaware Public Schools. Most of these funds were directed towards African American schools with the vast majority of expenditures being devoted to school construction. What impact did Pierre du Pont's philanthropy make on Delaware's African American community? How did African Americans respond to this program of rebuilding schools? What kind of relationship did the African American community have with Pierre S. du Pont and he with them? Why did one of the nation's wealthiest men make this commitment to African American public education? How did the students and teachers who attended and worked in these schools remember their experiences? What does this chapter in our history reveal about race relations, the nature of philanthropy, and the role that public education played in building what E. Franklin Frazer has called the "Black Bourgeoisie?" What were the national implications of this story for both the African American community and white society? The answers to some of these important questions lie in Hagley's archives, where the papers of Pierre S. du Pont are kept. These papers provided the basis for a special temporary exhibit and school program, a documentary video, and curriculum materials.

Until the second decade of the twentieth century Delaware did not have anything resembling a state-wide school system. Local school districts operated with almost complete autonomy. Most rural schools were one-room schoolhouses without indoor plumbing, adequate heat, or lighting. School attendance was on average only ninety days per year with many children regularly missing school to work in the fields or orchards that dominated rural Delaware's landscape. Teacher salaries were extremely low and there were no standardized hiring guidelines. Until 1875, no public money was spent on African American education. There were some private elementary schools for black school children, but these were horribly underfunded even by Delaware standards. In 1881, the state legislature passed a law allowing African Americans to tax their own property for school construction and appropriated a small sum of money to support black school operations. Still, as late as 1911, the state was only spending on average \$427.86 to support the white schools and only \$273.24 for the typical African American schools. **Delaware was the only state in the union with a segregated system for collecting school taxes.** Part of the reason for this is that until the Progressive era, the Delaware legislature was dominated by the rabidly racist Democratic party whose main power base was the rural southern counties (Kent and Sussex). Since Delaware had remained loyal to the North during the Civil War, it was untouched by Reconstruction and its African

American residents did not benefit from the Freedman Bureau schools that were established elsewhere during the post-Civil War era.

In the early twentieth century, the political landscape began to change. Delaware started to industrialize with the area around Wilmington growing particularly rapidly. In 1902, the three du Pont cousins (Pierre S., Alfred I. and T. Coleman) reorganized the DuPont Company and transformed the family business into a quintessential modern corporation. Other Wilmington-based companies including Bancroft (textiles), Pusey and Jones (industrial machinery and paper products), Harlan and Hollingsworth (ship building) and the Blumenthal Company (leather) experienced rapid growth during these years. By World War I, Wilmington had become a diverse industrial center with railroad links to Philadelphia and New York. This economic transformation was accompanied by a political one with the rise of an urban-based progressive Republican party reflecting the state's economic changes. The election of Henry A. du Pont to the Senate in 1906 and progressive governors to the state house in 1912 and 1916 created a political climate that made educational reform possible.

By 1910, the state board of education had become committed to modernizing public education. They strongly recommended a total reorganization of the educational system to reduce the number of school districts, increase centralized control, standardize curriculum, improve school facilities, and consolidate Delaware's many one-room school houses into multi-room school facilities. The state board also strongly recommended raising teacher salaries, establishing state-sponsored teacher training programs, provide better supervision, reducing the number of ungraded schools, and increasing compulsory school attendance to 180 days per year. In 1913, Dr. Charles A. Wagner from the University of Pennsylvania was appointed state commissioner of education. This was the environment that Pierre du Pont stepped into when he formed the Service Citizens of Delaware to push for educational reform. Du Pont actively supported the state board of education's agenda and used his influence in the state legislature and within the Republican Party to support this program. In 1913, the state legislature passed a school reform law that put Delaware on the road to centralized schools and looked towards implementing the state board's long-range program. However, there was considerable opposition to this program from the Democrats in Kent and Sussex counties. In 1915, when the balance of power in the legislature changed, much of this legislation was repealed. Discouraged by the development, Pierre S. du Pont took independent action. In 1917, he joined the state board of education in asking the Rockefeller Foundation to undertake a survey of state schools. This study, which Pierre S. du Pont helped fund, was conducted by two prominent sociologists and educators, Drs. Abraham Flexner and Frank Bachman of Columbia University's Teachers College. The Flexner report blamed local control and lack of resources for most of the problems with public education. It noted that Delaware spent \$4.04 per year per citizen for education compared with the national average of \$7.26. This placed it fortieth in average educational expenditures.

Flexner and Bachman also noted that Delaware was maintaining a dual school system divided by race. This system had been institutionalized by the 1897 state constitution. Since local school revenue primarily depended on real property of which African Americans had little, black schools were separate but certainly not equal to the white schools. Teacher salaries at black school averaged two-thirds of those at white schools. Also, there were never enough local funds to maintain black schools or to build new ones. Flexner noted, "no such anomalous and undemocratic arrangement [could] be found in any other state of the union." Pierre du Pont enthusiastically embraced the Flexner report and its reform agenda. He hoped that the public could be persuaded to support higher taxes to reconstruct dilapidated schools if he provided some initial resources. In 1919, he set up a trust fund to administer a \$2,000,000 school construction fund. Again he turned to Columbia University, hiring a group of Teachers College faculty and graduate students to inspect every school building in Delaware. In the fall, he saw to it that their report was published. As with the Flexner report, this document focused much attention on the sorry state of Delaware schools, but particular attention was paid to the African American situation. This report created a backlash in the legislature, with many representatives from Kent and Sussex counties arguing that centralization meant the loss of local control and the end of democratically elected school boards. Pierre du Pont responded by increasing his support for educational reform. He accepted a gubernatorial appointment to the state school board and became tax commissioner in order to help rationalize the collection of school taxes and root out local corruption. He also increased his financial support for school construction focusing almost exclusively on the African American school districts that had been identified as being in a state of crises by the Columbia studies. One of the problems that were identified in the Flexner report and subsequent studies was "Negro School Attendance." Absenteeism was a particular problem in the African American community since students were constantly being removed from school to perform farm labor. The dilapidated school buildings were also thought to have demoralized many African American students and their parents. The reformers thus mounted a campaign to convince parents that the long-term goal of increased school attendance was more important than the short-term value of child agricultural labor and its contributions to the family income. The immediate focus of the campaign for full-time schooling and school construction centered on the African American community since their problems were recognized as being much worse than those in the white community.

The African American schools received so much attention because reformers believed that because of the complete separation of local school taxation between the races and given the fact that Delaware's black population was overwhelmingly made up of tenant farmers and day laborers with few financial resources or significant real property to tax, school construction could only take place if state or private resources were made available. Pierre du Pont endorsed this approach and provided the resources necessary to rebuild the

state's African American schools. By the end of the 1920's, he provided sufficient funds to reconstruct the entire school plant that used uniform plans, professional architects and engineers, careful field reports, the most modern equipment available and careful auditing. Construction costs average \$5,000-\$8,000 per room compared to less than \$1,000, which was normal for similar projects. In order to increase the accessibility of these schools, the DSAA often built them in locations that were equidistant from several African American population centers. This sometimes resulted in African American schools being built in white neighborhoods and this often created racial tensions. The DSAA was also concerned with the necessity to consolidate one-room schools into multi-room graded buildings. This was one of the major recommendations of the Flexner report that the DSAA tried to follow through on. There was some concern that consolidation would reinforce patterns of racial segregation and this was one of the reasons that the DSAA did not proceed as quickly in this area as the Flexner report had recommended. The DSAA also took on the problem of the lack of secondary schools open to African American students. In 1924, Howard High School was built in downtown Wilmington at a cost of over \$1,000,000. Du Pont also provided funds to improve the facilities of Delaware State College.

As one would expect, the African American community responded to these school reforms with enthusiasm. School attendance increased dramatically as many parents hoped that the new schools and approach to education would open up economic opportunity to their children. The Service Citizens sent educators and social workers into the African American community to convince parents that school attendance was important and that their children should not be pulled from school to do farm labor. With opportunities increasing, more African Americans entered the teaching profession. There were now also opportunities for continuing education. Howard High School English teacher, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, established a summer school at Delaware State College. The Service Citizens financed six-week institutes, which brought speakers such as historian Charles Beard, journalist Henry Luce, and soprano Marian Anderson to Delaware. This brought an excitement to the school system and during these years many ambitious and talented African Americans decided to become schoolteachers. The students also responded positively, attendance went up dramatically, and achievement levels increased. Many African American students recognized Pierre du Pont's contributions. He received hundreds of grateful poems and letters from grade school children. Many of these survive in his papers and provide vivid testimony about the impact that school reform had on the lives of African American children and how it raised their horizons and opened up opportunities for them. In 1928, the African American community commissioned artist Edwin Harleston to paint a portrait of P.S. du Pont. Harleston had been recommended for the job by famous author and scholar, W.E.B. DuBois.

A Separate Place: The Schools P.S. du Pont Built

Primary Source Documents

The following quotes come directly from letters written to P.S. du Pont from school children all over the state. They will give students an introduction to this interesting period in Delaware history. The quotes are generally grouped under subject headings for easy reference, although you can pick and choose the ones you would like to focus on. The headings are Building Conditions & Maintenance, Classroom & Extracurricular Activities, the Importance of Education, and Community Response to P.S. du Pont's contributions.

There is also a section of entire letters that were transcribed. These were chosen because they touched on all of the subject headings listed and because they are powerful in their entirety. (*N.B. The following letters are transcribed exactly as they were written with misspellings and errors intact.*)

Letter Excerpts

Building & Classroom Environment

The segregated schools that African American students attended in Delaware before the 1920's were often in deplorable condition. Most had no indoor plumbing, were heated by small stoves, and had very little lighting. The grounds were usually poor as well with large puddles of water and stretches of mud outside the building, and little or no playground equipment for the children. Some schools took place in church basements, if the community could not raise enough money for a separate building. Few schools had resources like maps, musical instruments, decorations or even blackboards. Once P.S. du Pont began donating money to rebuild school structures, communities took the initiative to raise funds for landscaping, books, and other things for use inside the classroom. The pride these students had in their new classrooms and the care they took of them is easy to find in their letters.

Letter to P.S. du Pont asking for help in building a new school:

The school we have now is in the Methodist Church at Buttonwood. It is not very well built, and in the winter it is cold in there. In the winter all of the pupils have to take their desk, and get around the fire until the room has gotten warm. We have been in these conditions for six years.

Sylvester Woolford, 8th grade, New Castle, Del., October 30, 1925

Letter to P.S. du Pont, describing and thanking him for the new schools he built:

To make our schoolroom more beautiful we have trimmed the blackboards and bought a glob[e], a Graphonola¹, a library, and by children coming to school we got four pictures.² Then we bought glass and got frames for the pictures and put them on the wall. We keep our floor oiled and that don't make any dust. We try to keep our desk looking like new ones. We have also bought some paper towel so we will not have to wipe on the same towel. We have a store with things in it to sell.

Elnora Cannon, Hammondtown School, Nov. 2, 1925

We do not have to go outside for any thing. The pump toilet and sink are all in side. We do not have to go out only to play. It is a nice school....We have plenty of seats and desks. The stove heats the room nicely.

Charlesetta Bleen, 5th grade, Lee's Chapel School, Townsend, Del., Oct. 30, 1925

We thank you very much for our large school rooms, and our cellar, and our nice large black boards. We are doing all we can to make our school house and our play ground look nice and not throw apple cores and orange peelings. We have put in nice lights to.

Easter Carter, 4th Grade, October 24, 1924

If it had not been for your great gift we may have been in the old school house to-day in the cold wind and rain. Our new building is warm in cold weather.

Beulah Thomas, Lincoln City, Del., Oct. 22, 1929

Besides keeping it nicely, we are improving our building by getting beautiful things to put in it.... We have bought a piano, victrola, sewing-machine, and also have our rooms nicely decorated with beautiful flowers and pictures

Helena Thorpe, 8th grade, Pierre S. du Pont School, Oct. 21, 1926

The children are keeping the white on the front porch as nice as it was when we moved in. All the children help keep the windows clean. Come visit us sometime.

Mildred Pettyjohn, 4th grade, Hammondtown School, Oct. 29, 1924

Classroom & Extracurricular Activities

-
- 1 A graphophone is a phonograph (or record player) that plays wax records.
 - 2 Attendance awards

Many of these letters give clues to the kinds of subjects the children studied in school and the kinds of extracurricular activities they participated in as well. Four activities that come up repeatedly are penmanship, landscaping & gardening, pledging allegiance and taking care of the flag, and Du Pont Day activities like acrostic poems, recitations and field events or other sports. These are the activities that the hands-on classroom program focuses on but you can find references to other clubs and areas of studies throughout the letters.

We are making booklets of our food and eskimo food and our clothing and eskimo clothing and books of songs. We are getting ready for Holloween.

William Stanley Coker, 4th grade, October 2, 1924

We are going to have a test in History and I am working very hard so that I can get a hundred.... Mr. Dupont we are having a new Classroom Leader every Monday morning we have elections and vote and now we are getting up a Jubiline Club for the Fifth, Sixth, and Eight grade.... We are going to have an entertainment Friday the 24th, we are going to have a fine time and than after the speaking we are going to have refreshments to sell.

Mr. Dupont we have health rules on the board and we two ladders on the board the girls has the red one and the boys has the green one the first thing we have every morning is hear the Grafnoia play the second is to pledge allegiance to the flag it is up on the wall.

Elizabeth Dembry, 5th grade, Delmar, Delaware, October 21, 1924.

We are also showing our appreciation by organizing clubs in the school. This is our second month in school but we have organized our Domestic Science, Domestic Art Club, Glee Club, Dramatic Club and several other clubs.

We are now showing our appreciation by having DuPont Day which occurs Friday October 22, 1926.

Millie White, 9th grade, Paul Laurence Dunbar School, Laurel, Delaware.

We can play the Victoria³ and have exercise. We can play plenty of school room games.

Mary Leona Watson, Lee's Chapel School, Townsend, Del., Oct. 30, 1925

Mr. DuPont we have nice library in our school and a model store, so we want you to come and see how good we have it kept it.

We have also had our flag fixed, we hoist it every morning at sunrise and lower it at sunset. If it rains during our school hours we always take it down, but we never let it touch the ground, get wet or stay out after sunset.

3 Victrola, the name brand for a record player

Elizabeth Dembry, Delmar, Delaware, Oct. 27, 1925

We have American Flags in our school and Salute every morning. We have learned the 23rd psalms. We sing the Star Spanggle Banner, Columbia the Gem of the Ocean, America and Delaware. Our Teacher is now learning us to sing Old Folks at Home and I think it is so pretty.

Ruth Emily Miller, 3rd grade, Rehoboth School, Oct. 29, 1925

Importance of Education

As these new schools were being built, African American activists began fanning out through communities to convince parents that the long term benefits of education were more important than the short term benefits of having the children work to help support that family economy. With these new schools and additional resources, more students were motivated to get an education or improve their attendance. Attendance was considered an important indication of how well the schools were doing in attracting and keeping students. Many communities had attendance parades or awarded prizes for classes that had the best attendance overall.

My greatest aim is to get an education, and as school has been opened nearly two months, I have not lost a day since I have started.

Ella Parker, Pierre S. du Pont School, Harrington, Delaware, October 23, 1929

I am a girl at the age of 14 who completed the eight grade June 2, 1929 at the Pierre S. du Pont School at Lincoln and come 12 miles every day to the Pierre S. du Pont School at Harrington to grasp the vital points of the subjects....

Gladys Young, Pierre S. du Pont School, Harrington, Del., October 23, 1929

We strive to attend regularly, our Enrollment is now 32 and as soon as the Agricultural Work is over, we will have a larger school attends.

Helen F. T. Cannon, 5th grade, Rehoboth School, October 29, 1925

To assure you that we appreciate this great gift, we attend school regularly and have a good attendance record.... Our aim is 100% attendance for the school term.

Mary Clark writing for her 6th grade class at Rehoboth School, Oct. 29, 1925

Community Response

The new schools for African American students did not just benefit the children who attended them. They also brought communities together to help the children make the most of their educational opportunities and improve their

lives. Many adults helped raise funds and landscape the school grounds. They also actively participated in DuPont Day festivities.

We the pupils of the seventh Grade of the Frederick Douglass School Ceaser Rodney district thank you very much for what you have done in this community. It means for us to put forth our very best efforts toward getting an education. We wish to express our appreciation for this great gift you have given us. We appreciate it by handling it with care. Mr. du Pont you have made for us to be comfortable. We are trying to increase our number in attendance and also trying to improve our studies. To show that we appreciate the new school we have grass plots and flowers.... You have given us comfortable schools and have left it to us to make good.

7th Grade Students, Star Hill School, Nov. 7, 1927

My dear Mr. DuPont, I am appreciating our nice school building you gave us. And I do not want to do anything to desecrate the soil of America.

We are selling candy to get a dodge ball and a football to play with.... I hope you could come and see our nice school building. We have a store in our school since we wrote to you last year and are writing to you again this year.

Pearl Smiley, Delmar, Delaware, Oct. 27, 1925

We are striving to make this school a better one in the future than it has been in the past.

Mary Jones, 10th grade, Paul Laurence Dunbar School, Laurel, Del., Oct. 20, 1926.

Our Parent and Teachers Association are going to fixed the ground and plant grass and flower seed.

Elsie M. Rider, R.F.D. No. 1, Smyrna, Del., Oct. 23, 1924

We are trying to beautify it by setting flowers, plants and a hedge around it. The building has not long ago been painted.

Beulah Thomas, Lincoln City, Del., Oct. 22, 1929

Every school has a celebration of Duponts day.... I would like for you to hear the Dupont song and Acrostic we are going to have.

Helena Thorpe, 6th grade, Hammondtown School, Harrington, Del., Oct. 28, 1924

Phyllis Whea[t]ley School
Bridgeville, Delaware
October 28, 1925

Dear Mr. Dupont;

It is with deepest sincerity that I write on this day our annual celebration in honor of your most wonderful gift to the negroes of Delaware. We are very grateful to you for your gift. I feel that we can only repay you by perfect attendance and in every way try to raise the standard of citizenship. This wonderful gift has improved the educational facilities of Delaware. Before this deed was performed Delaware ranked thirty seven among the other states in educational affairs. Now it stands about the place.* Thus you see the advantage of the gift. The parents, local board of trustees, and the P.T.A. have beautified the ground by hedges trees and grass. There is a song entitled "Du Pont" which every boy and girl should be glad to sing because it makes them think of the wonderful thing which you have done. Every boy and girl should know the song and keep it in their memory. Music instrument such as pianoes and Victrolas have been placed in the school. In every school there should be your picture, and we are trying to get it the best we know how here at Bridgeville, because when the boys, girls, and parents look at it they should think of the wonderful deed. Our school has been named after a negro poet who was Phyllis Wheatley who was in slavery got her education by asking her master words on a salt box and when his boy came home from school she would ask him words she kept improving until she learned her alphabet. Then she kept on till she could read and write. She went on she began to write poetry. So the negroes of Delaware should improve like Phyllis Wheatley.

Long may your life of service be because service is vocation of every one.

Most sincerely yours,
Wilbert Evans

*Information incomplete in original letter.

Phyllis Whealey School,
Bridgeville, Delaware,
October 28, 1925

Dear Mr. Dupont;

It is with deepest sincerity that I write on this day our annual Celebration in honor of your most wonderful gift to the Negroes of Delaware. We are very grateful to you for your gift. I feel that we can only repay you by perfect Attendance and in every way try to raise the standard of citizenship. This wonderful gift has improved the educational facilities of Delaware. Before this deed was performed Delaware ranked thirty seven among the other states in educational affairs. Now it stands about the place. Thus you see the advantage of the gift. The parents, local board of Trustees, and the P. T. A. have beautified the ground by hedges trees and grass. There is

a song entitled "Du Pont" which every boy and girl should be glad to sing because it makes them think of the wonderful thing which you have done. Every boy and girl should know the song and keep it in their memory. Music instrument such as pianos and Victrolas have been placed in the school. In every school there should be your picture, and we are trying to get it the best we know how here at Bridgerille, because when the boys, girls, and parents look at it they should think of the wonderful deed. Our school has been named after a Negro poet who was Phyllis Wheatley who was in slavery got her education by asking her master words on a salt box and when his boy came home from school she would ask him words she kept improving until she learned her Alphabet. Then she kept on till she could read and write she went on she began to

write poetry. So the Negroes of Delaware
should improve like Phyllis Wheatley.

Long may your life of service be
because service is vocation of
every one.

Most sincerely yours,

Wilbert Evans.

Wilbert Evans
Ninth Grade
"A Letter To Mr. Dupont."

E. S. Hartgrove
Bridgeville Pa.

RFD. No. B, Bot 58,
Smyrna, Del.
Oct. 24, 1926

Dear Mr. Du Pont,

We are in school to-day so I thought I would write and thank you for our beautiful new school.

We have some pretty pitchers, a victrola and a dodge ball. We have lots of fun playing with our dodge ball. We have a new flag too but we cannot put the flag up because the rope is broken and none of us can climb the pole.

Next year we are going to sow some grass seeds so that we can have some green grass in our front yard.

We have three hanging lamps in our school so you can see we can give concerts at night.

We do not let the children scratch the desk or play in the school.

We are going to buy an oilstove this winter. So that we can have hot lunches every day.

I like to go to school. I am in the fourth grade.

I guess I will close.

Your truly,
Alfred Sudler.

R. F. D. No. B, Box 58
Smyrna, Del.
Oct. 24, 1924

Dear Mr. Du Pont,

We are in school to-day so I thought I would write and thank you for our beautiful new school.

We have some pretty pitches, a victrola and a dodge ball. We have a lots of fun playing with our dodge ball. We have a new flag too but we cannot put the flag up because the rope is broken and none of us can climb the pole.

Next year we are going to sow some grass seeds so that we can have some green grass in our front yard.

We have three hanging lamps in our school so you see we can give concerts at night.

We do not let the children stretch the desk or play in the school.

We are going to buy an oil stove this winter. So that we can have hot lunches every day.

I like to go to school. I am in

the fourth grade.

I guess I will close.

Your truly,

Alfred Suther.

Pierre S. du Pont School
Harrington, Delaware
November 1, 1927

Mr. Pierre S. du Pont.
Wilmington, Delaware.
Dear Friend;

I can never express to you in words how I appreciate the great deed you have done for our race. But I can show to you how I appreciate our school by helping to see that it is carried for in the right way, so it may be used generations after generations. When I heard that you were building schools, and when Harrington was complete it seemed that my heart beat faster with joy.

When you are in a nice warm room with a little seat all by yourself, and having the proper ventilation in the room, with the childrens written work and drawings hanging around neatly so that the other pupils in the other two rooms may see just what they will have next, you can't help but study for a big round "A."

When I first went to school and saw what kind of buildings they had I went home and asked mother to pray to God and ask him for better schools for the colored race. This is my ninth year in school, and through these years God has at last answered my prayers. I thank you again and again for the wonderful schools.

Very Truly Yours,
Elnora Cannon

Pierre S. du Pont School.
Harrington, Delaware.
November 1, 1927

Mrs. Pierre S. du Pont.
Wilmington, Delaware.
Dear Friend;

I can never express to you in words how I appreciate the great deed you have done for our race. But I can show to you how I appreciate our school by helping to see that it is carried for in the right way, so it may be used generations after generations. When I heard that you were building schools, and when Harrington was complete it seemed that my heart beat faster with joy.

When you are in a nice warm room with a little seat all by yourself, and having the proper ventilation in the room, with the childrens written work and drawings hanging around neatly so that the other pupils in the other two rooms may see just what they will

have next, you can't help but study for a big round "A."

When I first went to school and saw what kind of buildings they had I went home and asked mother to pray to God and ask him for better schools for the colored race. This is my ninth year in school, and through these years God has at last answered my prayers. I thank you again and again for the wonderful schools.

Very Truly Yours,
Elnora Cannon.

Nassau Delaware
October 30, 1925

Honorable Pierre S. du Pont
1116 du Pont Building
Wilmington, Delaware

Dear Sir:

Our Teacher has asked us to write you a letter to day, for we all know that you were the one that gave us our New School. Our School is as good as it was when we first came into it. We would like for you to come down, for we have all wishes to see you. We all appreciate our New School Building. In our School we have two wall clocks, an organ, graphonola, pencil sharpner, oil stove for hot lunches, two maps--one of South America, and one of the United States. We have five graduates at State College Dover Delaware--three boys and two girls--Christina Maull, Levata Williams, Cyrus Sparrow, Arthur Ward, Charles Norwood.

I am in the Seventh Grade. We have Community Civics, Hygiene, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Language, Reader, Spelling and Industrial Artwork. In Industrial Artwork, we draw, make crepe paper flowers, baskets, etc. I like all of my studies very much and I am proud of all of my books.

I attended school eight days in September, three in October. I am sorry to say that I have been working to the packing house all summer, but I started to school for good now. I was very sorry that I couldn't get to School those days I was absent. I hope I wont have have to miss any more days this year.

Our teacher is back this year. This makes the fourth year that she has taught our school. Her name is Mrs. Virginia H. Jones. The Primary Room has a new teacher, Miss Laurencetta M. Hicks. We all love both of the teachers.

We are celebrating (du Pont Day) to night, and have invited all of the Parents. We will have, cake, and ice cream to night.

We wish that you might live many more years to see what the Delaware Children might accomplish.

Very Truly,
Thelma Norwood

Nassau Delaware,
October 30, 1925.

Honorable Pierre S. du Pont,
1116 du Pont Building,
Wilmington, Delaware.

Dear Sir:

Our Teacher has asked us to write you a letter to say, for we all know that you were the one that gave us our New School. Our School is as good as it was when we first came into it. We would like for you to come down, for we have all wished to see you. We all appreciate our New School Building. In our School we have two wall clocks, an organ, graphonola, pencil sharpener, oil stove for hot lunches, two maps - one of South America, and one of the United States. We have five graduates at State College Dover Delaware - three boys and two girls - Christina Maull, Levata Williams, Cyrus Sparrow, Arthur Ward, Charles Norwood.

I am in the Seventh Grade. We have Community Civics, Hygiene, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Language, Reader, Spelling and Industrial Artwork. In Industrial Artwork, we draw, make crepe paper flowers, baskets, etc. I like all of my studies.

very much and am proud of all my books.

I attended school eight days in September, three in October. I am sorry to say that I have been working to the packing house all summer, but I started to school for good now. I was very sorry that I couldn't get to school those days. I was absent. I hope I won't have to miss any more days this year.

Our Teacher is back this year. This makes the fourth year that she has taught our school.

Her name is Mrs. Virginia H. Jones. The Primary Room has a new teacher, Miss Laurencetta M. Hicks. We all love both of the teachers.

We are celebrating (du Pont Day) to night, and have invited all of the Parents. We will have, cake, and ice cream to night.

We wish that you might live many more years to see what the Delaware Children might accomplish.

Very Truly
Thelma Norwood.

P. S. du Pont and African American Schools in Delaware

List of Photographs

- 1) **Christiana School**,* New Castle County
 - A) Before Renovations
 - B) After Renovations

Christiana was the first school that P.S. du Pont funded to be rebuilt. It was started on April 20, 1920 and completed on September 6, 1920. It cost \$19,338.46.
- 2) **Blocksom's School**, Sussex County
 - A) Before, showing students arranged out front. Notice the outhouse in the back.
 - B) After
- 3) **Blackwater School**, Sussex County
 - A) Before. Notice the water pooled around the building.
 - B) After
- 4) **Georgetown School**, Sussex County
 - A) Before, with students in doorway.
 - B) After
- 5) **Dover School** (Later named Booker T. Washington School), Kent County
- 6) **Dover White School**, Kent County
- 7) **Cedar Neck White School**, Sussex County
 - A) Before. Notice that this building is not that much nicer than the black schools at the same time.
 - B) After

* All schools listed are segregated schools unless otherwise noted.

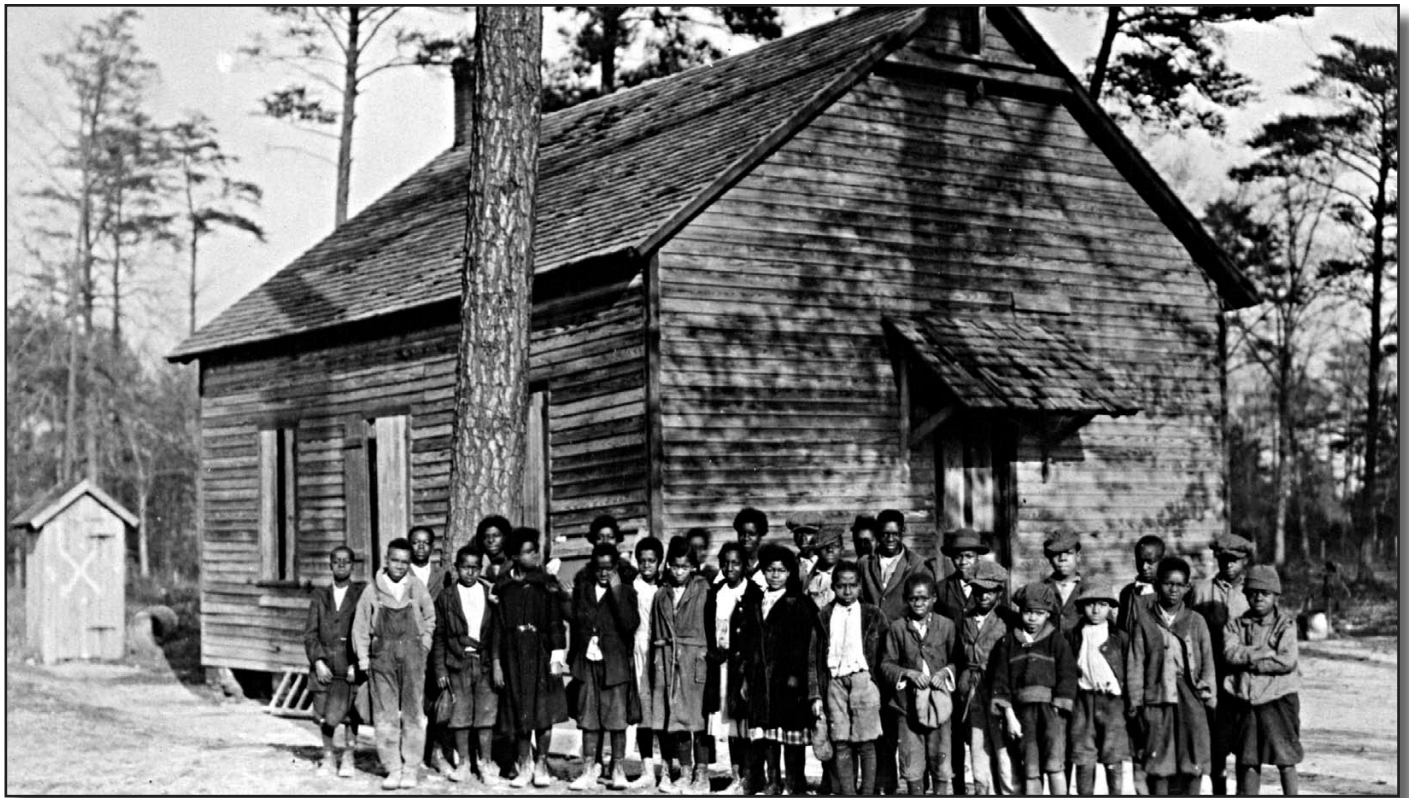
LM 1/00



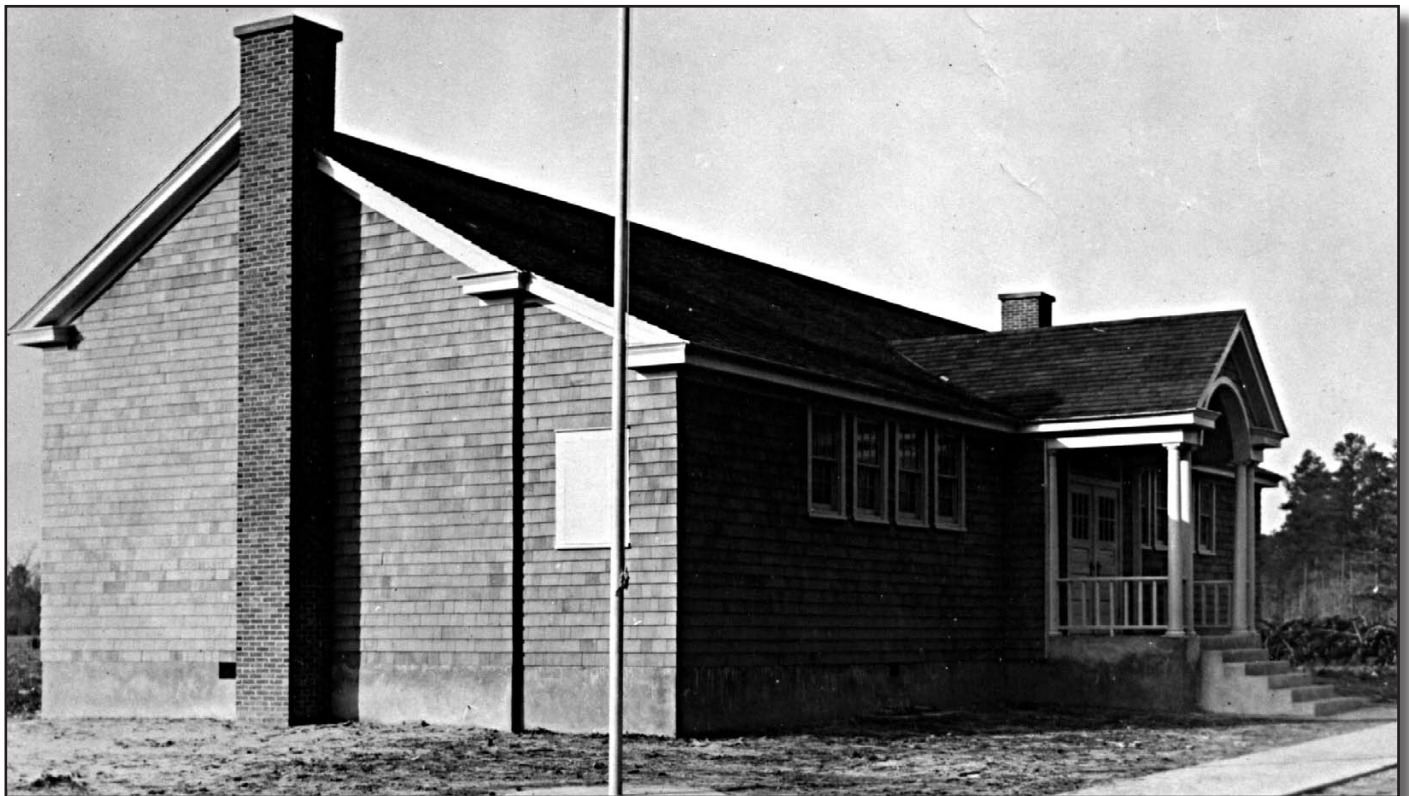
Christiana School, New Castle County, Before Renovations



Christiana School, New Castle County, After Renovations



Blocksom's School, Sussex County, Before Renovations



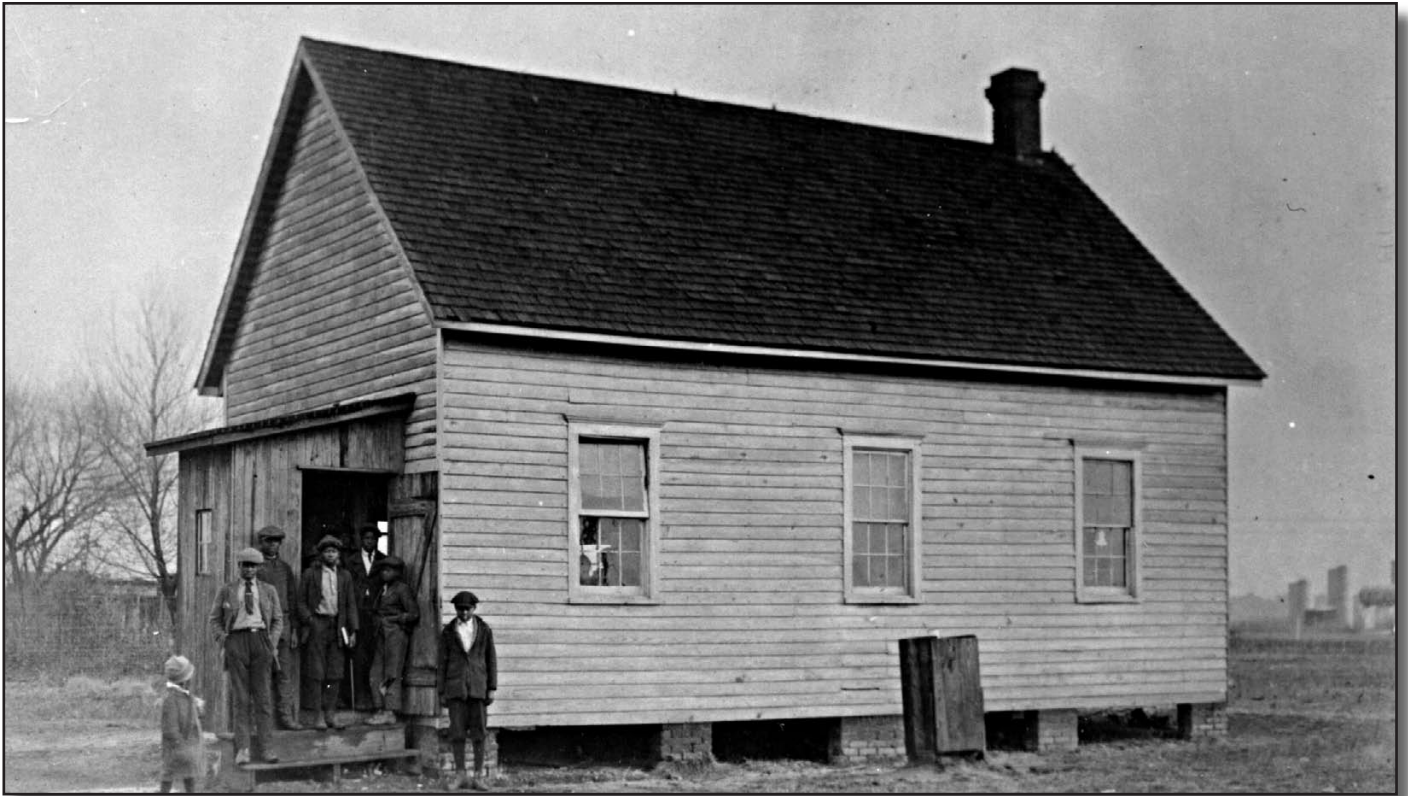
Blocksom's School, Sussex County, After Renovations



Blackwater School, Sussex County, Before Renovations



Blackwater School, Sussex County, After Renovations



Georgetown School, Sussex County, Before Renovations



Georgetown School, Sussex County, After Renovations



Dover School (Later named Booker T. Washington School), Kent County



Dover White School, Kent County



Cedar Neck White School, Sussex County, Before Renovations



Cedar Neck White School, Sussex County, After Renovations

DUPONT SONG

Dedicated to the Schools and Roads of Delaware

Words and music by J. MATTHEW COULBOURNE

Arranged by F. A. CLARK

March time,

1. There are two men in Del - a - ware Of whom the state feels proud; One gave us schools, one
2. Their names shall live while a - ges roll, They kept the gold - en rule: Do un - to oth - ers

gave us roads, Let's sound their names a - broad. They were in - spired by the voice of God, They
as you would That they should do to you. They're great - er than a king or queen Who

saw the peo - ple's need, And with a heart so big and brave They did this great, great deed:
sits up - on the throne, And rule the peo - ple by their birth, And not by might a - lone.

Chorus

Du - pont, Du - pont, Du - pont is the man, Du - pont, Du - pont the best men in the land, One
gave us schools, one gave us roads, You rid Del - a - ware of a great big load. Du - pont, Du - pont,
we are proud of thee, And your name shall ev - er with us be, No great - er deed has
e'er been wrought, We know that you have played your part, Du - pont! Du - pont! Du - pont is the man.

Copyright, 1924, by J. Matthew Coulbourne

P. S. du Pont and African American Schools in Delaware

Classroom Activities

Elementary School (Grades 3-4)

Read aloud 1 or 2 descriptions of classrooms both before and after renovations were done. From this the students can:

- Draw pictures of what they hear; then draw a picture of their classroom today to compare.
- Look for and point out similar items in their classroom.
- Make a list of items they do not know and look them up in resources like the dictionary. Have them describe what these items were and what they were used for. Why were some of these things so proudly mentioned?
- **Play an imagination game**--If a wealthy person said they would donate money to your school for improvements, what would you suggest fixing or adding? What would make your school a more exciting place to learn? Why? What are you already proud of in your school or classroom?
- **Sing the "DuPont Song"** by J. Matthew Coulbourne, a teacher at one of these schools. It was written to honor P.S. du Pont for renovating school buildings and T. Coleman du Pont for creating the first north-south highway (Route 13) through Delaware.

It would help to pass around or post the enclosed photographs of the school buildings as an introduction.

Photo Activity

Post or pass around the before and after pictures of some of these segregated schools.

- How were the schools improved?
- How do they compare with schools today?
- How were the schools for African-American and white children the same or different?

Middle and Intermediate (Grades 5-8)

Give out copies or read aloud excerpts from student letters to P.S. du Pont, then choose any or all of the following questions as part of a class activity. You can use them to lead a discussion or turn them into a writing exercise. It would be helpful to pass around or post the enclosed photographs of the school buildings at the same time.

Questions to think about:

- 1) What is education? What do you think education can do for you? What do you think schools today need to provide in order to give you a good education?
- 2) Why was education so important to African American communities during the early 20th century? What did they hope education would do for them?
- 3) Compare your classroom with the descriptions found in the letters of students from segregated school. How is it different? How is it the same? How would you feel about attending one of these segregated schools?
- 4) What kinds of things did these students find important to mention about their school when writing to Mr. du Pont? What effect did these new schools have on them? What did they think about their old schools?
- 5) Why did the students of segregated schools write these letters to Mr. du Pont? (Sincere gratitude? Class Exercise? Invitation to DuPont Day celebration?)
- 6) Do you love your school enough to help landscape the grounds or maintain the buildings? Why or why not? What would you change about your school grounds?
- 7) Is there someone who has done a lot for all of the schools in Delaware recently? Or maybe there is someone who did a lot for your school in particular. Consider writing them a thank you note for all of their hard work on your behalf. (For example, former Governor Carper made sure that all of the public schools in Delaware were connected to the internet during the 1990's.)
- 8) One of the classes writing to Mr. du Pont chose as their motto, "What we hope to be, we are now becoming." What do you think that means? What would your class motto be?

Photo Activity

Post or pass around the before and after pictures of some of these segregated schools.

- How were the schools improved?
- How do they compare with schools today?
- How were the schools for African-American and white children the same or different?

Projects

- **Create a timeline of African American history in Delaware** or the U.S. with progress in education highlighted. For instance, the building of Howard High School in Wilmington was important because it was considered the best and most well-equipped secondary school for African Americans in the nation at the time. Delaware was also involved in the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to overturn segregated schooling through the work of lawyer Louis L. Redding.
- **Research a prominent African American person in Delaware history** and describe how education (or being denied one) shaped his or her life and career. Examples include Edwina Kruse, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Littleton Mitchell and Louis L. Redding, but there are many more possibilities.
- **Find segregated school locations on a map of Delaware.** Then find out if any of the buildings still exist. Is there one close to your school? Can you find it or a historical marker for it? If it still exists, what is the building being used for today?
For example, the Iron Hill Museum in Newark is a former African American school. If you track down the location any of these schools in your neighborhood, share that information with the local historical society so they can add it to their records.
- **Become involved in efforts to preserve and maintain former African American Schools.** Is there anything you can do to help save one of these pieces of history? Maybe you could sponsor a fundraiser or work to clean trash off the site.
- **Learn more about African American culture during the 1920's.** P. S. du Pont's portrait was painted by Edwin Harleston, an artist with connections to the Harlem Renaissance. What was the Harlem Renaissance and why has it had such a strong influence on African American and other artists of all kinds? Who were some of the people involved and what did they create?
- **Sing the "DuPont Song"** by J. Matthew Coulbourne, a teacher at one of these schools. It was written to honor P.S. du Pont for renovating school buildings and T. Coleman du Pont for creating the first north-south highway (Route 13) through Delaware.
- **Record an oral history.** Do you know someone who attended a segregated school? Interview them to find out what it was like to attend one. Prepare a list of questions you would like answered and schedule an appointment to talk. You should bring a tape recorder or a video camera to catch everything that is said.

- **National History Day.** National History Day is an annual competition for students in grades six through twelve. Participants choose a topic in history, do research and present their work in one of four ways: paper, exhibit, dramatic performance or media presentation. Winners of the state competition go on to the national competition and could win scholarships. Check out www.NationalHistoryDay.org for more information.

High School (Grades 9-12)

With high school students, you can use the questions below in conjunction with viewing the video, "A Separate Place (The Schools P.S. du Pont Built)," preferably the longer version.

Discussion/Worksheet Questions for the Video "A Separate Place:"

1. Who ran schools for African American students before the 20th century?
2. Why were public schools for African American students in Delaware so poor?
3. Who was P.S. du Pont? Why did he become involved in Delaware school reform, especially for African American students?
4. Name one improvement that the new school buildings had over the old ones.
5. How did African American communities respond to these new buildings? How did they work to make the schools even better?
6. Even after these new schools were built, African American students and teachers still suffered from unfair treatment. Describe an instance of discrimination experienced by one of the interviewees.
7. When did the original Howard High School open? When did the Howard High School built by du Pont open? What was the controversy about its location?
8. What sacrifices or hardships did students have to face in order to go to Howard High School in Wilmington?
9. What was the name of the lawyer who led the fight to desegregate schools in Delaware? In what important Supreme Court decision was he involved?
10. Describe an unexpected negative outcome for African American students or teachers after Delaware schools desegregated. [*Not covered in shorter version of the video.*]

Projects

If you are interested in having your students do a longer-term project, many of the ones listed on page 43 are also appropriate for high school students. We particularly encourage involvement in the National History Day program, which can help students develop stronger research skills through the incentive of a competition. Call the Historical Society of Delaware or go to www.NationalHistoryDay.org to get more information.

LM, Rev. 10/03