

## BECOME A "SCHOOL FRIEND"

The Rahway School for Colored Children, was a one-room schoolhouse constructed by the Society of Quakers on property belonging to Mr. Jacob R. Shotwell (former Vice President of RSI Bank) in 1844, was established to educate "Colored Children" in the City of Rahway. The Quakers operated the school with little to no public funding until the late 1870's, and by 1882 the school was permanently closed and the property was sold and converted into a one-bedroom residential property.

Though the use of the property has changed over the last 180 plus years much of its original architectural integrity has remained intact. As a tribute to the great history of African-Americans in the Greater Rahway community and Union County, it is our hope to restore this property to its original state. The African American History and Heritage Learning Center of Rahway is working to preserve the great history and artifacts of the "Colored School" and African Americans in this community.

Renovating this property is a monumental undertaking, hence, we are working to secure the services of Connolly and Hickey, a historical architect firm in Cranford, NJ, specializing in the historical preservation of properties.

Help us finance this monumental work by becoming a "School Friend." No gift is too small.

With Gratitude and Excitement,

*Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford,*

Chair of the Board

The **MISSION** of the African American History and Heritage Learning Center (AAHHC) of Rahway, NJ shall be to preserve and disseminate information about the history of the Rahway School for Colored Children (1840's – 1870's), the culture and history of African-American "Colored" people in the Greater Rahway community and to provide a network of programs and support services promoting the individual, social, cultural and academic well-being of African Americans in the Greater Rahway Community.

As an **OVERVIEW**, The AAHHC shall serve as a resource center and community space which houses (will house) collections and archives related to the former Rahway School for Colored Children and African American History. Collections and archives hope to include, but will not be limited to, some original books from the "Colored School," – currently housed in the Rahway Library - bulletins and baptismal records from local African American Churches, Artwork and Artifacts. The AAHHC facility will be made available for presentations, exhibits, programs, and events relating to African American History, Heritage, Culture, and Diversity.

The AAHHC **PROGRAM AND SERVICE** goals are to:

- Develop sustainable initiatives that examine the African American experience in the City of Rahway and throughout the African Diaspora via critical dialogue, heritage exploration, exposure and the performing arts.
- To serve as a vehicle for self-expression and leadership enhancement for people of African descent through workshops, seminars, exhibits and performing arts groups.
- To encourage within African American youth a growing sense of pride and dignity based on their rightful cultural heritage, and to assist them in acquiring a growing cultural awareness.
- To provide educational, cultural and historical assistance and support to African American organizations and institutions in the Greater Rahway community.

#### Front Cover Photo Credit:

The building on the front cover is not an actual picture of the Rahway School For Colored Children building. However, it is a picture that reflects what the building probably looked like. The map on the front cover is from the 1882 map of Rahway, NJ which reflects the "Colored School" and the "Colored Church," also known as Ebenezer AME Church.

#### Special Thanks To:

Ebenezer AME Church of Rahway NJ  
Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs  
RSI Bank of Rahway  
Rahway and Plainfield Friends (Quaker) Meeting

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN *History* AND *Heritage* LEARNING CENTER OF RAHWAY, N.J.



In the former

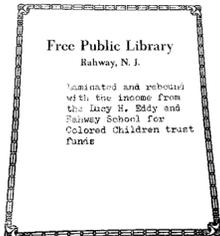
## RAHWAY SCHOOL FOR COLORED CHILDREN

261 Central Avenue

Rahway, NJ 07065

# ABOUT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE CENTER

## (FORMERLY THE RAHWAY SCHOOL FOR COLORED CHILDREN)



On Thursday, July 2, 2015, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford, African Methodist Episcopal Ebenezer Church of Rahway, New Jersey purchased the parcel of land known as 261 Central Avenue in Rahway, New Jersey. The acquisition of this property was of great historical and cultural significance to this congregation,

the African-American community, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and The City of Rahway, NJ because it was the location of the first Public School for "Colored Children" in the City of Rahway.

In 1792, a trust for the education of poor children was established with from the proceeds (approximately b200 ) willed to the Quakers, from the estate of Isabel Hartshorne (Hartshorn?). Although Rahway was home to at least three Public Schools by the mid-1800's, slavery had not truly ended in the State of New Jersey, and the nation was on the cusp of a Civil War. In spite of being "free," children of color in Rahway were not welcome in the Public School system, thus, "freed" people of color found it extremely difficult to educate their children.

In 1844, the Construction of the one-room school house for colored children commenced on the property belonging to Jacob R. Shotwell (former Vice President of RSI Bank). In 1848, with hopes of giving the school some stability, Several Rahway Citizens met in the home of Jacob R. Shotwell to incorporate Trustees for the Rahway School for Colored Children. In 1849, the New Jersey State Senate introduced the "Act of Relief" Bill # 42, which was intended to provide state funding for the school.

In the meantime, The Rahway School for Colored Children was fiscally supported by the Friends (Quakers), who paid all of the school's expenses including the salary of the teacher, Ms. Putman. On February 12, 1863, the State Senate finally moved Bill #42 for a third reading and on March 2, 1863, Bill #42 passed, guaranteeing State Public Education Funds to the school and placed the school under the control of the "Preparative Meeting Society of Friends"

Historical records indicate that the Friends (Quakers) were very supportive of persons of color and that the Free African Society in Philadelphia, from whence the AME Church evolved, was allowed to meet in the Quaker African School House when the meetings became too large to meet in Richard Allen's home. Therefore, it is no surprise that the first colored school was organized by the

Friends (Quakers) and strategically located at 261 Central Avenue (then 59 Central Avenue) approximately 75 feet from the "colored church" - Ebenezer AME Church, albeit across town from the Quaker Meeting House.

According to historical records, Miss Martha (Matilda) Putnam (b. 1836 - ??) was the school Principal/Teacher. The school averaged an enrollment of approximately 35 pupils. By 1882, the Rahway school had integrated and the by the mid-1880's the school was closed.

After the closing of the school in the late 1800's, the building was turned into a one-bedroom home. In the 1930's, an addition was added on to the one-room school house which included a kitchen and bathroom, followed by the addition of a front porch. In spite of its change in use, much of the structural and architectural integrity of the building has remained intact, making this 185-year-old building the oldest standing schoolhouse in the City of Rahway.

After the school was closed, a Philanthropist who lived in the neighborhood, Mrs. Lucy H. Eddy (b? - March 1879), established the "Rahway School for Colored Children Trust Fund." Following her death and after a court battle, the books and other artifacts from the school were donated to the Rahway Library.

We are excited about the opportunity to reclaim and preserve this great history and welcome persons and organization to share any additional information or history of the school as we restore the school for use as "Heritage House" for African American History.



**Historical Resources/References:**

[1] Some records say the school was started in 1865, however, the building is present on the 1856 City of Rahway map, suggesting that it may have been established earlier. (Rediscovery of Rahway, F. Alexander Shipley; Robin J. Shipley; and Linda A Bragdon. 1976)

[2] Annals of the First African church in the United States of America, Now Styled the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, in Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1862), The Library Company of Philadelphia.

[3] The school is not listed in the 1883-1884 Merchants Directory, so it must have closed due to the integration of schools or establishment of government-funded public schools for students of color.

[4] Reports of cases decided in the Court of Chancery, the Prerogative Court, and, on appeal, in the Court of Errors and Appeals of the state of New Jersey by New Jersey, Court of Chancery.; New Jersey. Prerogative Court.; New Jersey. Court of Errors and Appeals.

**I WANT TO BE A SCHOOL FRIEND**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GIFT AMOUNT:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  CHECK  CASH

Make Checks Payable to the AAHHLc

**TO GIVE ONLINE VISIT:**

[www.ebenezeramechurch.com/aaahhc-colored-school-.html](http://www.ebenezeramechurch.com/aaahhc-colored-school-.html)

**I WANT TO HELP BY:**

- RESEARCHING HISTORY
- OFFERING TOURS
- MAKING PRESENTATIONS
- ATTENDING MEETINGS AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SCHOOL
- WRITING GRANTS
- FINDING FUNDING
- OTHER

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