



**CENTURIES OF SERVICE:  
CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF CAMPBELL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY OF FRANKFORD**

Presented by the Historical Society of Frankford  
in cooperation with  
Frankford Friends School  
and  
Campbell African Methodist Episcopal Church

**May 2007**

Funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council



## INTRODUCTION

This companion booklet to the exhibit *Centuries of Service: Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Campbell African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Early History of the African American Community of Frankford* is published by the Historical Society of Frankford in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit in May 2007. The exhibit was produced by the Historical Society of Frankford in cooperation with Frankford Friends School and Campbell AME Church and is presented in celebration of Campbell AME's 200th anniversary in 2007.

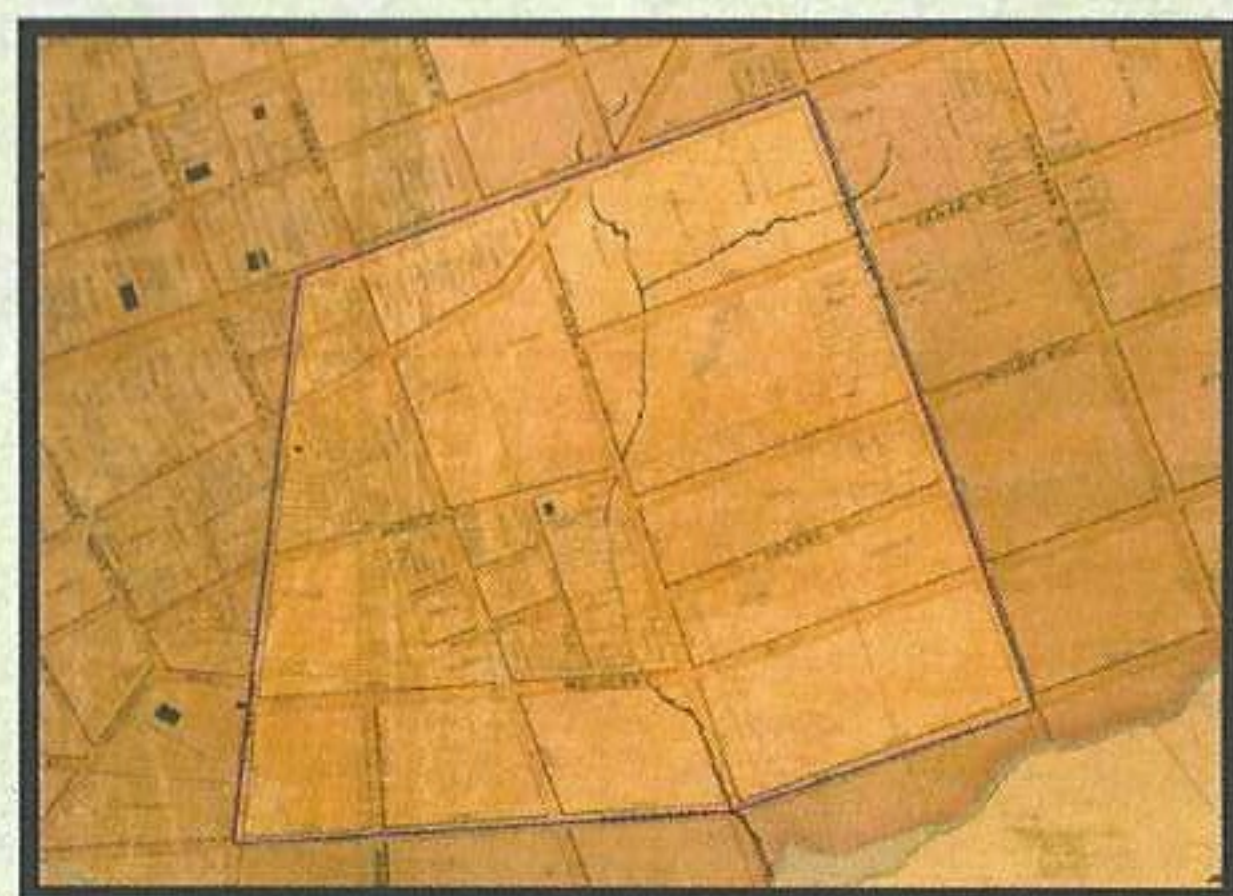
The exhibit focuses on the early history of both Campbell AME Church and the African American community of Frankford. On display are documents and artifacts from the collections of the Historical Society of Frankford and Campbell AME, as well as examples of the work of sixth-grade students from Frankford Friends School. The students spent the 2006-2007 school year studying African American history and interviewing elders from Campbell AME, under the direction of their Teacher Elaine Ballengee. (The students' work and three-dimensional objects in the exhibit are not included in this booklet.) Historian and Educator Harry C. Silcox, a Historical Society of Frankford Board Member, served as Historical Advisor to the project. Historical Society Archivist Jack McCarthy directed the project and produced the exhibit with Board Member Diane Sadler and Volunteers Susan Couvreur and Laura Hertz Stanton.

Historical information was gathered from the Historical Society of Frankford Library, Campbell AME records, and two scholarly studies: "Frankford, Philadelphia: A 19th Century Urban Black Community," by Henry Williams and Robert Ullé, which was published in *Pennsylvania Heritage* in December 1977 and "Boundary Living: Black and White Students and Adults Study Their Community Through an Ethnographic/Ethnohistoric Perspective," a 1981 University of Pennsylvania doctoral dissertation on the African American community of Frankford by Rae Alexander-Minter

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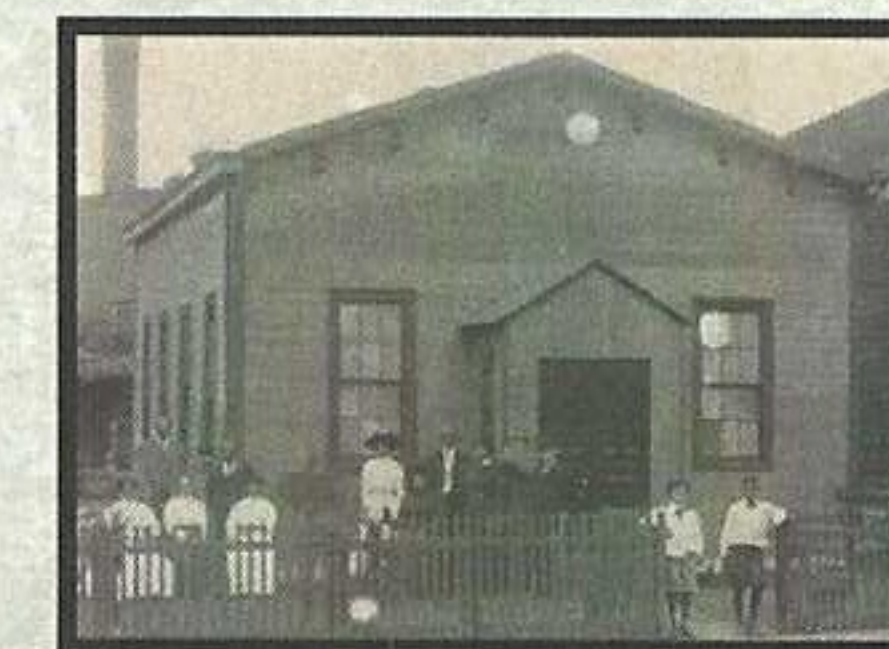
While African Americans have been in the Frankford area since at least the mid-eighteenth century, it was not until the very early years of the nineteenth century that they began to establish a community of their own. Prior to that, most blacks who lived in the area resided with white families, either as slaves or as domestics or laborers who lived with their employers. There were simply not enough African Americans living together independently of whites in Frankford in the eighteenth century to form a “community” in the true sense of the word.



*1845 map of Frankford, with African American neighborhood highlighted*

This began to change around the turn of the nineteenth century, as a number of African American families began to settle in east Frankford. While the Federal Census for 1790 shows only forty-four blacks in the Frankford area, of whom all but one lived with their employers, by 1810 there were 107 blacks in Frankford, over 60% of whom lived in black households, and by 1840 there were 193, of whom 90% lived in black households. The community was centered in an area bounded roughly by Main Street (now Frankford Avenue) to the west, Tackawanna Street to the east, Foulkrod Street to the north, and Oxford Street (now Kinsey Street) to the south.

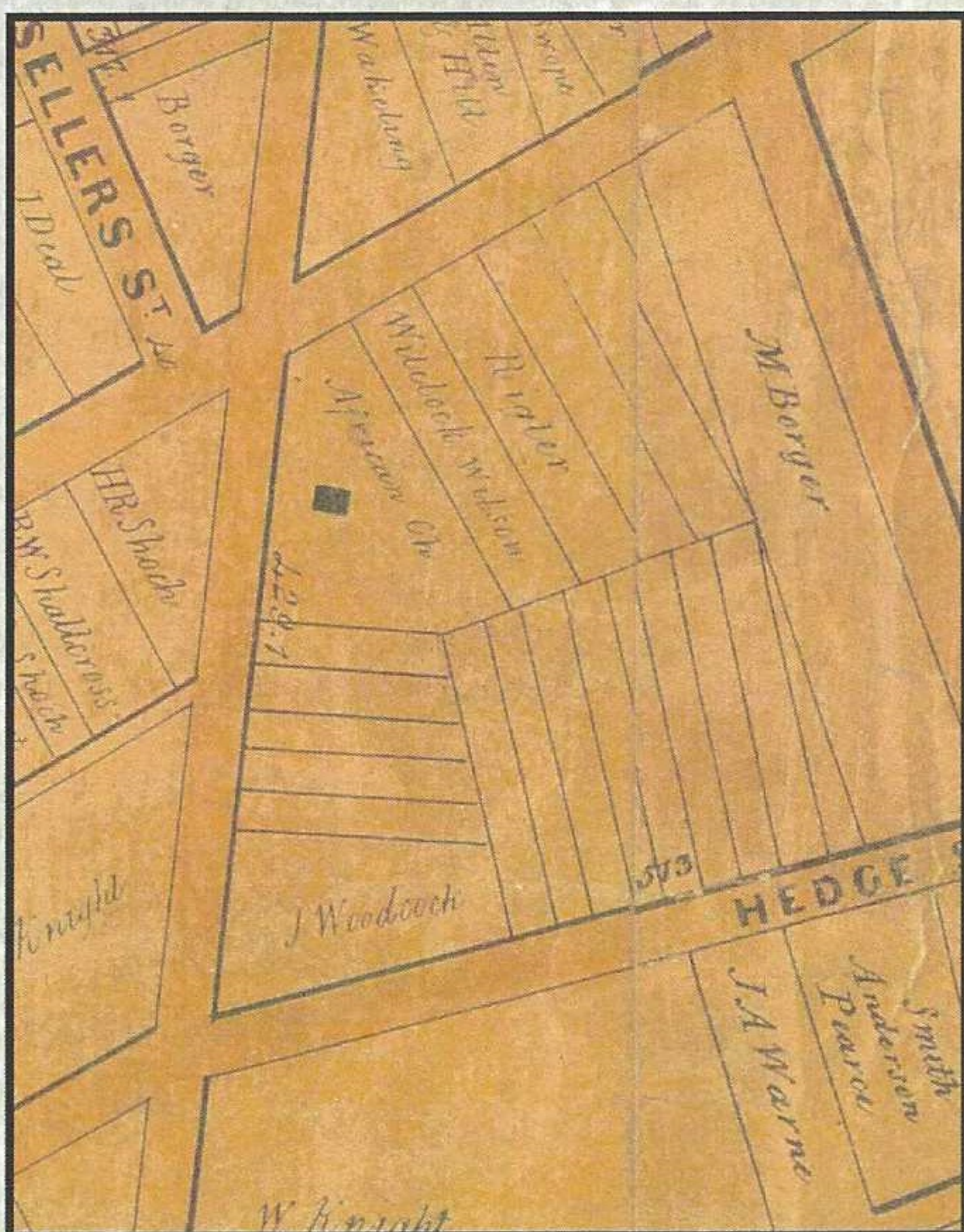
As the African American community in Frankford grew in the nineteenth century, its residents established various institutions, including a number of churches, a school, and other organizations. Blacks would also begin to establish businesses, leading to the emergence of a small but significant African American artisan and professional class. By the turn of the twentieth century the black population of Frankford had developed into a diverse community of over 1,000 people and the foundation had been laid for the African American community that is a major part of the social fabric of Frankford today.



*Members of Zion AME Church in Frankford pose in front of their Church circa 1895*

## CAMPBELL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Soon after settling in east Frankford in the early 1800s and forming a small community, the first institution the black residents of the area established was an African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Church was originally called "Second Bethel," indicating that it was the second AME church formed after "Mother Bethel," the nation's first AME Church, which was



*Detail from 1845 map of Frankford, showing Campbell AME as "African Ch"*

established in downtown Philadelphia in the late 1700s. According to church tradition, members first began meeting in 1807 in the home of Sarah Congo, who lived on Bowser Lane, now Plum Street, in east Frankford. They would later build a church building a few blocks away on Oxford Street, now Kinsey Street. In the 1860s the name of the Church was changed from Second Bethel to "Campbell" in honor of Jabez Pitt Campbell, a mid-nineteenth century AME bishop. The church building was rebuilt several times over the years, the last time being in 1870. The 1870 building is still used by the congregation today. From its beginnings in the early 1800s with a handful of worshipers in a private home, Campbell African Methodist Episcopal Church has grown into one of the longest-serving and most important institutions in Frankford.



*Undated late nineteenth-century photograph of Campbell AME*



*Members gathered in front of Campbell AME in 1946*

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF FRANKFORD

African Americans have been in Frankford since at least the mid-eighteenth century. The first blacks in the area were slaves or servants who resided with

their owners or employers. There are notices in Pennsylvania newspapers of slave sales and runaway slaves in Frankford in the 1740s and references to African Americans in official

*To be SOLD,  
A Likely lusty Negro Man, about 25 Years of Age,  
fit for any kind of Country Business. Enquire of John Hillborn,  
near Frankford, in Philadelphia County. ©*

*Notice of a slave sale near Frankford in the Pennsylvania Gazette,  
January 27, 1742*

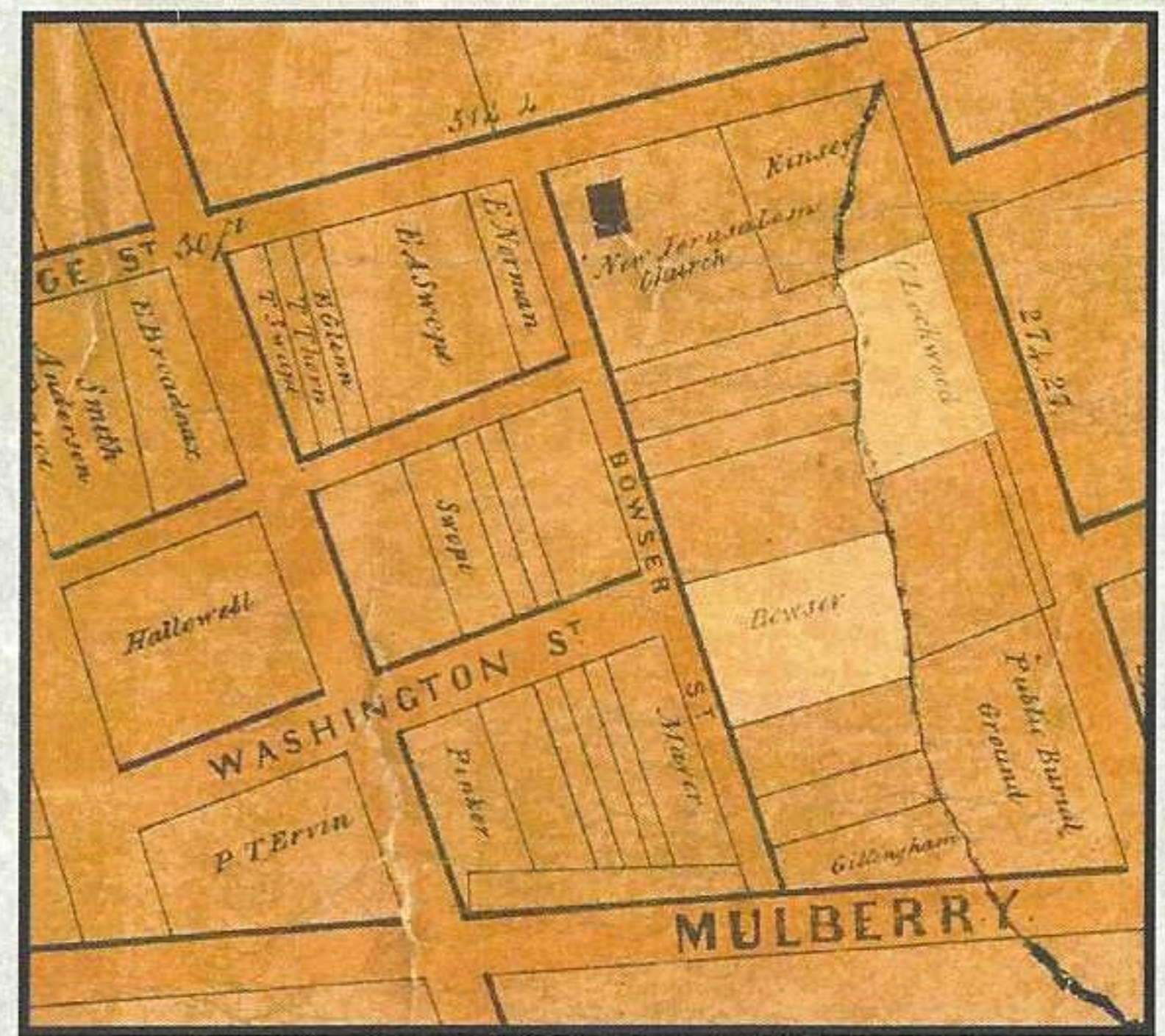
**A** BSENTED himself in April last, from his Mistres's service, a short thick Negro Man named Cambridge, full thick cheeks, flat nose, large nostrils, low forehead, about 38 years old: had on a new ozenbrigs shirt and Trowsers, light coloured Pea Jacket trimmed and lined with red, an old hat, but took with him a very good newfashion bever hat; he is subject to fits especially when cross or vexed; he has been in, and about Frankford, until very lately, known by most People there, and in Town; he plays with a crooked stick and a pipe in his mouth a sort of musick; he goes under pretence of looking for work: all Persons are hereby forewarned not to imploy him; and if any one hath a mind to purchase him, they may treat with his Mistres on easy Terms; or if any will bring him home to his Mistres in Chesnut-street near Mr. Hamilton's, shall have Ten Shillings reward, paid by Hannah Pugh. ©  
N. B. He sometimes calls himself Abraham Brick.

*Runaway slave notice in the Pennsylvania Gazette, July 8, 1742. The notice states that the escaped slave, a 38 year old man named Cambridge, "has been in, and about Frankford, until very lately, known by most People there."*

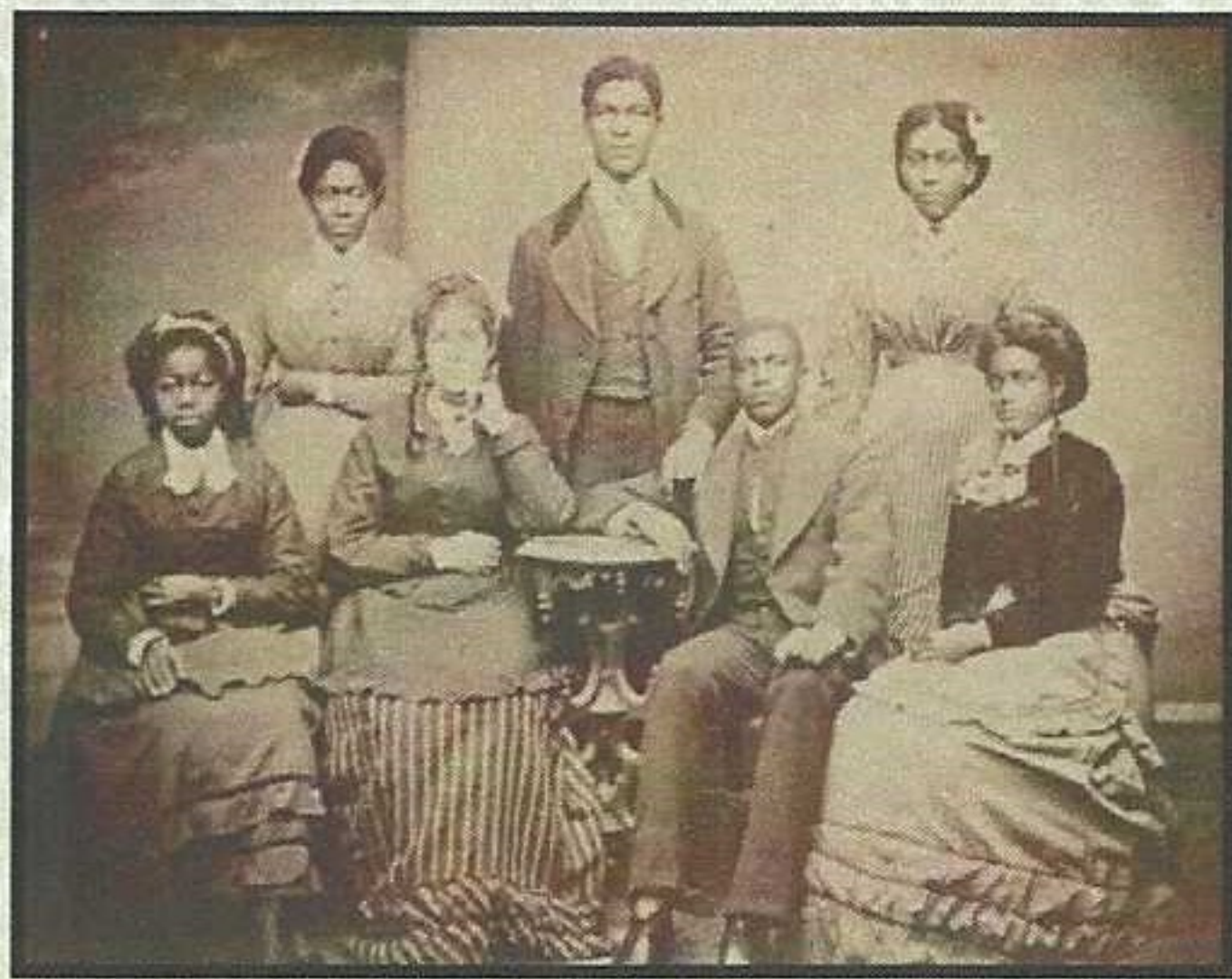
records and private diaries of Frankford residents in the period prior to and during the Revolutionary War. Slavery gradually disappeared from the area in the late eighteenth century, after which most blacks in Frankford worked as servants or laborers. These individuals generally lived with their employers, however, and not together as a community. The federal census for 1790 shows forty-four blacks in the Frankford area, all but one of whom lived with their employers. It was not until the early years of the nineteenth century that African Americans would begin to establish households independently of whites and form a community of their own in Frankford.

In the very early 1800s African American families began to settle in east Frankford, either as renters or homeowners. Federal census records reveal the growth of the community over the years: in 1810 there 107 blacks in Frankford, over 60% of whom lived in black households; by 1840 there 193, of whom 90% lived in black households; and by 1860 there were 321, of whom only twenty lived in the households of their employers.

The African American community of Frankford was originally centered on Bowser Lane, now Plum Street, a three-block-long street that for many years was the heart of black Frankford. It would later expand to encompass an area bounded roughly by Foulkrod Street to the north, Main Street (now Frankford Avenue) to the west, Oxford Street (now Kinsey Street) to the south, and Tackawanna Street to the east. This area would constitute the traditional African American neighborhood of Frankford for almost two centuries. It is important to note, however, that the area was not predominantly black; many more whites lived in east Frankford than blacks in the nineteenth century. African Americans tended to live in small clusters within what was the overwhelmingly white neighborhood of east Frankford.



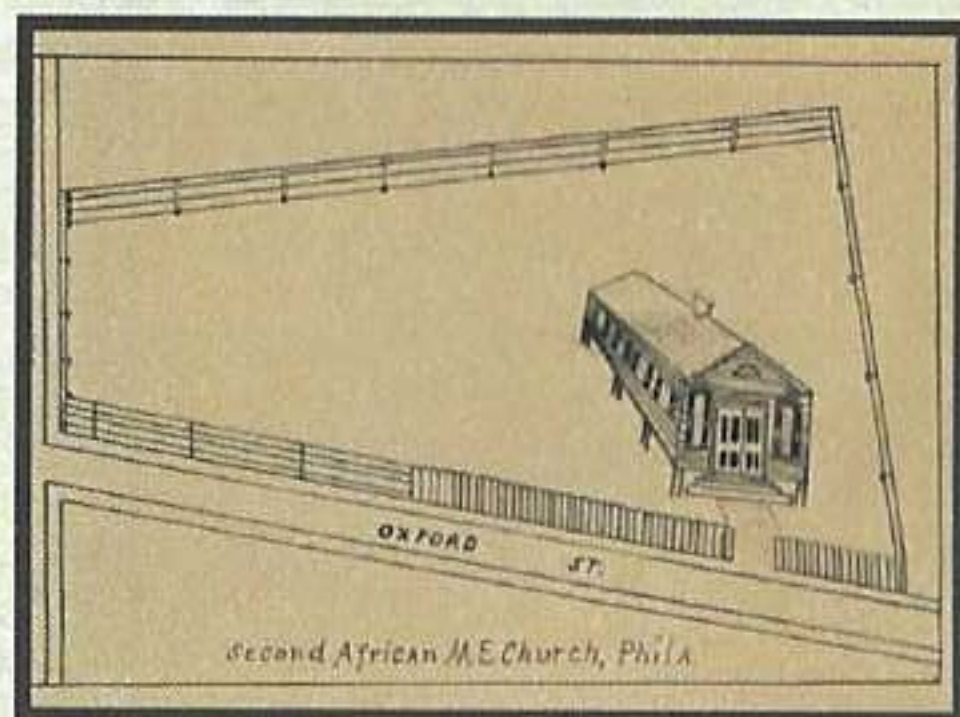
*Detail of 1845 map of Frankford, showing the heart of the African American section. Bowser and Lockwood were prominent black families.*



*Circa 1875 photograph of an unidentified African American group. The photograph was found in a small album next to a photograph of Campbell AME Church, suggesting that the group may have been affiliated with the Church.*

By all accounts, relations between blacks and whites in Frankford in the nineteenth century were, if not close, at least fairly harmonious. To be sure, discrimination and segregation were a part of life in this period and African Americans were denied opportunities in many areas. But there does not appear to have been much open hostility between the races. Nor was there much social interaction; with a few exceptions - such as the establishment of the African Colored School in the 1830s, in which blacks and whites worked together - each group kept to itself for the most part. While blacks were greatly limited in terms of where they could live, work, study, and socialize, they were apparently allowed to live in relative peace and build a community of their own in Frankford.

## EARLY HISTORY OF CAMPBELL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



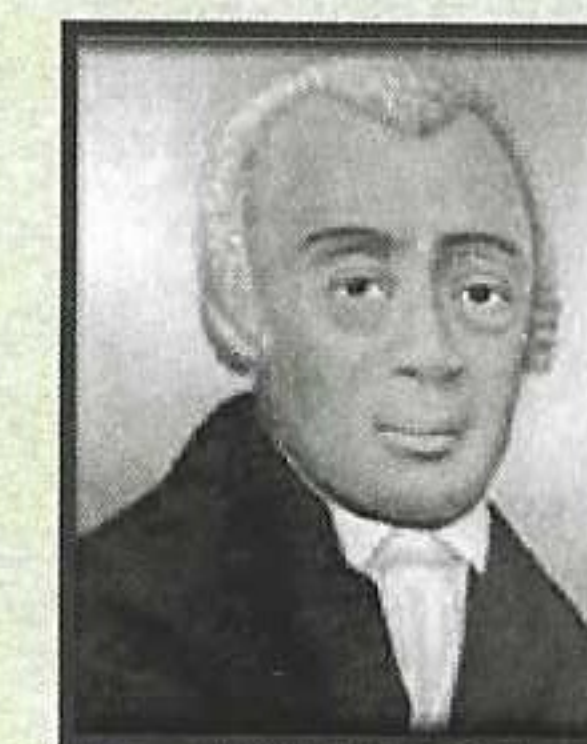
*An undated drawing of Campbell AME Church. The structure depicted may be the church building prior to its rebuilding in 1870*

Campbell African Methodist Episcopal Church was the primary religious and social institution for blacks in Frankford for most of the nineteenth century. No records of the early years of the Church are known to have survived, but according to church tradition a prayer group of some twenty-eight members began meeting in 1807 in the home of Sarah Congo, which was located in the rear of the property at 1757 Plum Street, then known as Bowser's Lane. This group would form the nucleus of what would become Campbell AME Church. Several years later they acquired a building a few blocks away on Oxford Street, now Kinsey Street, and began holding services there. That building was later torn down and replaced by another. The current building, built in 1870, contains cornerstones indicating that there have been several church buildings on the property.

Another inscription on the Campbell building refers to the Church as "2nd AME," indicating that it was the second AME church established after "Mother Bethel," the nation's first AME Church, which was founded by Richard Allen and others in the late 1700s. Richard Allen was an ex-slave who had purchased his freedom and



*Campbell AME Church in the early twentieth century.*

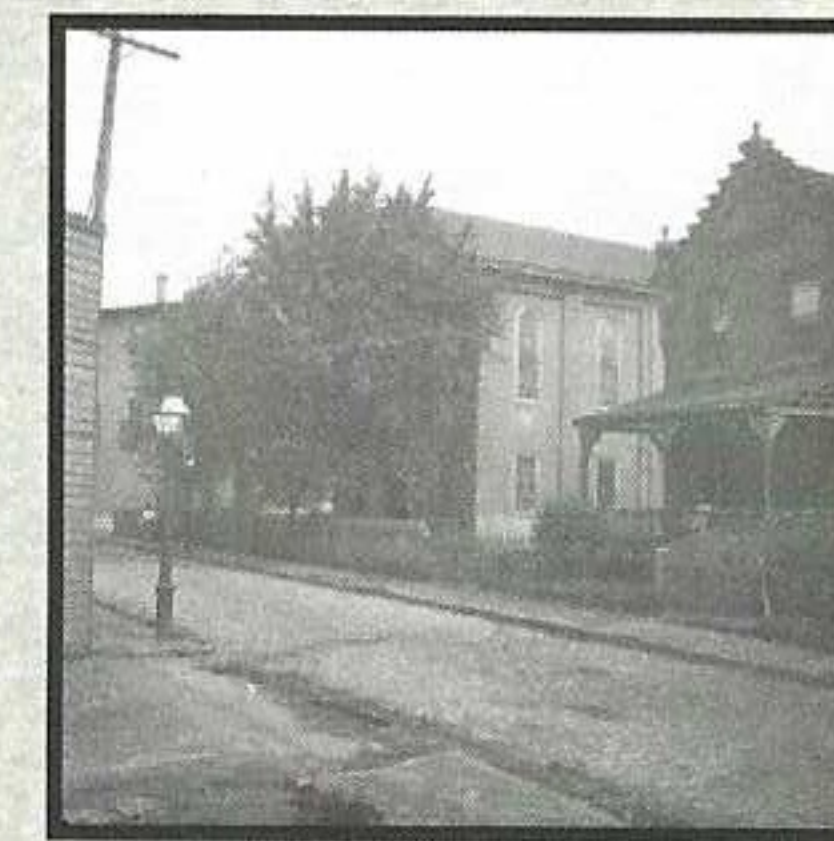


*Richard Allen*

become a Methodist preacher and a leader of Philadelphia's African American community. In 1787 he and other black members of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church left that congregation after experiencing discrimination by the church's white leaders. A few years later Allen would oversee the establishment of a new church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and would eventually become its first bishop. The AME congregation that Allen established is still active. It was originally called "Bethel" and is now known as "Mother Bethel." When the new AME congregation formed in Frankford in the early 1800s it was called "Second Bethel," confirming its status as the nation's second AME church. In the 1860s Second Bethel was renamed "Campbell" in honor of Jabez Pitt Campbell, a mid-nineteenth century AME bishop.

As the first, and for many years only, institution in Frankford that was controlled and supported entirely by African Americans, Campbell AME played an especially important role in the community. It served as a center of black social, religious, and civic life. In addition to holding religious services and community events, it housed the African Colored School of Frankford for the first few years of its existence and is purported to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. Its members have ranged from poor residents to successful businessmen and leaders in the black community. Over the course of its two hundred years, Campbell has played a major role in shaping the history of the African American community of Frankford.

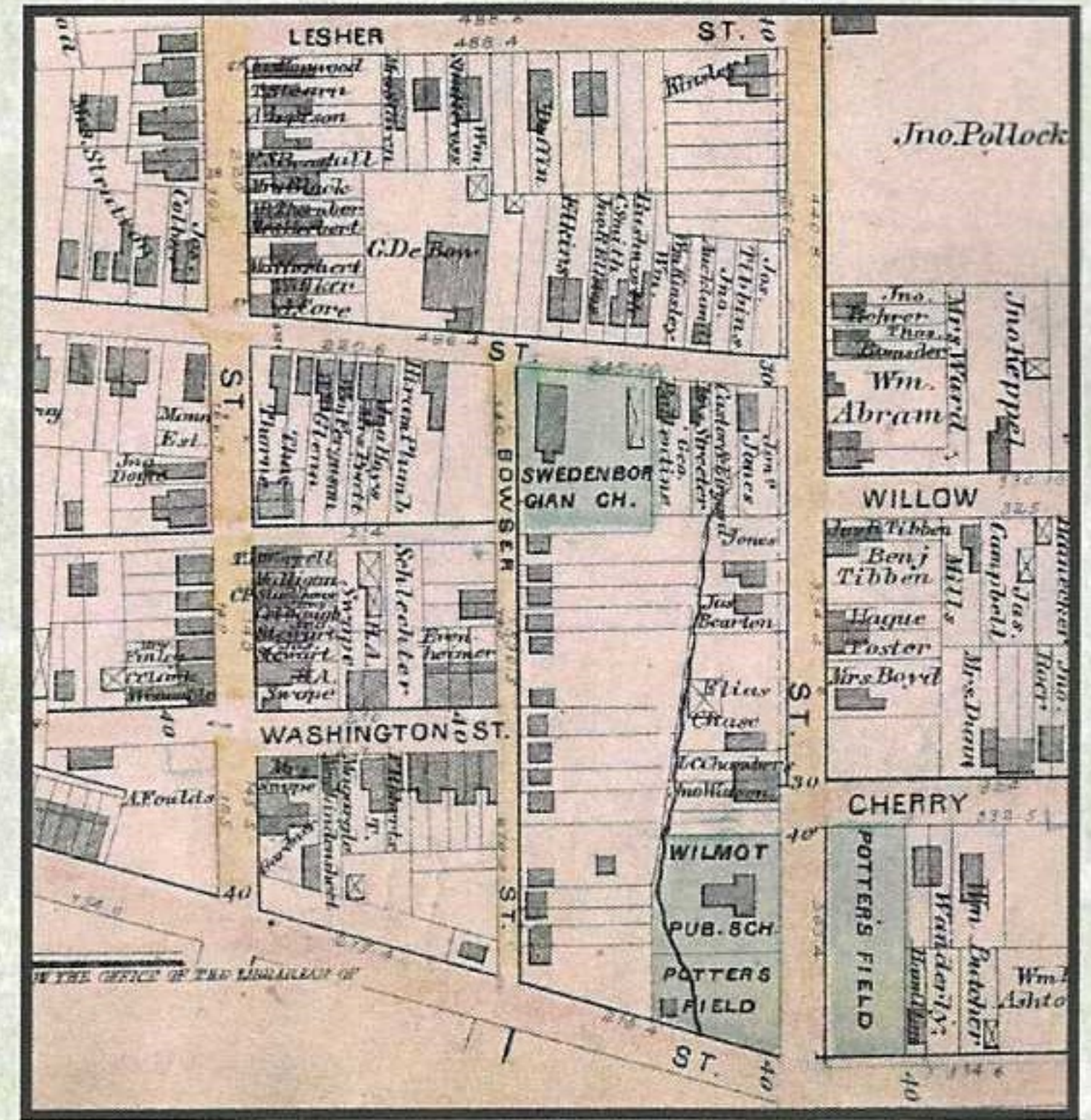
Campbell AME Church in the early twentieth century.



*Campbell AME Church in the early twentieth century.*

## THE WILMOT SCHOOL

Originally known as the African Colored School, the Wilmot School educated African American children in Frankford for almost 100 years. Efforts to establish a school for blacks in Frankford were begun in 1837 by local Quakers, who in June of that year formed a committee "to consider and if practicable report a plan for the organization and support of a school for colored children of the vicinity." In January of 1838 the committee reported that the school had been set up "in the colored meeting house [Campbell AME Church] ... with about thirty scholars." The school met in Campbell until 1841, when a schoolhouse was erected several blocks away on Meadow Street in the heart of the black community in east Frankford. The land for the building was part of a public burial ground and was leased to the trustees of the school by the Borough of Frankford.



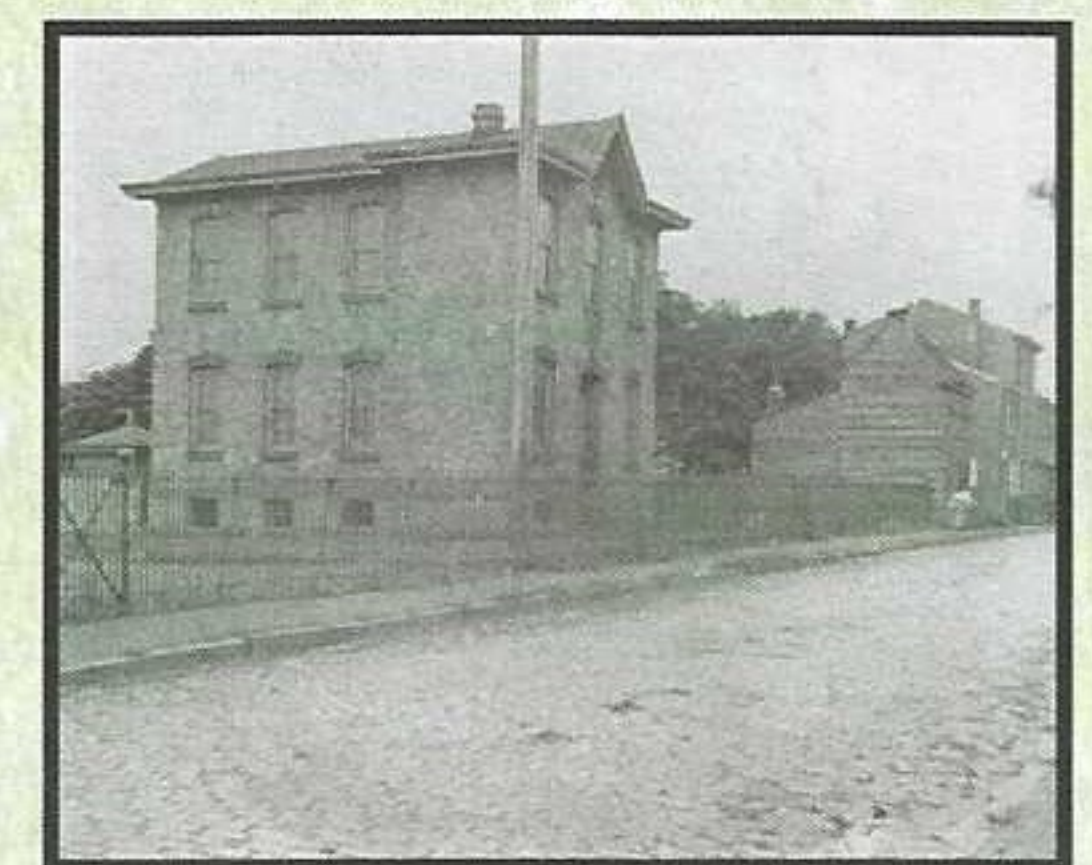
*Detail from 1876 atlas showing the Wilmot School*

While the Borough provided funding for the school, money was also raised by public subscription. A white resident of Frankford writing years later remembered that money to build the schoolhouse "was collected by George Lockwood, an intelligent colored man, who went from house to house soliciting subscriptions for the purpose." The school enjoyed a steadily increasing attendance in the nineteenth century.



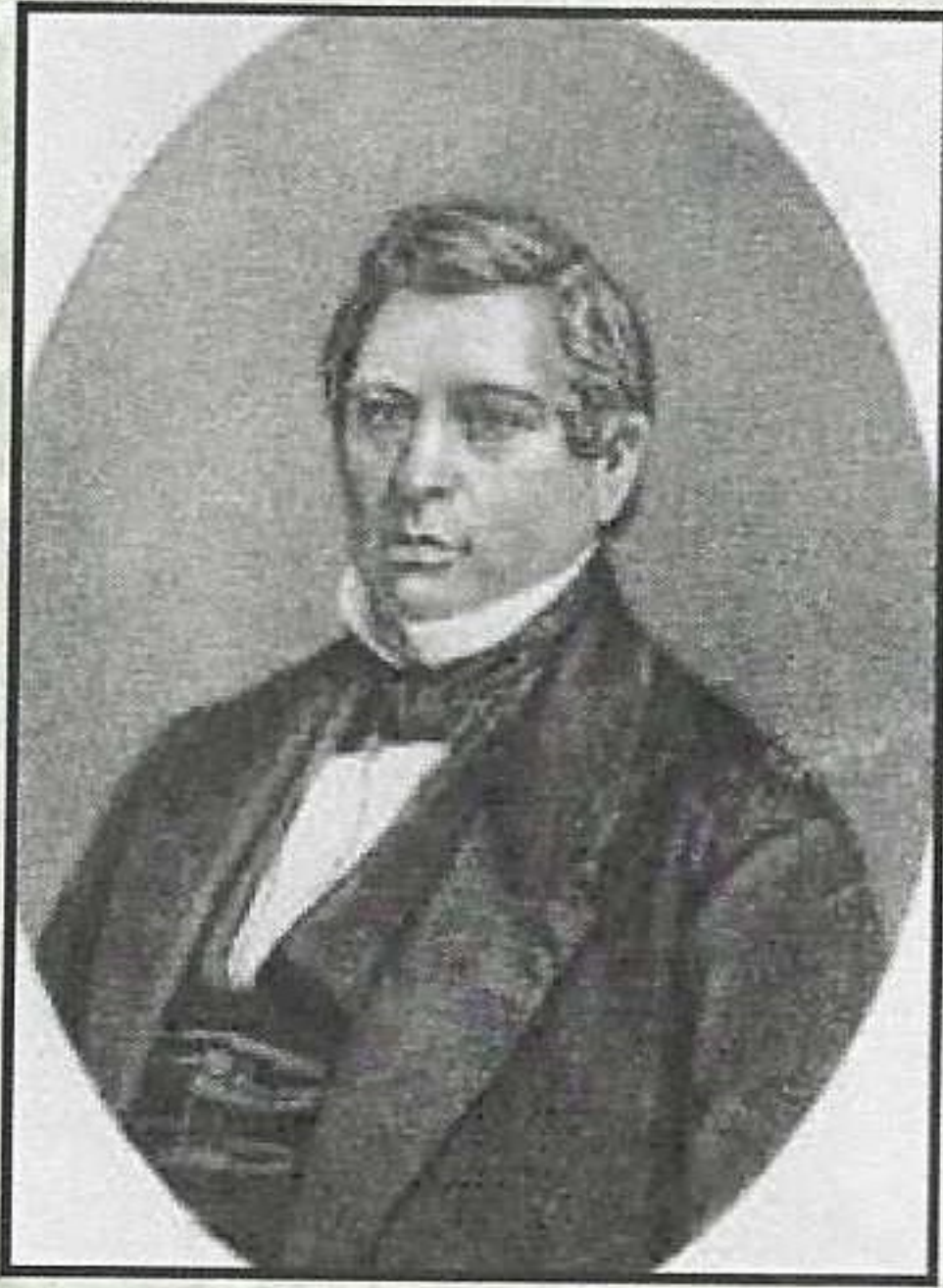
In 1874 the African Colored School was officially incorporated into the Philadelphia public school system and renamed the Wilmot School in honor of Pennsylvania Congressman

David Wilmot, author of the "Wilmot Proviso." The Wilmot School remained an all-black school until Philadelphia public schools began to be desegregated in the 1930s. Many families with roots in Frankford's black community have ancestors who attended the Wilmot School.



*Two early views of the Wilmot School*

## THE WILMOT PROVISIO



*David Wilmot*

David Wilmot was a democratic congressman from Pennsylvania who in 1848 introduced into a pending bill in Congress a clause that would prohibit the introduction of slavery into any territory the US acquired from Mexico as a result of the Mexican-American War, which was then winding down. The clause, which became known as the Wilmot Proviso, did not make it into the bill and despite repeated attempts over the next several years it was never successfully included in any legislation. However, historians consider the Wilmot Proviso's attempt to limit slavery among the early actions that would eventually lead to the Civil War. The text of the Proviso reads as follows:

*Provided that, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.*

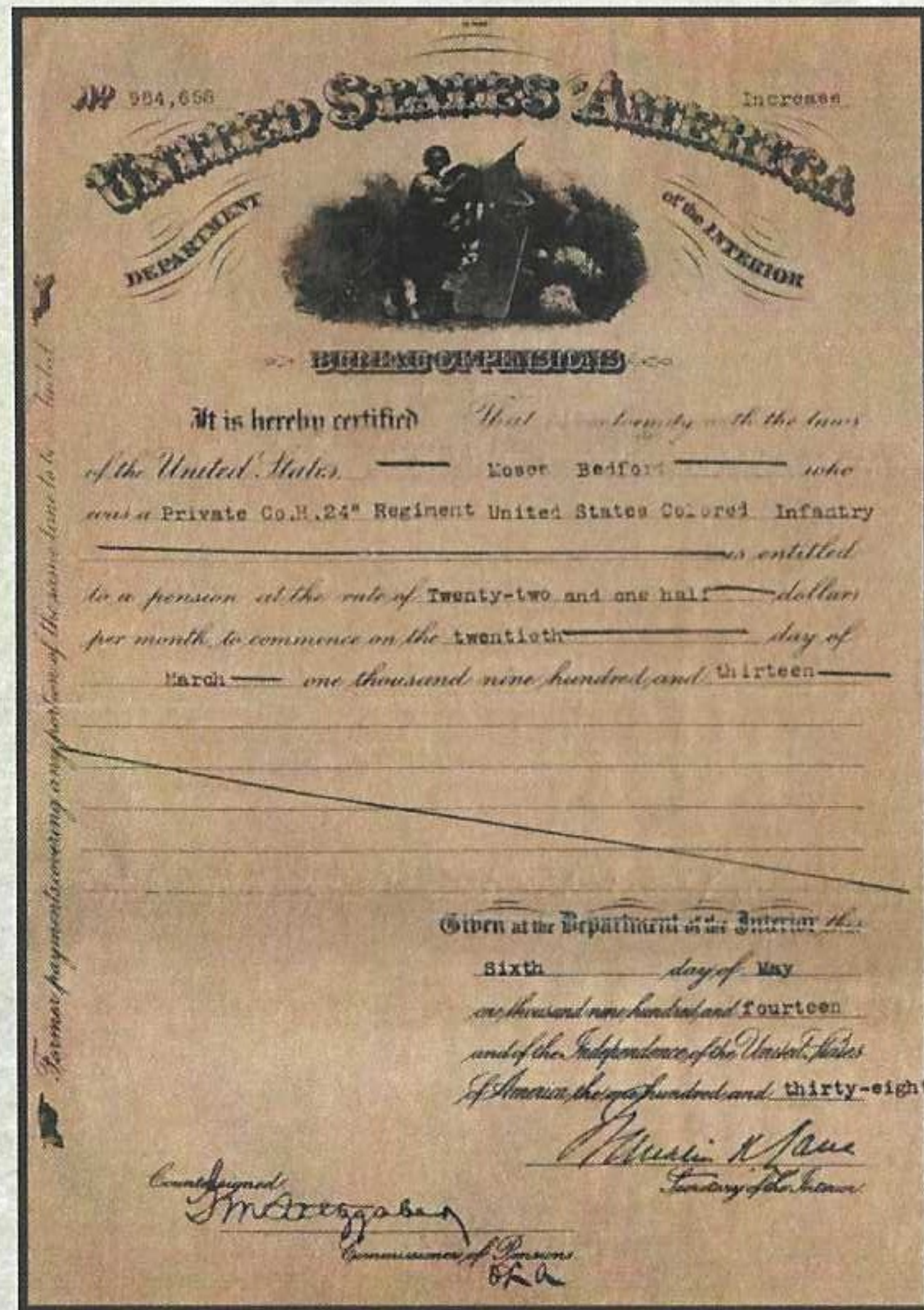
Despite his opposition to slavery, Wilmot's position was more a practical than moral one and his views would be considered racist by today's standards. Nevertheless, he became identified with the anti-slavery movement as a result of the Proviso and when the African Colored School in Frankford was absorbed into the Philadelphia public school system in 1874, the school was re-named in his honor.

# FRANKFORD COLORED TROOPS IN THE CIVIL WAR

Many African American men from Frankford served in Colored Regiments in the Civil War. The names of thirty-two such individuals – some 10% of the total black population of Frankford in the 1860s - are included in a list of local Civil War soldiers published in the Frankford Gazette and subsequently reprinted in the Historical Society of Frankford's Journal in 1907.

<b>3rd Penna. Artillery</b> Penna. Vols. 3 years service	
Frankford Jacob Washington Newmond Loeber Edward Miller Thomas Hopper Roger Mollenhans	Frankford John Conaway William Vashoff William Davis Patrick Mollenhans
<b>2nd Heavy Artillery</b> Penna. Vols. 3 years service	
G. Tomlinson, P. J. John E. Smith	
<b>11th Veteran Reserve Corps</b> Charles C. Gold, Frankford	
<b>United States Colored Regiments</b> 3 years service	
1st United States Colored Regt. 3 Years' Regt. William H. Young James Gray William Gray	
2nd United States Colored Regt. 3 Years' Regt. Thomas Truist Jacob H. Myers	
24th United States Colored Regt. 3 Years' Regt. James Flourens George Fennema Moses Bedford Doris Jackson Edward Thomas Robert Coleman Isiah Sumner James Sumner	
James Butler Jacob Reed George Butler Elijah Barrett William Stewart Samuel Smith Harold Pleasant	
25th United States Colored Regt. 3 Years' Regt. James W. Davis Thomas Truist Thomas T. Davis Joseph Jackson Joseph Lancaster Niles Little Charles V. Sumner Darlington Little Jeremiah Morye James Little Henry A. Cherry Miles Parker Edna Canary	
30	

List of Colored Civil War Troops from Frankford, published in 1907



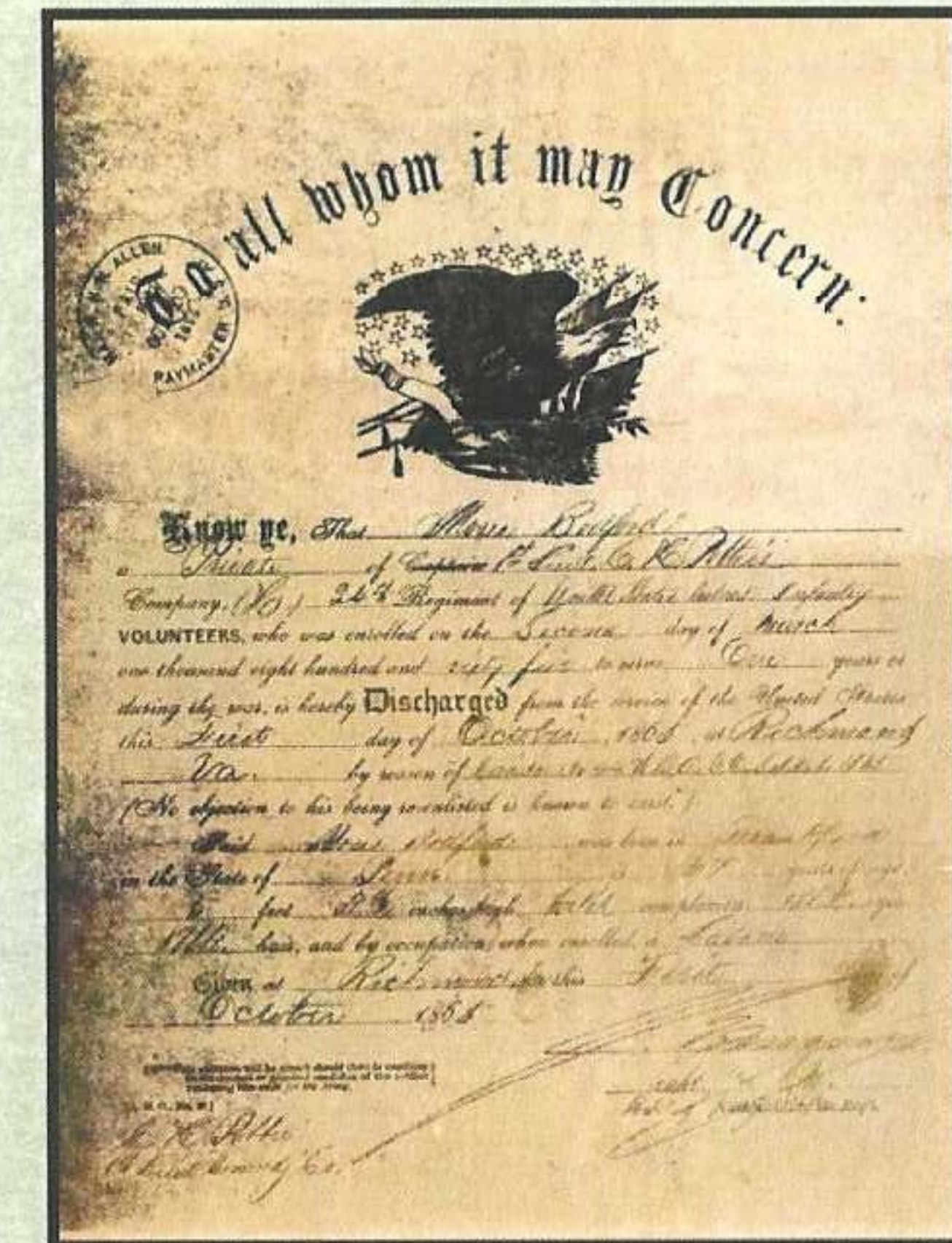
Moses Bedford's 1914 pension record, showing that he was entitled to \$22.50 per month

Many of these men were members of Campbell AME Church, including Moses Bedford, who served in the 24th Regiment of the US Colored Infantry, and who is buried in the church cemetery.

In a timeless tradition, young boys from Frankford played at being soldiers during the Civil War. A white resident recalled years later that as a boy he was involved in a skirmish against some local black youths and "we had a terrific battle, in which oyster shells were used for ammunition."



Tombstone in Campbell AME cemetery of Moses Bedford, who died in 1920, and his wife Mary.



Moses Bedford's discharge, given at Richmond, Virginia, on October 1, 1865

## WORSHIP AND WORK



*St. Thomas  
Methodist  
Episcopal*

Life in the black community in Frankford in the nineteenth century revolved around family, church, community, and work. Church was particularly important. Campbell AME was the only African American church in the area until the late 1860s, after which a number of others were established: Second Baptist in 1869, St. Thomas Methodist Episcopal in 1871, and Trinity AME Zion in 1880.

Church services at Campbell were a major event in the community. A white woman, writing years later about life in Frankford in the 1840s and 1850s, describes these services: "Worshippers came from long distances, and services lasted all day, and part of the night. When spirits got high, it was no unusual thing for them to jump up, almost reaching the ceiling in their enthusiasm of religion." Letitia Bowser, who died around 1902 at the age of 97, was a longtime Campbell member and led the singing there for many years.



*Letitia  
Bowser*

She was remembered by another writer for her "soprano voice of great volume which was recognized above all the other voices in the congregation. It was said by judges that if Letitia's skin had been white, she would have a national reputation for her voice."



*Trinity AME Zion*

In the working world, the black residents of Frankford were denied access to better-paying, more-skilled jobs, but still managed to find a variety of types of employment. In addition to the traditional jobs of servants and menial laborers, many found work as white washers, wood sawyers, and brick makers. Dr. Richard C. Allen, a white historian writing in the early 1900s, remembers Edward Smith and his three sons as "the colored wood sawyers of Frankford ... No other four wood sawyers could make a cord of wood disappear as quickly as could the Smiths ... They were the experts without equals." Dr. Allen also writes that Peter Marks, a white washer, "boasted of his ability to white wash a ceiling of a



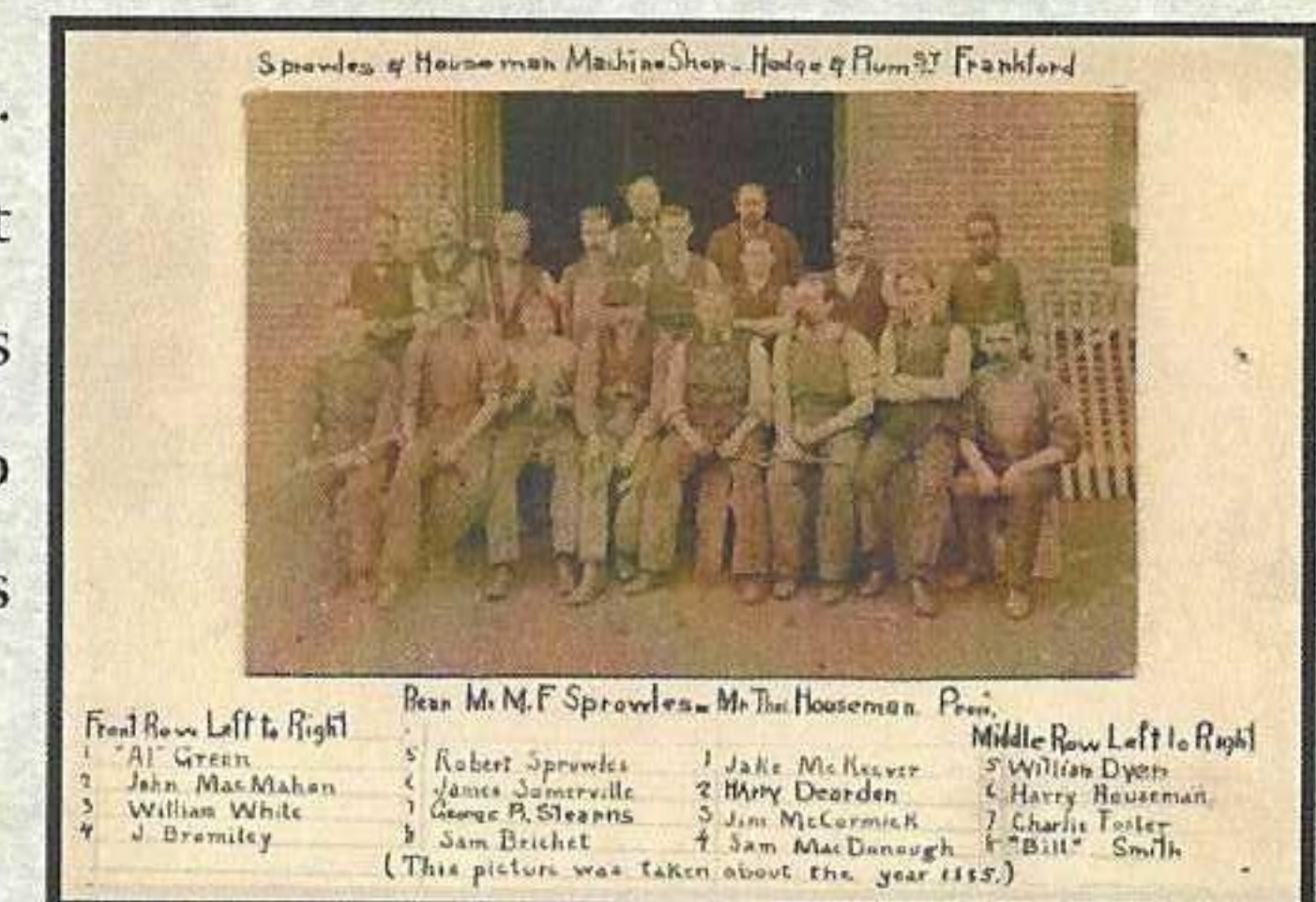
*Second Baptist*

room without the necessity of removing the carpet." Marks and his wife Virginia had an interesting history. He was born on the plantation of James Monroe, for whom he worked as a servant, and his wife was born on the plantation of Thomas Jefferson, for whose family she served as a domestic. Thus they both worked for US Presidents before moving to Frankford in the early 1800s.

Eventually blacks were able to gain a foothold in some of the better types of employment. Dr. Allen notes that James Horrocks, co-owner of a local dye works, "was the first manufacturer in Frankford to employ colored persons to perform skilled labor." This was around 1850. In the latter part of the nineteenth century a small black proprietary and professional class began to emerge, consisting of tailors, shoemakers, barbers, and skilled laborers of various types. By 1880 a fifth of Frankford's black workers were in skilled labor or professional jobs, a major accomplishment given the obstacles they faced.



*Agnes Spencer, the  
first woman licensed  
to preach in the  
AME Church, is  
buried in the  
Campbell cemetery*



Housemen Machine Shop - Hodge & Plum St. Frankford

Front Row Left to Right		Back Mr. M.F. Sprawles - Mr. The Housemen - Penn.		Middle Row Left to Right	
1. Al Green	5. Robert Sprawles	1. Jake McNeaver	5. William Dyers	6. Harry Houseman	
2. John Mac Mahan	6. James Sumerville	2. Harry Doerden	7. Charles Foster	8. "Bill" Smith	
3. William White	7. George P. Sleepers	3. Jim McCormick	4. Sam MacDonough		
4. J. Bramley	8. Sam Bricket	4. Sam MacDonough			

(This picture was taken about the year 1885.)