

1842 Our First School For Negroes

Almost as early as the establishment of Clara Barton's first public for white children a self-sacrificing Negro woman was devoting her energies to the uplift of the children of her race in Bordentown. Mrs William Middleton a woman whose character and foresight deserve more than a passing notice, had won for herself an education above the average at a time when such an accomplishment not a little difficult for one of her race. She saw the folly of having an entire group of the people untutored and determined to use her knowledge for the advancement of the younger generation of Negroes.

Middletons Hall, since torn down and replaced by a new hall and apartments at the corner of Borden and West streets, was probably the spot selected for the school which she opened in 1842. She started with 14 pupils ranging in age from five to twenty-one years. The numbers increased until 1853 her school had become important enough to receive official recognition and be placed on a footing with the other public schools of the time.

Notable among Mrs. Middleton's successors as principal of the Negro school was the late William F. Powell who assumed charge in 1880 and continued with marked success for several years. Powell was later appointed Minister from the United States to Haiti. His memory has been honored by his race in this city by the naming of Powell Park a small plot at the intersection of Burlington and West Streets

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