

**April 23, 2023**

**Mayor Josh Halpern**

**Re: Notes on History of Community Center**

During the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were many episodes of racial tensions between the white and colored populations in Fair Haven. In fact, the State of New Jersey was the last of the 37 states then in existence to abolish slavery and to give its children free and integrated schools. Even some of the reconstructed Southern states integrated their schools before New Jersey and Fair Haven. Racial tensions were high amongst the whites and colored over the school issue.

After a burning of a school house in Fair Haven, the colored parents demanded that their children be allowed to attend the white school on Willow Street; school administrators decided to close the school for "cleaning and repairs."

In 1881, Fair Haven "colored peoples school" and the Fair Haven African American community changed U.S. History by petitioning the N.J. Supreme Court for school integration and they won; the decision is known as the Fair Haven Rule. (The rear portion of Fair Haven's Police Headquarters is the original 1881 building where history was made) The Fair Haven rule was the law that prohibited school boards from excluding children based on race, color or creed.

The wheels of justice sometimes turned slowly, for it wasn't until 1944 that N.J.'s Supreme Court ordered "immediate integration of ALL public schools in N.J.", which was an historic ruling that would be cited by the U.S. Supreme Court ten years later in the Brown vs. Board of Education case, which made integration the law of the land throughout America.

So, the unassuming building behind the Police Station that we all know as the Community Center has had quite an impact on Fair Haven History as well as U.S. History.

We should all be proud of our Fair Haven history, as well as our "colored" residents who fought so tenaciously for their equal rights. Fair Haven's colored people demonstrated a toughness, a tenacity and a courage born out of generations of former slaves.

**Pat Drummond**

Founder, Historic Association of Fair Haven, 1995

Initiated the Historic Preservation Commission from 1986-1993, when it was finally adopted

Founded the Garden Party in 1995 to raise money for Fisk Chapel (Bicentennial Hall) \$500,000 raised