

Audio - Inez Hallman

First voice:

My name is Inez Hallman, and I'm the teacher at Rocky Hill School, the Negro school in Clarksburg. It's the start of the 1932 school year and this year I'm in charge of forty-four students in grades first through seventh. The school board has told us that next year we'll get a second room and another teacher, but for now it's just me and my students in one room. Our school is a frame building on Frederick Road, and even though it's small, we are very proud of it. We have a bell tower and a flagpole outside, just like the white schools. I sit at the front of the room, with the blackboard and our little library, and the students sit facing me at their desks with the youngest grades in front. The school system does not provide janitors for the Negro schools, so I and the students take care of our building: stocking the wood-burning stove, cleaning the floors, and hauling water from the nearby well. The school board doesn't send many resources our way, so we do the best we can, with help from parents and the community. Fortunately, my school parents and other adults in the community are very supportive—everyone makes sure the children get to school on time and have decent clothes to wear. And I always bring extra lunch to share so no one goes hungry.

After my students graduate from seventh grade, some of them take a long bus ride down to the only black high school in the county, Lincoln High School in Rockville. That school only opened five years ago; before that any student able to continue their education usually went to high school in Washington DC. Many kids can't afford that and have to stop going to school after 7th grade, so having a school that goes to 11th grade is a big improvement. I'm thankful that things are getting better, but I know we still have a long way to go.

Second voice:

Inez Hallman was 23 in 1932. Although she was from Montgomery County, her family lived several miles away so Inez stayed in Clarksburg with the Mason family who lived next door to the school. Education was so important to Montgomery County's African American communities that in the decades following the Civil War one-room schools, most entirely funded and built by the black community, sprang up throughout the county. Like all African American teachers in Montgomery County at that time, Inez was given fewer resources, and less pay, than her white colleagues by the School Board; the black community made up for these discrepancies as much as they could, often providing textbooks, supplies and even classrooms themselves. The Rocky Hill School in Clarksburg was built by the local community (not the school board) in the late 1870s; for a few years prior to that, classes were held in the Pleasant View Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Rocky Hill School closed in 1952. The Montgomery County School Board consolidated the county's many sub-standard one- and two-room schools (most of which had no indoor plumbing) and built four new elementary schools and a new high school. The students from Rocky Hill were sent to the more modern, though still segregated Edward U. Taylor School in Boyds. The Supreme Court's decision to end school segregation in 1954, in the landmark case *Brown v. the Board of Education*, meant that African American-only schools were (technically) a thing of the past. Although several of the old pre-integration schools still exist around the county, the Rocky Hill School building was torn down several years ago, and a community center was built on the site. To learn more about school segregation in Montgomery County visit www.montgomeryconnections.org.