

# A BLACK HISTORY OF CECILTON

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1993

FEB 24 1993

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## "A Black History of Cecilton"

This is a collection of stories of the people who have lived in or around Cecilton all of their lives.

This book is in no way guaranteed factual. It is purely memories of people who either remember the actual happenings or remember hearing about them from older people in the community.

Our special thanks to:

Wayman Biddle  
Frances Edwards  
Helen Harris  
Elmer Harris  
Britton Harris  
Arthur Hollingsworth  
Shirley Hollingsworth  
Barbara Phillips  
Cordelia Ruley  
Elsie Wilson  
Grace Wise  
Edward Wise

Without the help of these people this book could not have been written.

**For Reference**

Not to be taken from this room

## Cecilton - A Black History

In writing a black history of Cecilton, we were very fortunate to have access to a book called "An Unwritten History" by Levi J. Coppin, one of the most prominent black leaders of the time.

In the early 1800's there were three towns incorporated into one. The main large town of Cecilton was strictly white, while two small settlements of colored houses were located on the south side of Cecilton. There was also a small settlement of colored houses on the North side of town which was not given a name. It was located somewhere near the pavillion in the park. Mr. Scott's home was probably in that area.

There was a woods of huge oak trees dividing the white town and the blacks. We have heard from some of the older folks that long ago there was a group of cabins on a creek which was called Coppin's Creek. This creek ran behind Bloomingdale and Greenfields. Since several of the colored people worked on these farms, it is quite possible that this is where "Crocktown" was located. This town is mentioned in Bishop Coppin's book. The people who worked on these farms were not slaves but were really treated as such. They were given homes, food, clothing, etc. but very little money. Bishop Coppin says that "Aunt" Fanny Bayard, Emory Sisco, John Hall, and Benjamin Freeman lived in Crocktown and were all free people.

We learned an interesting fact here. Did you ever wonder why so many colored folks in years gone by were called "Aunt", "Uncle", or "Mammy"? During slavery it was against the law to call a black person "Mr." or "Mrs.", so as a sign of respect by both blacks and whites, the title "Aunt, Uncle, or Mammy", was used.

"Uncle" Perry Hinson owned about an acre of ground on the south side of Cecilton. On this ground he built a few one room cabins and a one room church. This little settlement became the social and religious center of the black people for four or five miles around. "Uncle" Perry became the important man of the place. He could read a little and claimed the right to preach. Since he owned the ground and the church (which he named "Friendship", he was not obligated to follow any rules of the surrounding churches so he could preach and do just about as he wanted as far as religion was concerned. This settlement came to be known as Perrytown. Crowds would gather there in summer. The white people would come to these meetings occasionally to be sure no mischief was being hatched. The magnificent grove of oaks was owned by the whites but by common consent it was left standing strictly for a colored meeting place and park.

"Uncle" Perry's church, "Friendship", is the first church of which there is any mention. Since he owned and ran it

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there was no question of ownership. After he died, people continued to worship in the same way and there was no one to exercise any special authority. However, as the white church in town was Methodist and had gone so far as to appoint class leaders for the colored people, it was just taken for granted that "Friendship" was Methodist. Mr. Coppin makes several references to the "Brick church". This must have been the Methodist Episcopal white church. Members of the Brick church came to "Friendship" and preached their doctrine to the colored people but the blacks didn't like their teachings. After the war, the African Methodist Episcopal church felt free to go its own way. When the blacks defied the white ministry, the whites immediately went to the County Seat (Elkton) to see who really owned "Friendship" and the acre of ground on which it stood, in the hope of taking it away from the colored people. There was no record of who owned the property. However, the Court of Equity decided that peaceful possession for twenty years gave it to the congregation who worshipped there. There was great rejoicing at "Friendship". The next step was to make "Friendship" an African Methodist church. Bishop Wayman came to "Friendship" and received the congregation into the folds of African Methodism.

Bishop Coppin mentioned several times that the tiny "Friendship" was terribly overcrowded but never does refer to the present A.M.E. church being started. He does mention vaguely the collecting of donations for a new church but never mentions a building actually being started. From other things he mentions, this may have been done about 1898. Since he was still alive in the early 1900's, the church must have been built in his lifetime.

Shirley Hollingsworth tells me that the Odd Fellows donated the ground for the new church and that it was named Odd Fellows. We don't know when the name was changed to its present one.

Levi John Coppin

Levi John Coppin, one of the most prominent black figures in this community, was born "on the hill" in Fredericktown, Md. on Christmas Eve in 1848, and his mother always referred to him as her Christmas gift! His maternal grandmother was free born but her husband, his grandfather, Perry Lilly, was a slave. This is an interesting fact. Children took the condition of their mother. If their mother was "free" then so were the children. For this reason, many slave men married "free" women so that their children might be free.

Mr. Coppin tried to trace his ancestry. He found that the name "Coppin" was of German origin and was originally "Coppenger". On coming to America it was shortened to Coppin.

His mother took great chances in teaching him to read and write as it was strictly forbidden under severe penalty of the law. Mrs. Lilly (Levi Coppin's mother) was a very religious and pious woman who practiced her religion as she preached it. This is no doubt where Mr. Coppin started his religious training.

He was so well educated by his mother at home that he was able to teach school before he could go to school.

He tells a funny story. After the Civil War when the slaves were freed, young men would come to him and ask him to write love letters for them. Then the girls who received the letters would come to him and ask him to read them so they could see what their boyfriends had to say. Levi charged ten cents a letter! That was a lot of money in those days so the boys must have thought a lot of the girls.

Bishop Coppin went on to travel and work all over the United States and later even went to Africa to do missionary work.

He married for the second or third time when he was an old man and he and his wife had one daughter, who was the light of his life. He spent his remaining years in this area and it is thought he is buried in Cecilton.

## Schools

After the slaves were set free, the woodsman's axe was heard in the oak grove. Enough space was left to build a schoolhouse. On our 1887 map there is a place marked "colored school". Edward Wise tells us that there was once a whole group of houses behind the cemeteries and this schoolhouse seems to have been located among them. This may have been part of "Perrytown". Bishop Coppin refers to this school in his book. When his mother stopped teaching in her home, the children moved to this school which was built about 1866 and was called the "Jane Coppin Private School".

Bishop Coppin says the school was kept open for the same length of time as the white schools. There probably weren't too many big boys in the classes while the growing season was on, as they had to work on the farms.

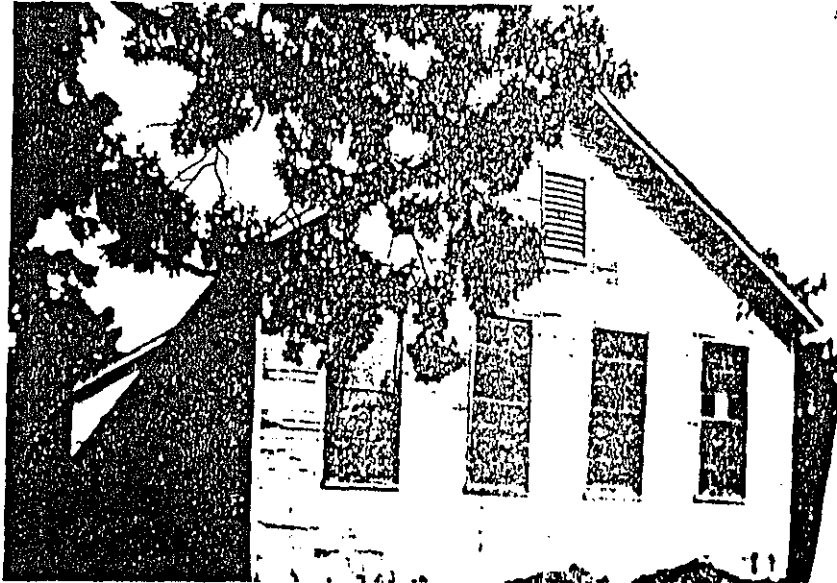
Christopher Jones, Jr. was the first black boy to go to school away from Cecilton. He got his education and came back to Cecilton to teach in the new school. Mrs. Sarah Christmas was the first certified teacher in a regular school.

After the war was over it was safe for the negroes to have a Sunday School. This was supposedly for religious instruction but it really gave the people the opportunity to learn to read and write. "Friendship", the little church, was available and soon the building was filled with new and strange sounds. Young and old came to church and learned the alphabet together. This was a wonderful opportunity for the older folks because there was no way in which they could have attended a regular school.

Mrs. Coppin was not alone now in her teaching. Her son, John, was now able to help. A man named Horace Brown next came to "Friendship" from Baltimore and as he was far advanced in teaching he automatically became "principal". The school increased in numbers until "Friendship" was too small to accommodate the students.

About the same time that the colored school was built behind the cemetery, a white school was built on the south side of Cecilton on Rt. 213. About 1870, a new white school was built on Main St. in Cecilton and the colored people moved into the old white school. This is the school we show in the picture.

In 1952 a new brick school was built for the colored people on the opposite side from the old school. It was called Coppin Elementary. After the schools became integrated, it was used as a primary school for both blacks and whites and is now called the "Annex"



This little building located on Rt. 213 on the south side of Cecilton was the colored school for many years.

Some of the early teachers there were:

Annabel Ruley

Alva Wallace

Rosa J. Pekoe

Gladys Shephard

Virginia Hobbs

Helen Harria

When the Coppin Elementary School (now known as the "Annex", this school was closed.

## Churches

The A.M.E. Church located in Cecilton is more than one hundred and twenty years old. The little meeting house called "Friendship" later gave way to the present church.

For a while the blacks worshiped at Zion Methodist Church. This was a white church. According to hearsay, there was a balcony in the church with an outside entrance for the blacks to use. The gallery was later closed off but some of the white people in town confirm that the blacks did worship there.

In 1871, the people of Union Bethel set out to build a new church. A woman named Helen Ford left money in her will for the building of this church.

The Reverend Ann Farrar Lightener is now pastor of A.M.E. Church and is the first woman to serve here in that capacity.

Elsie Wilson remembers that when she was a child the church had beautiful stained glass windows. These were dedicated to the Stewards, the Sunday School, etc., but she says that they are all faded out now.

At one time there was a hall behind the church but it was later joined to the church and used for a kitchen.

In 1985 the Union Bethel A.M.E. church published a booklet about their church. It is very interesting and gives a lot of information to anyone who is concerned.

In the early 1900's there was a small church off Crystal Beach Road near what is locally known as Paige's Bottom. It was called the John Wesley church. About 1929 the congregation had fallen off, mainly because so many people were moving nearer Cecilton. A new little church was built on the South side of Cecilton and was called the John Wesley church. The old church "down the Neck" was sold to Wm. Bolton, dismantled and used to build a home for his son.

The little church in Cecilton was used for some time, but gradually the people switched to the A.M.E. Church. There were three remaining members at John Wesley when it was closed. They were Anna Wise, James Wise, and Steve Davis. Joe Short bought the church and the lot on which it stood and converted it into a bungalow.



## Businesses

There were very few black businesses in town. A man named Jack Price, (Civil War veteran), took his watch to pieces and put it back together with no tools except his hands. As you can imagine, this was quite an achievement.

The next man to accomplish this was Jack Ferrell who did it so well that he opened a clock and repair shop. He fixed all kinds of things for the townspeople.

Christopher Jones was one of the first black men to start his own business. He rented ground from the white men and then harvested crops. He also rented woodland and cut trees for firewood. Since no coal was burned then and the farmers were too busy to cut their own wood they bought from him. He was not afraid of the white men and demanded a good price. He became quite well to do.

He rented a lot on Back Street and built a cluster of five houses on it.

Those who had musical talent often became "fiddlers". They were quite expert with the bow. They played for the "buck" dances at corn huskings and at parties or holiday gatherings, for black and white alike.

## Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries in colored Cecilton. One of them is very old and is almost completely overgrown with woods and brush.

Edward Wise prowled through part of it with us and read off some of the names. They didn't seem familiar to any of us and we wonder if they were names taken from the slave owners. We found the following:

Lorenzo Dumpson	- Buried	1887
John Reed	"	1888
Henrietta Reed	"	1892
Henry Ruley	- no date	

These were the only stones on the edge of the woods that we could get to. Shirley Hollingsworth told me that this cemetery was called the Odd Fellows Cemetery. The piece of ground where the A.M.E. church now stands was paid for and donated by the Odd Fellows. Nobody knows when the Odd Fellows club was formed or who belonged to it, but Shirley says that the tavern owned and run by Mr. Jeeters was originally the Odd Fellows Hall. Mr. Jeeters bought the building and turned it into a tavern.

When the old cemetery was full a new one was started right next to it. When we visited this new cemetery, I was impressed with the number of American flags on the graves. I contacted the V.F.W. and was informed that there are more than thirty veterans buried there.

Now this cemetery is full and a third one has been started behind the present one.

## Wayman Biddle

Wayman was born and raised in Cecilton. When he was grown he joined a construction company and worked for the duPont Co. His jobs took him to the duPont Laboratories and the Hall of Records. He also worked at the Experimental Station at Chestnut Run. Among other jobs, he helped to build Tidewater which was later sold to Getty. Wayman worked as a shop steward.

When Wayman was in his fifties, he retired and came back to Cecilton. He has worked off and on at odd jobs.

I asked Wayman if he could tell me anything about the town that he remembered from his youth. He reminded me of something that I had heard but forgotten. He remembered that Friz Boyer drove the stage (with horses) to Middletown to meet the train. He would then deliver his passengers to their destinations. This was one of the first jitney services around. Later Frank Tillison drive a car as a taxi for the community.

Wayman went to grade school in Cecilton and then stayed with friends in Elkton so that he could go to high-school for two years.

In the article on churches, there is an account of the little church being moved from Crystal Beach Road. Wayman was the only one who mentioned this so I investigated it. If it hadn't been for his remembering this fact it would have passed us by.

Not many people can remember Civil War veterans but Wayman said he knew of two. One was a Mr. Miles and the other was a Mr. Wilson. These were both black men.

Ella and Leon Carroll

Ella and Leon were both born near Earleville, Md. Leon has the distinction of being the son of a runaway slave. Leon's daughter said that her grandfather would never tell anything about where he came from and its easy to see that he would have been afraid. After attending school near Earleville, their families moved back to Cecilton.

Leon was custodian for the schools, bank, and churches for years in Cecilton. He was completely trustworthy and held keys to many private homes as well as business.

For years, Leon and Ella ran an extensive catering service, and helped at functions throughout the community.

There were ten children in the Carroll family, eight of whom are still living. They are as follows:

Shirley, who lives in Cecilton, and married Gilbert Hollingsworth.

Dorothy Carroll Carter, who lives in Dover

Doris Carroll, who lives in Cecilton

James Carroll, who lives in Philadelphia

Tony Carroll, who lives in Philadelphia

John Carroll, who lives in New York

Leroy, who lives in Washington

William, who lives in Hampton, Va.

Leon and Ella did a very unusual thing for a black family in this community. On their fiftieth wedding anniversary, they renewed their wedding vows on a grand scale. A full dress wedding was held in St. Stephen's Parish House. The oldest son and daughter were best man and matron of honor, and the other children were bridesmaids and ushers. The Parish House was decorated beautifully and they had a huge wedding cake. About three or four hundred people came, white as well as black.

Gene Mackie, who was Mayor of Cecilton at that time presented Ella and Leon with a money tree with a sizable amount. There were photographers from the News Journal and Cecil Whig. The children went together and bought a set of gold plated flatwear for their parents. Leon slipped a brand new wedding band on Ella's finger. Altogether it was a beautiful affair.

Frances Edwards

Frances was born in the house where she is living now. Later her family moved up to Mr. Kenneth Price's farm on Wards Hill Rd. and they stayed there for seventeen years. Later they moved back to Cecilton and lived in a house where Sawyer Bros. are now located.

During the war she worked in the defense plant in Elkton. When the war was over she moved to the house where she now lives and nursed her mother till she died. After her mother died, her father became ill and she nursed him till he died about a year later.

In between times, she helped raise Bob Kennedy's children. Then she helped Louise Short with her children, and then helped Kay Short. After Kay's children were grown, she took care of Kay's grandchildren. Then she worked at Rose Hill for two years.

She then started doing day work and worked for Stephen Foster for eight years. After that she worked for a school teacher at Chesapeake City and now works for John Griffith.

Frances has always been on call for people who need help. I don't know how we would have gotten along without her.!!

Frances and Gilbert were married on June 17, 1961. When going over the records for St. Stephens Church we found that Gilbert's father, Gilbert Edwards, Sr. and Maimie Hughes, were married on May 30, 1909 at the rectory, by Rev. Cole. That was a long time ago.

Britton Harris

In addition to the things Elmer told me, Britton remembers that there was a store in Cecilton run by a black family. It was located in a house on the corner in the vicinity of Sawyer Bros. present store.

It was the only store in colored town and a sort of mini-general store. They sold baked goods and tobacco, among other things.

The lady who ran this store also ran a boarding house. She used to take in the teacher when she came to work in Cecilton. This was about eighty years ago.

Britton says Friz and Emma Boyer sold icecream and also sold ice. Friz drove a wagon to Middletown and brought home a load of ice covered with sawdust. Can you imagine how much loss he had by the time he got home?

Britton now lives in Earleton Village in Cecilton.

Helen Harris

Helan Harris was born in Baltimore. She taught school in Baltimore County for a while. She then moved to Conowingo and taught there for a year. Then she taught in Elk Neck for six years and in the late thirties or early forties she moved to Cecilton and taught ten years or so in the old colored school on Rt. 213.

Helen met Elmer shortly after she came to Cecilton. They were married in 1945. They didn't have any children, but raised a boy, Amos Young. Amos completed highschool in Baltimore and graduated with honors. He learned how to do masonry work, then later went to work for Chrysler and will be retiring in a couple of years.

When Coppin Elementary was built in 1952 or 1953, Helen moved there and taught for several years.

When the schools became integrated, Helen went to Elkton and has the distinction of being the first black principal in the County. She worked at Elkton Elementary for six years and retired in 1970.

She and Elmer now live in Fredericktown.

Elmer Harris

Elmer was born in Fredericktown in 1918.

We were talking about old times and these are some of the things he remembers. There was a colored school there in Fredericktown. Nobody else mentioned that. It was the first house at the top of Fredericktown hill. There was a whole row of houses on the opposite side of the road from the present colored town. Remember, when Rt. 213 was widened there it took out a large chunk of land. Those houses probably stood on that ground because there is certainly no room there now for homes. His aunt, Ella Wilson, used to live on that side of the road.

Elmer went to school in Cecilton as it was the main school for blacks in this area. There were no buses for blacks and he walked three miles to and from school. This school was located on the south side of Cecilton on Rt. 213. It was built originally as the first white school in town, and was later used as a colored school. Elmer says it had two rooms and it was heated with two potbellied stoves. If there were students big enough and responsible enough, they tended the stoves, but Helen, Elmer's wife, who taught there for several years, said she had made many a fire herself!

There was no indoor plumbing and the outhouses were always busy. After all, if the weather was nice, who was to say you didn't need to make a trip "out back"?

Elmer remembers his teachers as being Miss Emma Boyer and Miss Annabel Ruley. He was only able to go to school till the fifth grade, which was about the average age at that time.

The Harrises had a very rough time in their childhood. Elmer's father worked for the carpenter, Mr. Pic Smith, and one day went into the woods to cut some lumber. He had a brain hemorrhage and died. Since he was alone, there was no one to help him. A year or so later, his mother was coming home from work at night. As she walked around the lodge hall she was hit by a stray bullet. She was killed. "Stump" Farrow was coming down the street from Hoover Bros. store where he was a meat cutter. He was also shot but wasn't killed. The man handy with the gun was found hiding in a cornfield the next day. Nobody knows why he went on this shooting spree. There were fourteen Harris children left orphaned. Different relatives took the children to raise as was the custom in those days.



Arthur (Chink) Hollingsworth

Chink was an excellent ball player. He belonged to a team called the "Alco Flashes". They were a semi-pro team and played locally. Then they started playing the southern circuit and played in Virginia and North Carolina. He played on this team for about four years. Later he played with the "Milford Yanks" in Milford, Del. They played a lot of semi-pro teams. They usually played after work and on weekends. They didn't get a salary; just their meals and traveling expenses. If by chance they played on a workday they got paid \$20.00 or \$25.00 which was good money back then! Chink was just out of the service and was in his twenties at that time.

When Chink got out of service he played in a negro league called the Crawford All-Stars. They played against some very good Jewish teams such as the "Philly Stars" and the "House of David". These were all semi-pro teams. Crowds of people would come to see them play. There would be standing room only.

Chink has one memory he will never forget. Satchel Paige pitched for the "Philly Stars" and in one of their games against the Crawford All-Stars, he pitched three innings. That was just about like Don Drysdale pitching for Bo Manor. At that time there was no baseball on Sunday so the teams had to stop at midnight. The "Stars", and Chink's team were tied six-six at midnight and had to stop playing, so they never got to break the tie. Chink can always say that his team was tied with Satchel Paige's team.

When Chink lived in Warwick some men came to see his mother to get her to sign him up for the big leagues but at that time she was afraid for him. Negroes weren't popular in the big leagues then.

To anyone who was in the service, I suppose this is old stuff but I had never heard of it. After the war was declared over, and the men were ready to be sent home, they were put in what they called "staging areas". These areas were named for cigarettes. Chink's camp was "Camp Lucky Strike". They were then sent home according to a point system (85 points and home you went). You got points for good behavior, points for whatever theatre you served in, etc. If you qualified, you could get on "special services" instead of having to drill all the time. Athletics were included in the "special services" and Chink played baseball. He says he played with a lot of the major league players while he was waiting to come home that he would never have played with otherwise!

When Chink finally got home he worked in Wilmington for a construction company called "Streuse". He put up scaffolds, including swinging scaffolds. He must have been very good at his job because he held a lot of lives in his hands.

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One of his big jobs was helping to build "Sally's", or Salasianum School in Wilmington.

Later he worked for Frommeyer & Co. Talk about hobnobbing with the rich and famous. He later worked for John B. Kelly, Princess Grace's father. He says he never saw Grace but worked side by side with her brother Jack, who was a pretty famous athlete.

Chink's last construction job was building Macy's big store at Marley's Station in Glen Burnie.

He retired in 1986 and lives in Cecilton.

Gilbert (Teen) Hollingsworth

Athletic talent obviously runs in the Hollingsworth family.

Teen was no exception. He played semi-pro ball with the Crawford Allstars as his brother Chink had done.

When Teen settled down in Cecilton, he started a team called the Cecilton Raiders. He also played on several other teams as a pinch player. When teams from Dover, Middletown, etc. needed a player, Teen would fill in. Sometimes he went clear to New Jersey to play. The games were usually played on weekends or evenings.

In his later years he worked with the Little League in Cecilton, as an umpire. He worked hard with the children and his efforts were certainly appreciated because the Cecilton Youth League gave him a certificate every year for his work.

When Teen died in 1990, the Youth League sent his wife (Shirley) flowering plants and a beautiful plaque which reads:

Teen Hollingsworth  
For many years of dedicated service  
to the  
Cecilton Youth League

Gilbert married Shirley Carroll (Leon's and Ella's daughter). She has lived in Cecilton all her life, dedicated to being a good wife and mother. They had two children:

Gilbert, affectionately known as "T.J.", inherited the Hollingsworth's athletic ability. He is in the Army at the present time and is stationed in Seattle. After he gets his education, he hopes to play big league ball. From all accounts, he stands a good chance.

Renee stays at home and helps her mother.

## Barbara Phillips

Barbara was born in Cecilton and grew up there. She went to elementary school in town and later, when she went to highschool she rode the bus to Elkton. After graduation, she attended Morgan State University. She left college to come home and get married to Charles Phillips.

Barbara and Charles had two sons, Melvin, and Bruce. Melvin was in the army and served in Vietnam. Bruce was in the navy and also served in 'Nam.

For some time Barbara worked at the Hotel duPont in Wilmington. When she came back to Cecilton, she worked for different people, helping out when there was illness or need. She was a godsend to many people.

She also worked at Campbell Soup for a time.

Her last job was with the Health Dept. in Elkton. She worked there for twenty years and retired in March, 1989.

At present, Barbara is on the Town Council in Cecilton. She is the first black woman to serve in this capacity. Her husband was on the Board at one time.

Barbara is presently also serving on the Library Board for the Cecilton Library.

## The Ruley's of Cecilton

Cordelia and Alvin Ruley's family are an inspiration to us all. They are living proof that you can overcome a lot of obstacles and achieve any goals you may set in for yourself in life. Cordelia says that she gives most of the credit for her children to the Lord. She is a firm believer in the old saying "The Lord helps those who help themselves". It is her belief that the Lord seldom hands you something for nothing. Alvin has always been a hard worker and good provider for his family. He graduated from high school, then completed a two year tour in the U.S. Army. After his tour, Alvin worked during the day and Cordelia worked at night for several years in order to provide for their family. They each played an important role in the rearing of their nine children.

It was not until her youngest child entered the tenth grade that Cordelia felt she could take the time to obtain her G.E.D. After receiving her G.E.D., Cordelia attended courses at Cecil Community College where she earned a certificate for ninety classroom hours, qualifying her to run a Day Care Center. Now, with all her children grown-up and self-sufficient, Cordelia plans to further her education by studying Theology at Loyola College located in Wilmington, Delaware. If all goes well, she will be qualified to teach. There's no doubt in my mind that she will make it!! Alvin continues to work as hard as he did when he had to support his nine children, sometimes working two jobs.

Though Cordelia did not complete her high school education until a few years ago, she must have had a knack for figures in order to maintain a budget that would allow she and Alvin to provide their children with a decent lifestyle. Her ability to manipulate dollars and cents, along with Alvin's much used "tax" sense during the income tax filing season must have provided the catalyst for some of the careers chosen by their children.

The following is a list of the Ruley children and their accomplishments:

Cornelius, referred to by family and friends as Maurice, is married to the former Jacqueline Waters of Warwick, Maryland and has two children, Cornelius, Jr. and Tia. Maurice worked for DuPont Corporation for a few years after graduating from high school. After becoming a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Maurice and his wife were inspired to go to Africa as missionaries. When they returned to the states, Maurice chose to pursue a degree in Theology. He attended a Seventh Day Adventist University in Keene, Texas where he obtained his degree. He and his family returned to this area a few years ago and have settled in Bear, Delaware. He now works for DuPont's as a Quality Assurance Inspector and also works part-time at a center for emotionally handicapped persons. He remains in the ministry.

Sherrill is married to Maurice Carr and has an eleven year old daughter, Dana. Sherrill graduated from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia with a degree in psychology. After she graduated, Sherrill relocated to Los Angeles, California where she worked as supervisor of the faculty and she also

taught classes at the Barclay College. Sherrill has since returned to the Cecilton area. She now works for the Housing and Urban Development Department in Elkton, Maryland.

Mary, called "Neicy" by family and friends, is married to Jerome Waters of Warwick, Maryland and has two children, Veronica and Jerome. Veronica is a freshman at Bowie State College and Jerome is a sophomore at Bohemia Manor High School. Mary chose to enter the work force after completing high school. She has been employed by the General Motors Corporation for almost fifteen years. Mary and her family reside in Cecilton.

Alvin attend the University of Maryland, College Park, upon graduation from Bohemia Manor, where he majored in engineering. Alvin entered the work force prior to obtaining his degree. He currently works for the Philadelphia Electric Company at the Peach Bottom Nuclear Power Plant as a control operator. Alvin has the distinction of being the first licensed African American operator at Peach Bottom. He has three children, thirteen year old twins, Franetta and Franitta, and a three year old named Eboni.

Kathleen is married to Leslie Holloway. She graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park with a degree in sociology. Kathleen's love for helping people has inspired her to work with emotionally disturbed persons as well as to be a sponsor for foster children. Kathleen currently teaches pre-school in Courtland, Virginia. She and her husband live in Zuni.

Francesca attended the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore on an academic scholarship where she obtained her degree in Computer Science. Francesca is employed by the Department of the Army. She works at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, Edgewood, Maryland as a Computer Scientist. Francesca has a three year old daughter, Candice and currently resides in Cecilton with her parents.

Selena is married to James Miller. She majored in Accounting at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. Upon graduation, Selena received a \$5000 cash award in recognition of graduating as the top student in her field of study. She is currently employed with the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service as a Budget Analyst. Selena, James and their three year old daughter Samantha live in a suburb of Sacramento, California.

LaMont attended the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore for two years after graduating from Bohemia Manor. He completed the course work for a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Maryland, College Park. While attending College Park, LaMont worked as a co-op student at NASA. He now works for NASA in Greenbelt, Maryland and resides in Laurel.

Elmer, referred to as EG, graduated from Bohemia Manor in 1991 and later joined the U.S. Marine Corp. EG graduated from Marine Recruit Training in Paris Island, South Carolina. He will continue his training at Camp Geiger in North Carolina.

Walter Ruley

Walter Ruley was blessed with great musical talent.

He attended Tuskegee Institute which is a co-educational school in Alabama. They were known for having a good music department.

I have heard that he could sit down at a piano and make it talk. He seems to have been able to play anything he heard. With such talent it is only natural I suppose that he would be the organist and choir director for the A.M.E. church for many years. He had a beautiful voice and was often called on to sing and play at many social affairs in the white community as well as the black.

Walter also taught school for awhile. I'm sorry that nobody remains who really knew him, because I feel sure he could have told us many colorful stories.

Edward Wise

Edward Wise was born on Rose Hill Farm on Grove Neck Road in Earleville. He remembers that there was a church called John Wesley United Methodist Church located on the ground where Curtis Carpenter, Jr. built his new home on Pond's Neck road near West View Shores. He said there was a cemetery there too but there is no trace of it now that I know of.

He also remembers when Grove Neck Road, then known as Chestnut Lane was lined with hundreds of chestnut trees. People picked up the nuts and used them for food. They came up with all kinds of good recipes.

At one time there was quite a large settlement of Negro houses at Watt's Corner (where Pond's Neck Rd. and Stemmers Run road intersect. You might remember that there used to be a big old house there where Lockwoods live for many years. Well, there used to be a store there. It is believed that the local farmers and the colored people living there had trouble getting to Cecilton and so used this store to do their shopping.

Edward says that there was a school at the top of the hill opposite the dump. The school was located on the property which Bristow owns now. The hill was called Aiken's Hill.

Edward later moved down to Sandy Bottom and went to school in Cecilton. He remembers that there were a lot more houses down that road than are there now. There were several cabins between his home (Andy Biggs owns his house now) and the top of Sandy Bottom Hill.

In going through some church records, a marriage certificate was discovered, showing that James Wise and Anna Brooks were married on September 8, 1910, at St. Stephen's rectory by Rev. Cole. These were Edward's parents so you can see that his family have been around for a long time.



Elsie Wilson

Elsie was born on Worsell Manor Road. Her family later moved to Wrightsville Woods where they lived till she was three or four years old.

When she first started school there were no buses for colored children but a short time later a bus was put on for them. Elsie went to elementary school in Cecilton.

After first grade her family moved to Water St. in Cecilton. When she finished grade school, she went to High School in Elkton.

Elsie tells us that Harry Jackson's granddaughter was the first black person to go to Bohemia Manor.

When she left highschool she went to work at Triumph Explosives in Elkton. This was during World War II. Elsie says you would have had to be there to imagine what it was like. When someone yelled "Run" you took off as hard as you could go because you knew an explosion was likely. A lot of people were killed and crippled there during that time. Elsie worked at Triumph for about a year and a half. This was about 1944. Her next job wasn't quite so dangerous, as she worked in the cafeteria. The munitions plant was finally closed and a new plant was opened called "Aerial". Shells were made there. Elsie says they were six or eight inches long. They used a fuse which looked like a piece of rope and threaded three pellets on each fuse. This was then placed inside a cylinder and packed in a box. These pellets were highly explosive and you had to be very careful. Elsie worked there till the plant closed.

After the plant closed, Elsie went to Philadelphia to her sister's and worked in Graduate Hospital. Later she came back to Wilmington and worked for two or three years at the Hotel duPont.

In 1957 she came back to Cecilton and worked at Vita Food. In 1960 she started at Campbell Soup and worked there for almost twenty-eight years. She is now retired from there and works part-time at K-Mart. She was only hired to work for three months and has been there two years.

Elsie is a mainstay of her church and a real asset to the community in general.

## Grace Wise

Grace was born on a farm on Ward's Hill Road. When she was two years old, her family moved to Fredericktown. This is a perfect example of how places change in a short length of time. You are all familiar with the small house on the corner at the top of Fredericktown Hill. Grace says there were colored houses all up that road where the modern ranch houses are now, on the opposite side of the road from this little farmhouse on the corner. She had to go across the road with her milk bucket and get milk from Mr. Phil Lloyd. He only had one cow but apparently she was a great little producer and Mr. Lloyd had milk to share! Grace lived there for nine years and then moved to the Shallcross farm, the big brick house on the right as you go toward Earleville.

Grace says they lived in a fairly large house which she thinks served as the main farm house at one time. It had been divided into two apartments and she lived in one of them. The big brick house has always been reported to have been haunted. Several of the people who have lived there reported strange things or sights. Grace has some really spooky tales to tell us.

After several years, the family moved back to Cecilton. Grace married Edward Wise. She is the mother of Helen Staten who lives in Baltimore, James Ralph Staten, who lives in Elkton, Joyce Wise Thomas, who lived for some time in Los Angeles and now is in Pomona, and Edward Wise, Jr. who lives in Cecilton.

For a while they lived in the house next door to their present one. Grace decided to open a restaurant and did all her own cooking and serving. People could either eat in her dining room or take their food home. She usually kept open only in the summertime as business dropped off during the winter.

After she moved next door (her present home), she ran a carry-out business only. She did this for several years. She also sold Abbott's ice cream. In one of the pictures of the old Boyer house, you can see part of her "Abbott's" sign! She finally gave up the lunchroom.

Grace is a very enterprising woman. A friend of hers moved from a large house to a small one. Grace took all her leftover furniture, etc. and opened a secondhand store in her old house. She sold the furniture on commission. She did so well that she started going to Crumpton to buy things for resale.

Grace also furnished the upstairs in the old house and used it as a guest house when they had an overflow of company.

Grace was asked to serve on the Town Council of Cecilton but chose not to do so. It's a shame she didn't! However, she was appointed to a Planning Committee. She attended a meeting in Elkton and brought the disgraceful conditions of the drainage system and pavement problems in colored Cecilton to the attention of the County Commissioners, etc. The people in charge of the meeting were very concerned and when the Board of Health checked out these problems they were soon solved. Below are excerpts from two newspaper clippings.

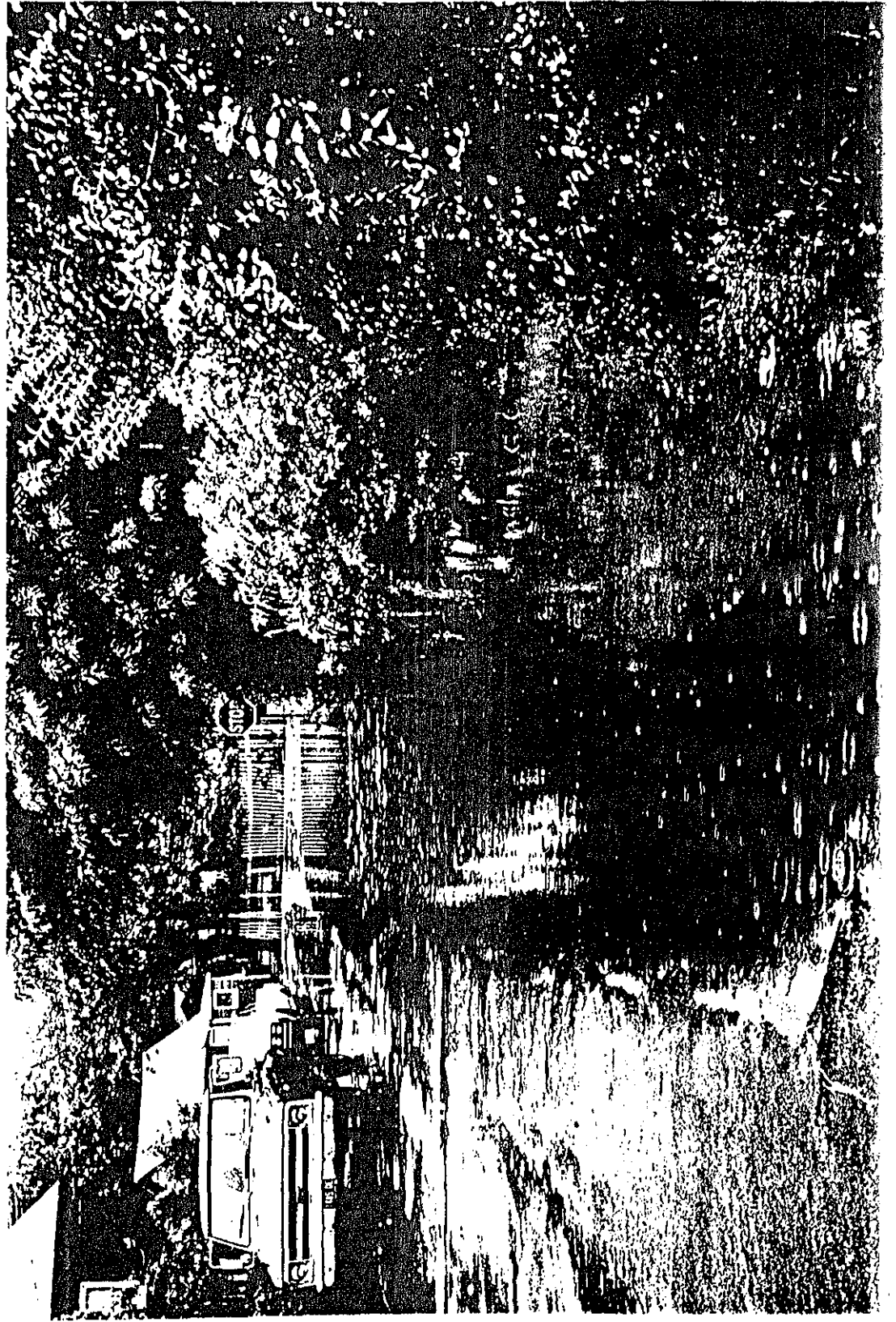
Evening Journal, April 7, 1981: Mrs. Grace M. Wise of Cecilton asked for aid in getting a drainage ditch within the town limits repaired so that water will drain away. This ditch created problems in Church St. for years. Mrs. Maloney and others will inspect the area later this week and seek a solution.

Cecil Whig, April 29, 1981: Grace Wise, 60, is also a candidate for town council. In the 1970's she was very active in efforts to clean up the town and make it a safer place for children. She fought for sidewalks, elimination of open drainage ditches, trash removal and a playground for youngsters.

Grace and Edward have always raised foster children. Through the years, she has helped care for fifty-eight children. Now that is something to be proud of.

Grace has, like so many others in her community, been a mainstay of the church.

Below is a picture of Church Street before Grace Wise went to work to get it cleaned up.



# Cecilton's champion doer has grandmother's touch

By MIM CROWL  
Newark Bureau

CECILTON, Md. — Some people are natural born doers and Mrs. Grace M. Wise of Cecilton belongs in that category.

The youthful looking grandmother works five days a week, stages record hops, cooks and serves neighborhood dinners, cares for five foster children, was instrumental in turning a vacant lot into a neighborhood playground — and in her spare time, spearheads a tireless drive to improve her neighborhood.

Why? Because she said she recognizes a need in her community and is trying to do something about it.

THAT need centers around creating recreational facilities for the youth in the area and attempting to improve their surroundings.

Mrs. Wise' neat white bungalow on Church Street has an aura of warmth that seems to say welcome—and is well-populated with a constant stream of young people.

The vacant lot is directly across the street from Mrs. Wise' home, and she now proudly refers to it as the Community Playground Center. She said she worried about the children playing in the narrow street—two-way traffic can barely pass, there are no sidewalks—and asked permission of the owner to use it as a playground.

TOTS and teen-agers pitched in to clear the brush and debris in a cleanup drive on Oct. 24th with three cash prizes as the incentive. Prizes were awarded for the largest bag of trash and three teenagers teamed up to collect the \$25 first prize. Second prize was \$15 and third, \$5. A total of 145 bags of trash was collected in less than three hours, Mrs. Wise said.

A party was held later with free drinks and food for all. The soft drinks were donated by merchants from Denton, Havre de Grace and North East, and



Photo by Greg K...

Neighborhood girl plays in new playground on Cecilton's Church Street.

were brought for the use of the neighborhood children.

ALSO, the children solicited funds door-to-door and collected enough money for a small swimming pool and filter system. The pool was set up and a fee of 5 to 25 cents was charged for admission. Some days were "free days," Mrs. Wise said, but "children were never turned away if on the days we charged, they didn't have a nickel."

The 12-foot pool collapsed after the second year of use and Mrs. Wise said "we must get a new one for next summer."

About eight neighborhood women are the backbone of the organization, Mrs. Wise said, with most of the teen-agers "willing workers and the little ones, more than willing."

She said there has been good support from the adults in the neighborhood, too, with many of the men donating their time to improve and repair the play-

cranberry sauce, cake and pie. Sometimes there is homemade ice cream and hot biscuits to tempt the patrons. Prices range from \$1.50 to \$2 depending on what is served, with the proceeds going towards future projects in the community.

Most of the children in the neighborhood refer to Mrs. Wise as Aunt Grace. One teen-ager said if "Aunt Grace ever stops, we want to keep on going in the direction she started us."

MRS. Wise said representatives of the organization have tried, unsuccessfully, to get help from town officials. There are no sidewalks in the Church and Wilson Street area, but Mrs. Wise said she is hoping that perhaps a sidewalk on just one side of the street could be installed for the children to use when walking to school. She is also asking the officials for stop signs and play signs.

The town did donate five trash

lects while trying to clean up section of town.

MRS. Wise said "we feel we've been cheated, but we continue trying to help selves."

Future plans of the organization include regular clean drives, cutting hedgerows, Thanksgiving and Christmas parties and long-range plans for more housing, Mrs. Wise said.

Also, Mrs. Wise said the organization is hopeful that it can obtain enough money to buy heavy playground equipment, because the hard use requires heavy equipment or any other equipment has been able to afford to. She said that any donation of equipment or any other project would be appreciated. The playground now has swing sets and a heavily used basketball area. Also, there is an area with chairs for anyone who wants to "just come



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LETTER OF APPRECIATION

Mrs. Grace Wise is a licensed and active foster parent of the Cecil County Department of Social Services. She began this service to the community on March 21, 1966. Since that time, Mrs. Wise has parented many children who entered foster care as the result of being neglected or physically and sexually abused.

Most often than not, these children have exhibited severe emotional and behavioral problems, to the extreme that most homes would be in a very turmoil and chaotic situation. However, due to Mrs. Wise, who is a very strong-willed individual, the majority of them have become productive members of our society.

The most recent sibling group has been in the Wise's home nearly 10 years. This is a prime example of her commitment and dedication. In addition to giving validity to the premises that with support, nurturance and stability in the lives of these children, they will be able to develop love, trust and a sense of purpose to move on with their lives, irregardless of the hardships.

In closing and I quote the words of a former caseworker who wrote in 1976, and which continues today, "Mrs. Wise has a general feeling of compassion towards the whole community which I find admirable."

Respectfully submitted:

  
Kenneth R. Jackson  
Human Service Worker

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