

The Maroon Hill Children Education Story

In 1796 approximately five hundred black residents of Jamaica known as Maroons arrived in Halifax. The Black population who settled in Sackville, not having had a school, bought a condemned schoolhouse from lower Beaver Bank, tore it down in sections and rebuilt the building on a new plot of land in Middle Sackville in 1890.

A school had been built years earlier for Black children in Sackville, on land belonging to a Black family for one hundred and fifty years. But over the years the influential white citizens did not want Maroon settlement children attending school with their children, leaving the Black students without a school to attend. The Black students were treated so poorly that they no longer attended the school site. With no Black children attending school in the area, it gave the white majority the right to deny entry for subsequent generations of Black families to be educated.

It would not be until much later, that Black youths would have a school for their studies. What the students needed most of all was a supportive environment where their educational needs and interests would be met. Mrs. Pleasah Caldwell became the person who Black parents turned to, to meet the academic needs of their children.

After the Black children stopped using Maroon Hill School, a fourteen-year-old boy wandered onto the property of a Mrs. Pleasah Caldwell. He asked if her son was home, and she informed the child that her son was at school in Bedford. The boy remarked that he wished he could also go to school. Mrs. Caldwell could not believe the young man when he informed her that he was not allowed to attend the school.

Mrs. Caldwell had just returned from Western Canada after having lived there for twenty-eight years. She had returned to live in her grandfather's house, which happened to be situated next to the local school building. Taking to heart what the child had mentioned to her, she offered to instruct the young teen; he was an eager student and quickly learned to read. The mother of the child in question spoke to Mrs. Caldwell to see if she would teach her daughter as well. The black residents spoke to her about taking in more students, and to become a teacher of the province in 1942.



Mrs. Caldwell's School

By 1942 Mrs. Caldwell had nineteen pupils. Mrs. Caldwell housed classes in her dining room and kitchen, referred to as a "kitchen school." At that time there were two sections of the first grade and one section each of grades

four, six and eight. The students proceeded to learn with great speed and comprehension, and many went home to even teach their parents how to read.

Mrs. Caldwell taught at a time when children were presumably entitled to a free and accessible education system, regardless of gender, ethnicity or cultural background. The community of Sackville can never forget Mrs. Caldwell, as she was a pioneer in this community; she contributed enormously to the education of countless Sackville youths.



Mrs. Caldwell and her students