
Wendell White: Black Lives, Resistance, and Agency in America





Wendel White: Black Lives, Resistance, and Agency in America

Concurrent Exhibitions at Swarthmore College

March 6–April 7, 2024

List Gallery

Selections from

Small Towns, Black Lives (1989–2002)
and *Schools for the Colored* (2002–2010)

McCabe Library Atrium Gallery

Selections from

Manifest (2009–present)

The Restorative Vision of Wendel White

Julie L. McGee

Wendel White: Black Lives, Resistance, and Agency in America guides us to knowable history through the artist's attention to the disposition and place of memory and Black custodial care.¹ Drawn from three bodies of Wendel White's photographic work—*Small Towns, Black Lives* (1989–2002), *Schools for the Colored* (2002–2010), and *Manifest* (2009–present)—the selected works highlight the artist's decades-long attention to the material and psychic evidence of the Black past in present-day America. He foregrounds mnemonics of Black resilience and liberation dwelling in the American landscape and our material culture. As he has remarked, "the ability of objects to transcend lives, centuries, and millennia suggests a remarkable mechanism

for folding time, bringing the past and the present into a shared space that is uniquely suited to artistic exploration."² Black thought, fellowship, activism, and a focus on the tools of education and liberation are particularly prominent. White's worldmaking offers lessons in curiosity and discovery that kindle marvel and inquiry. Among the most recent works on view are those motivated by the artist's 2023 campus visit to source artifacts for the *Manifest* portfolio from Swarthmore College Libraries. He chose materials in the care of the Friends Historical Library and the Peace Collection, repositories devoted to Quaker history, social reform, and peace movements. The moral, political, and pacifist dimensions of the collections resonate in the objects selected for *Manifest*.³

Comprising more than one hundred photographs of historical objects from special collections and public repositories across the United States, *Manifest* foregrounds White's interest in the power of material culture to convey history and memory. Artifacts migrate to repositories from previous places of belonging and sociality and these repositories become keepers of material and psychic evidence. Often, the object and its displacement invite curiosity—for example, the tape recorder used by Malcolm X at New York City Temple No. 7 in the Smithsonian collections (above), or a fabric scrapbook in Friends Historical Library collection that



Tape recorder used by Malcolm X at Mosque #7, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC, 2016, 32 x 40 inches



Above:
Scrapbook with Slave Cloth, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches

Right:
Skull Inscribed "Negro," Mütter Museum, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2019, 32 x 40 inches

includes muslin samples "worn by Slaves in Virginia."⁴ The scrapbook was presented to Swarthmore College in 1872 by Rachel D. Griscom, a schoolteacher and member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). White pries open and re-presents Griscom's gift in his *Manifest* photograph (at left). Focused on the haptic relationship of the cloths to enslavement, he obscures the impersonal text written above the fabric: "Winter fabrics worn by Slaves in Virginia. White and blue checks were used for summer dresses. The muslins used were osnab[ur]gs."⁵ The artist does not shy away from representing deeply fraught object-repository relationships, as evident in his *Skull Inscribed "Negro"* in the Mütter Museum, College of Physicians of Philadelphia (below). *Manifest* implicitly questions postcustodial and decolonial archiving.

Photographed against a black velvet cloth and seen from different vantage points, each object within the portfolio is identified by description and repository, wayfinders akin to footnotes: *Scrapbook with Slave Cloth, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA*. In *Small Towns, Black Lives* and *Schools for the Colored*, geographic location is an important binder for the artifactual material brought into focus by White. With *Manifest*, the objects' black backgrounds unite the myriad subjects into a connected network of Black affiliation. Like Dorothy A. Porter's national infrastructure for a Black bibliography that "mapped black subjectivity as a system with hundreds of points of entry," White's library of things is similarly expansive and expressive.⁶ Indeed, the artist's interest in the potency of artifacts developed from his rapport with Black communities in southern New Jersey. As he researched the *Small Towns, Black Lives* project, he was invited into homes that were repositories of history and generational wisdom

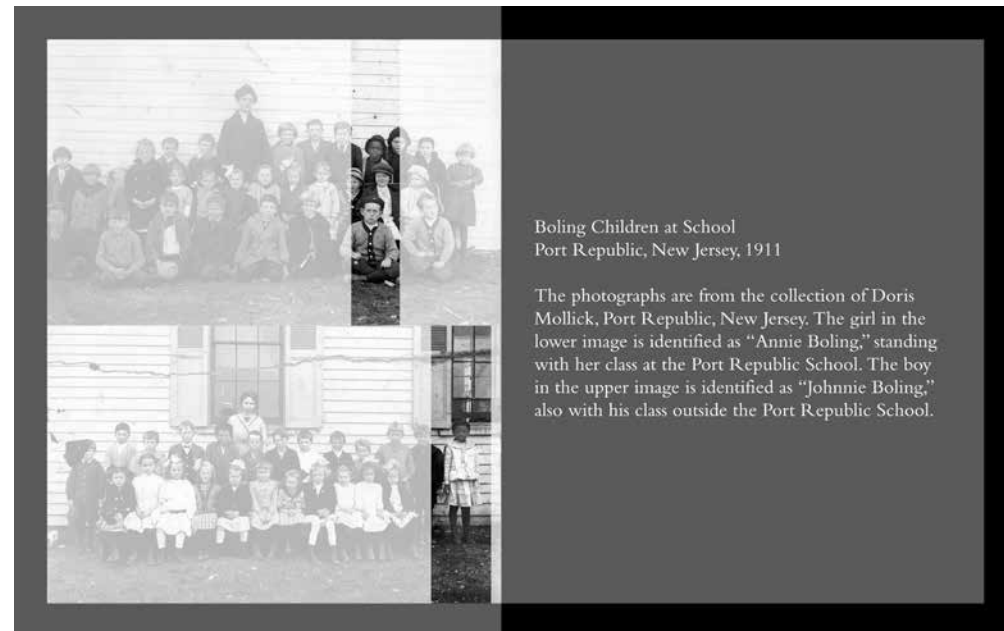


conveyed through objects held dear by their custodians. Photographing heirlooms, including family photographs, became integral to his narrative, as seen in *Boling Children at School* (1911), *Port Republic, New Jersey* (below).⁷ The artist's travels from private collections to institutional repositories recalls the journeys made by many of the objects featured in *Manifest*. Each home, town, object, and collection is an access point for Black memory and history.

The objects chosen from Swarthmore's collections are diverse in scope and media and underscore critical and paradoxical associations between African Americans and Quakers. Among these is the *Anti-Slavery Alphabet*, a reader attributed to Quaker sisters Hannah and Mary Townsend and printed for the 1846 Anti-Slavery Fair in Philadelphia. Many Quakers were early and staunch abolitionists; nonetheless, some were enslavers prior to the mid-late 18th century, or benefited from the slave trade.

In 1761, the Congregationalist Wheatley family purchased African-born Phillis in Boston for domestic service in their New England home; they were said to have encouraged her education

Boling Children at School (1911),
Port Republic, New Jersey, 2002,
22 x 35 inches



Boling Children at School
Port Republic, New Jersey, 1911

The photographs are from the collection of Doris Mollick, Port Republic, New Jersey. The girl in the lower image is identified as "Annie Boling," standing with her class at the Port Republic School. The boy in the upper image is identified as "Johnnie Boling," also with his class outside the Port Republic School.



Above:
Copy of "Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral" by Phillis Wheatley, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches

Right:
Free Produce Sugar Bowl, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches

and writing. With the 1773 appearance of *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* (published in London), Phillis Wheatley became the first Black woman enslaved in the United States to be published. The frontispiece and title page of printed volumes of *Poems on Various Subjects* identified the author as "Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley." White was drawn to a handwritten, re-arranged copy of Wheatley's poems (at left), and photographed the first page, attentive to where the transcriber had repeated the text denoting Wheatley's enslaved position.⁸

At Swarthmore, White selected what might be considered to be canonical objects, such as the Wedgewood Free Produce Sugar Bowl (below), along with lesser-known but no less instructive items, such

as the Quaker human-rights activist Bayard Rustin's LP, *Elizabethan Songs & Negro Spirituals* (page 6). Released around 1952, it was recorded for an interfaith peace organization, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and belongs to Swarthmore's Peace Collection.⁹ These juxtapositions create a more elastic and reflective understanding of what represents the *longue durée* of Black and Quaker associations in American history.

Consistent with White's vision for the portfolio, each object appears as one might encounter it in a reading room or in use. White works with the natural and artificial light of each reading room, an ambience often reflected in the photographed object, as with *Free Produce Sugar Bowl, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College*. This method is not one of taxonomy but of sociality, and is one that personalizes our view.¹⁰ In some photographs, White toys with what might be called a nearsighted perspective: objects blur as they recede into a flat, inky space of immeasurable





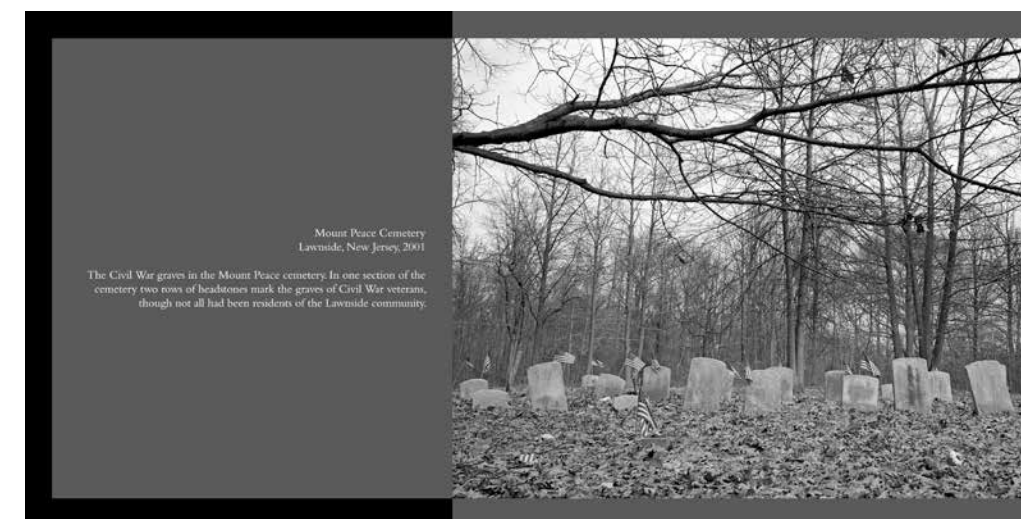
Bayard Rustin Elizabethan Songs and Negro Spirituals, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches

volume. This partial legibility is seen in his handling of *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* and the Bayard Rustin album cover. In the former, we are enticed into reading folio pages for the letters A through D; however, only text near “A is an Abolitionist” is sharply defined (page 41). With the latter, there is a handsome clarity to Rustin’s singing countenance, but few of the song titles listed on the cover are discernible (at left). Our perception is shaped by what we think we see or already know. Nearsightedness is considered a refractive error that is created by “an inaccurate focusing of the light passing into the eye.”¹¹ White brings objects close, but deflects straightforward readings. His photographic language becomes a metaphor for oblique comprehension—the sidelong glance—and questions the very meaning of *discernible*, a synonym of *manifest*. How and

where do you see history? Constructing histories from the tangible is already a refractive error; conjecture and the unseen fill the inky space of immeasurable volume.

Manifest is White’s most distilled series to date. The works succinctly convey his longtime concern for chronicling the terrain of African American life and the resonances of “once occupied geographic spaces” that underpin *Small Towns, Black Lives* and *Schools for the Colored*, which also deploy camerawork to rebuild history.¹² There is an urgency to White’s witnessing and to his serial photographic record. His attentiveness to historical remainders honors their disappearing legacies. White’s pictorial and formal placemaking is fundamental to his creative vision. He began the project *Small Towns, Black Lives* in 1989 with Whitesboro, in Cape May County, New Jersey, one of many Black-owned settlements that had been established in the United States by the early twentieth century; these became beacons of freedom and self-determination. Named after George H. White (no relation to the artist), a prominent African American investor and former North Carolina congressman, Whitesboro was established in 1902 on land purchased the previous year.¹³ While many of these settlements are unincorporated—Whitesboro is part of Middle Township, for example—these communities are considered towns by their inhabits. Of the twelve places featured in White’s portfolio, only Lawnside, New Jersey, incorporated in 1926, has official state borough status. Lawnside, once known as Free Haven, supported Black habitation before and after the Civil War.¹⁴

Mount Peace Cemetery, Lawnside, New Jersey, 2001, 22 x 44 inches



White launched *Small Towns, Black Lives* “without a thesis,” but with a fundamental commitment to engaging with the Black communities whose lives were layered within the storied sites and their histories.¹⁵ He drew perspective from his conversations with local and descendant communities, archival and genealogical research, and astute observations. Having assembled these diverse sources, he structured them into compositions with two “speaking” parts. *Small Towns, Black Lives*, is a collection of organized visual dialogues that leverages portraiture, maps, architecture, landscape photography, and oral history to create intimate and accessible entry points for viewers. Drawn into the pictorial archive of White’s making, we meet local educators, pastors, town historians, and torch bearers, and we witness the commemoration of Civil War veterans laid to rest in the Black-owned Mount Peace Cemetery in Lawnside (below). The land purchased by African Americans in 1900 to organize the cemetery came from the family of a Quaker abolitionist.¹⁶

While only ten photographs from *Small Towns, Black Lives* are included in Swarthmore’s List Gallery exhibition, they strategically support the presentation of *Schools for the Colored* and *Manifest*. Testaments to the importance of community and place as worldmaking, they foreground histories of American education and its entanglement with race, class, and identity formation. As White developed *Small Towns, Black Lives*, his conversations with community members



Above:
Whitesboro Headstart, Cape May,
New Jersey, 1990, 22 x 44 inches

Below:
Whitesboro School, Whitesboro,
New Jersey, 2009, 13 1/3 x 20 inches

inevitably turned to the subject of Black schools and *Schools for the Colored* emerged organically. This kinship is evident in the appearance of the Whitesboro School in both portfolios. Founded in the early 1900s for Black youth, the Whitesboro School later became home to Whitesboro Head Start (at left), as seen in *Small Towns, Black Lives*. Today it services the nonprofit organization Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro, Inc. White's later photograph of the site, in *Schools for the Colored* (below), includes the brick-encased historic marker that commemorates the site as the home of the Whitesboro Grammar School from 1910 to 1967.¹⁷ White's representations of the school speak to place, memorializing layered histories of a site in ways a cast plaque may not. In the photograph from *Small Towns, Black Lives*, the artist uses narrative to draw us back to the school's founding and its first educator, Mamie White, the daughter of George H. White. His text signals the paradox that northern Black settlements faced under the "separate but equal" doctrine that prevailed in the United States at that time. According to the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), racially separate facilities were not in violation of the Constitution if they were equal. Accordingly, Black towns were obliged to create segregated schools.

Schools for the Colored engages with fifty sites historically connected to the system of educational apartheid, with a particular focus on New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—places marked by their proximity to American enslavement and legalized segregation under Jim Crow laws. As White notes, "The architectural remains of the 'colored schools' are not simply ghostly apparitions of our segregated past; they are the unresolved ideologies (neither living nor dead) which still haunt the American landscape."¹⁸ Photographing what remains of segregated schools, like the foundation of the Longwood School in Charlestown, Pennsylvania (page 9, top), and silhouetting placeholders when they have disappeared, as with the George Jones School in Chester, Pennsylvania (page 9, middle), he emphasizes the racialized strata of the American landscape.¹⁹ White developed a "new photographic language" for *Schools for the Colored*, obscuring select aspects of the space around the school site—a tribute to W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of the veil articulated in *The Souls of Black Folk*—and occupying redeveloped



areas with opaque black silhouettes that serve as stand-ins for the original building.²⁰ As artist Dawoud Bey remarked, "Using digital technology to create a veiled layering that places the landscapes and the structures in two separate physical and psychic spaces, he effectively calls forth the segregation that had Blacks both present and absent in society."²¹ White creates an architecture of absence and presence within the photograph that extends the metaphor to which Bey alludes. This is especially evident in *Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth, Bordentown, New Jersey*, where the imposing brick structure appears to be little more than a curtain wall punctuated by windows that frame a posterior world (below, bottom).²² *Schools for the Colored* invites us on a journey across a topography of segregated America that lays bare "unresolved ideologies" that inhabit our world today. The construction of our segregated education extends far beyond brick and mortar.

From disappeared structures to a soundless tape deck, White returns to the place of the seen and the unseen across these portfolios. Deploying a photographic language for the incompleteness of memory that haunts the geography of Black history, he moves our gaze toward architecture, artifact, and historical resonance. *Wendel White: Black Lives, Resistance, and Agency in America* is a testament the artist's determined placemaking and restorative vision.

Julie L. McGee is associate professor of Africana Studies and Art History and director of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center at the University of Delaware.

Top: Longwood School, Charlestown, Pennsylvania, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches

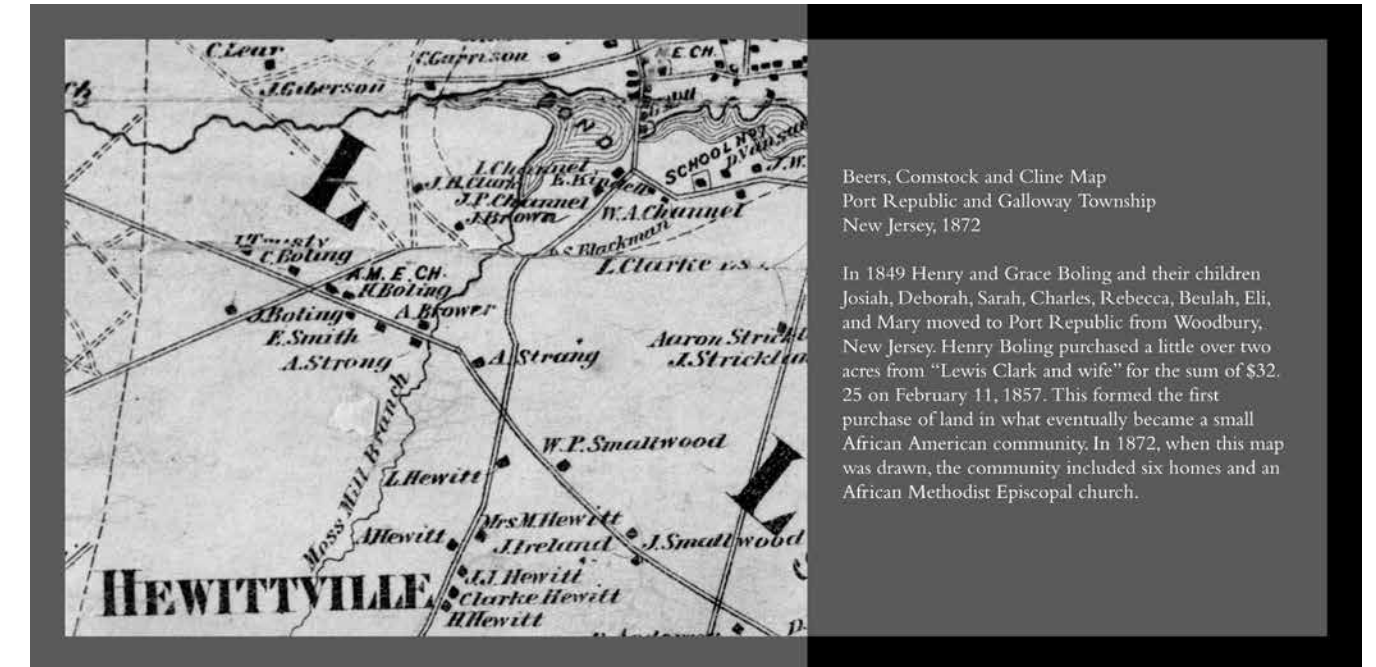
Middle: George Jones School, Chester, Pennsylvania, 2008, 13 1/3 x 20 inches

Bottom: Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth, Bordentown, New Jersey, 2008, 13 1/3 x 20 inches

Notes

1. *Wendel White: Black Lives, Resistance, and Agency in America* consisted of concurrent presentations in Swarthmore College's List Gallery and McCabe Library Atrium Gallery, March 6–April 7, 2024. This essay was shaped by conversations with the artist.
2. Wendel White, "Manifest," *Southern Cultures* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 14.
3. White photographed thirty objects from Swarthmore College Library Special Collections and selected ten of them for the exhibition in McCabe Library Atrium. The Friends Historical Library was established in 1871 and the Peace Collection formed in the 1930s.
4. Inscriptions inside the scrapbook provide details on fabric samples, donor name, and the date of its presentation to Swarthmore College. Malcolm X's tape recorder is in the collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Temple No. 7 on Lenox Avenue in New York's Harlem neighborhood burned down in the wake of Malcolm X's assassination in 1961. "Muslim Mosque Burns in Harlem; Blast Reported," *New York Times*, February 23, 1965, 1.
5. The handwritten text reads: "Winter Fabrics work by Slaves in Virginia. White and blue checks were used for Summer dresses. The muslins used, were Osnabergs." The muslin was an imported, durable textile prevalent in colonial America and named after the German town of Osnaburg (Osnabrück). Variant spellings exist, including osnabrig, but Osnaburg is common usage today. Katherine Gruber, "Clothing and Adornment of Enslaved People in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Humanities (December 7, 2020). <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-clothing-and-adornment-in-virginia>.
6. Dorothy Porter Wesley was a celebrated librarian, curator and Black bibliophile. See Laura E. Helton, "On Decimals, Catalogs, and Racial Imaginaries of Reading," *PMLA* 134, no. 1 (2019): 112.
7. The small population of Port Republic supported an integrated school only. Wendel A. White, "Schools for the Colored": Places, Words, Pictures," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 22, no. 1 (2015): 67.
8. The transcriber used a 1786 edition of Wheatley's work. Information provided by catalog record, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/repositories/7/archival_objects/409788
9. Loren Ludwig, "Making Art and the Fight for Freedom," September 19, 2022, <https://www.earlymusicamerica.org/emag-feature/making-art-and-the-fight-for-freedom/>
10. As White remarks, this is markedly different perspective from that provided by institutional cataloguing and digitization.
11. "Nearsightedness," Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/nearsightedness/symptoms-causes/syc-20375556>
12. Wendel White in conversation with the author, January 2024.
13. George W. Reid, "The Post-Congressional Career of George H. White, 1901–1918." *The Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 4 (1976): 365–66; and Benjamin R. Justesen, *George Henry White: An Even Chance in the Race of Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), chapter 14.
14. Black settlements date back to the eighteenth century. Jason Romisher, "Lawnside, New Jersey," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, 2019 <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/lawnside-new-jersey/>
15. Wendel White, "Preface," *Small Towns, Black Lives: African American Communities in Southern New Jersey* (Oceanville, NJ: Noyes Museum of Art, 2003), 6.
16. Quaker abolitionists advanced Black settlements in other areas of Southern New Jersey. Christopher P. Barton, "Antebellum African-American Settlements in Southern New Jersey," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* 12, no. 4 (December 2009), <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol12/iss4/4>; for more on the historic cemetery see <https://www.mtpeacecemeteryassociation.org/>
17. Whitesboro Grammar School Marker <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=114598>. Organizations committed to the town's legacy include the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro, Inc. and the Whitesboro Historic Preservation Project: <https://www.concerned-citizensofwhitesboro.com> and <https://preservewhitesboro.org>.
18. Wendel White in *Schools for the Colored: Wendel White* (Corvallis, OR: Push Pull Editions, 2022), n.p.
19. The Longwood School was built in 1857. Traces of its foundation are visible in Chester County, PA on the corner of Valley Hill and Bodine Roads. "The Longwood School," https://www.charlestown.pa.us/historical_longwood.aspx. The George Jones School building dates to 1902 and was located at 17th and Walnut Streets. It was named after the first recorded Black educator in Chester, George Jones (1819–1886). "George Jones School," http://www.oldchesterpa.com/schools_jones.htm
20. Bill Aguado, "Publisher's Statement," *Nueva Luz* 26, no. 2 (2022): 1; White in *Schools for the Colored*, n.p.
21. Dawoud Bey, "Excavating Histories: Wendel White's *Schools for the Colored*," *Nueva Luz* 26, no. 2 (2022): 5.
22. Known as the "Tuskegee of the North," Bordentown Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth was established in 1886.

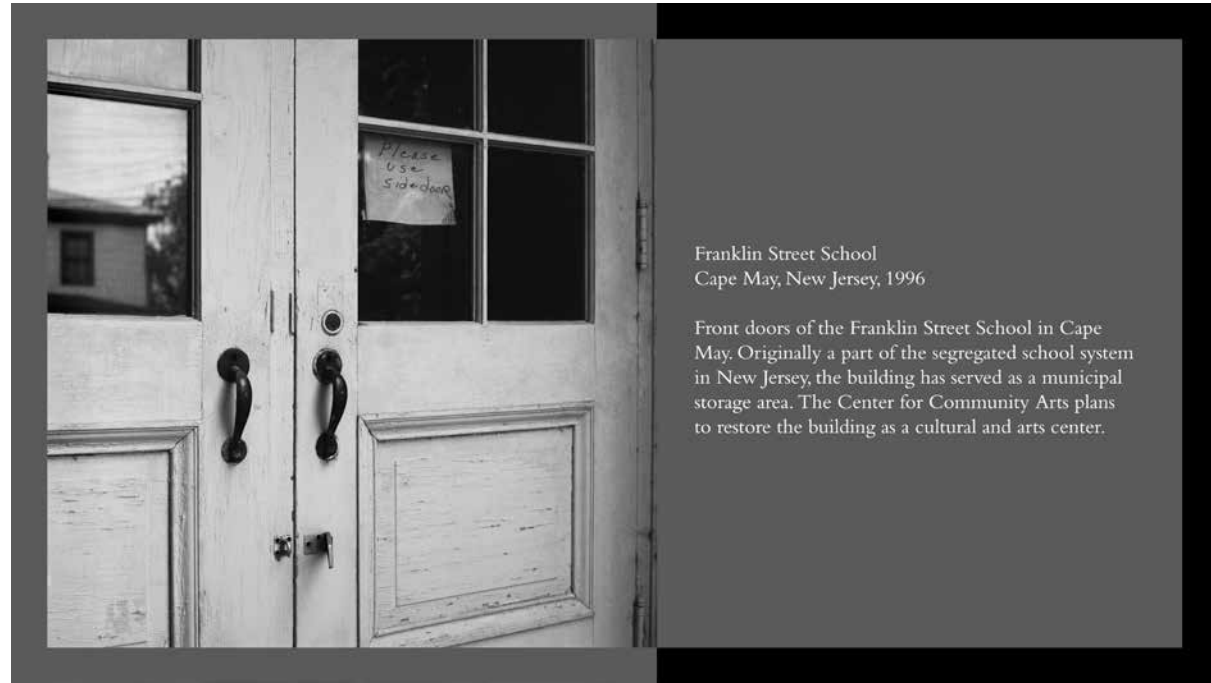
SELECTIONS FROM SMALL TOWNS, BLACK LIVES (1989–2002)



Beers, Comstock and Cline Map
Port Republic and Galloway Township
New Jersey, 1872

In 1849 Henry and Grace Boling and their children Josiah, Deborah, Sarah, Charles, Rebecca, Beulah, Eli, and Mary moved to Port Republic from Woodbury, New Jersey. Henry Boling purchased a little over two acres from "Lewis Clark and wife" for the sum of \$32.25 on February 11, 1857. This formed the first purchase of land in what eventually became a small African American community. In 1872, when this map was drawn, the community included six homes and an African Methodist Episcopal church.

1872 Beers Comstock and Cline Map, Port Republic, New Jersey, 1990, 22 x 44 inches



Franklin Street School, Cape May, New Jersey, 1996, 22 x 39 inches



Franklin Street School, Cape May, New Jersey, 2002, 22 x 44 inches

Alice Jones
Whitesboro, New Jersey, 1989

Alice Jones (left) moved to Whitesboro in 1907. She was a teacher in the Whitesboro school and one of the longtime residents of the community. Comedian Flip Wilson a one-time Whitesboro resident credited her as the person who helped to motivate him. Mrs. Jones died August 1991.



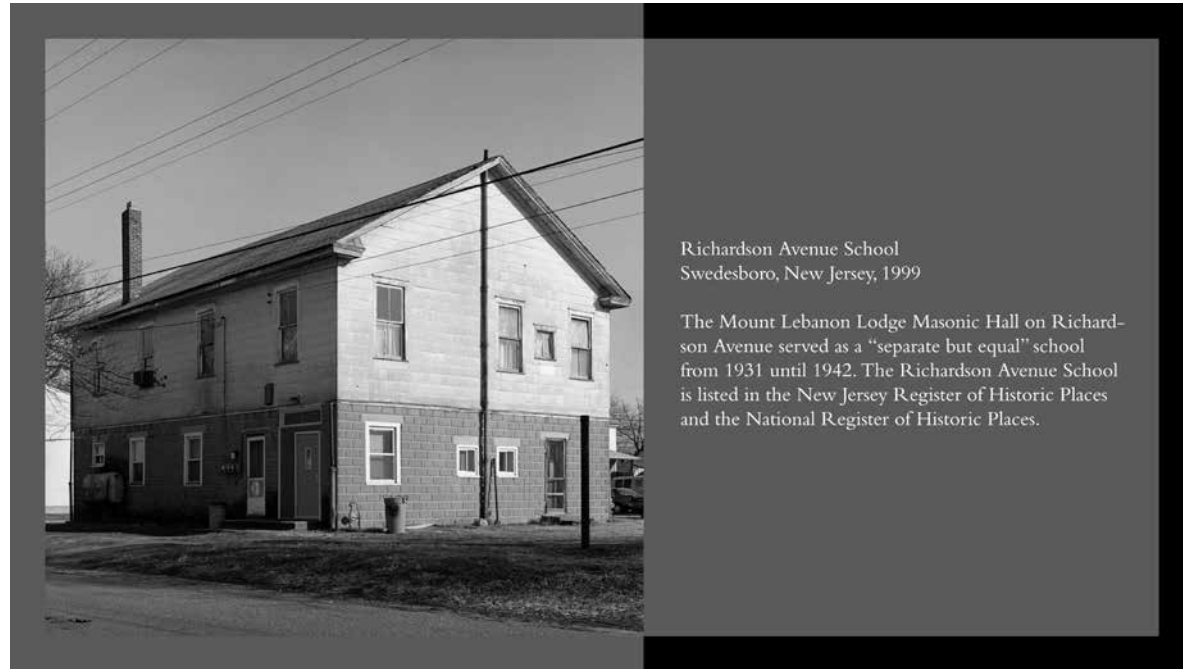
Mrs. Alice Jones, Whitesboro, New Jersey, 1989, 22 x 39 inches

Reverend James Saylor
Chesilhurst, New Jersey, 1993

James Saylor was born in Ashville, North Carolina, and he moved to Chesilhurst in 1963. He became custodian of the Chesilhurst School in 1976 and has been pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Weymouth, New Jersey, since 1989. Reverend Saylor is married with four children.



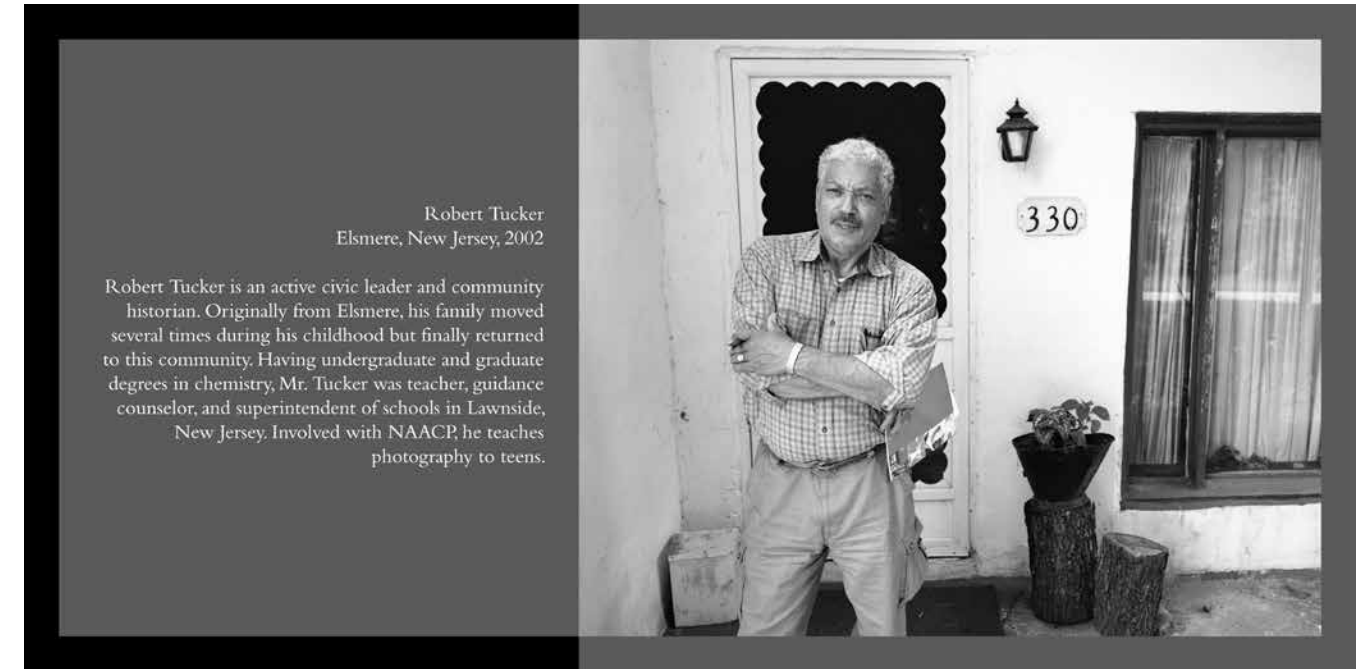
Reverend James Saylor, Chesilhurst, New Jersey, 1993, 22 x 39 inches



Richardson Avenue School
Swedesboro, New Jersey, 1999

The Mount Lebanon Lodge Masonic Hall on Richardson Avenue served as a “separate but equal” school from 1931 until 1942. The Richardson Avenue School is listed in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Richardson Avenue School, Swedesboro, New Jersey, 1999, 22 x 39 inches



Robert Tucker
Elsmere, New Jersey, 2002

Robert Tucker is an active civic leader and community historian. Originally from Elsmere, his family moved several times during his childhood but finally returned to this community. Having undergraduate and graduate degrees in chemistry, Mr. Tucker was teacher, guidance counselor, and superintendent of schools in Lawnside, New Jersey. Involved with NAACP, he teaches photography to teens.

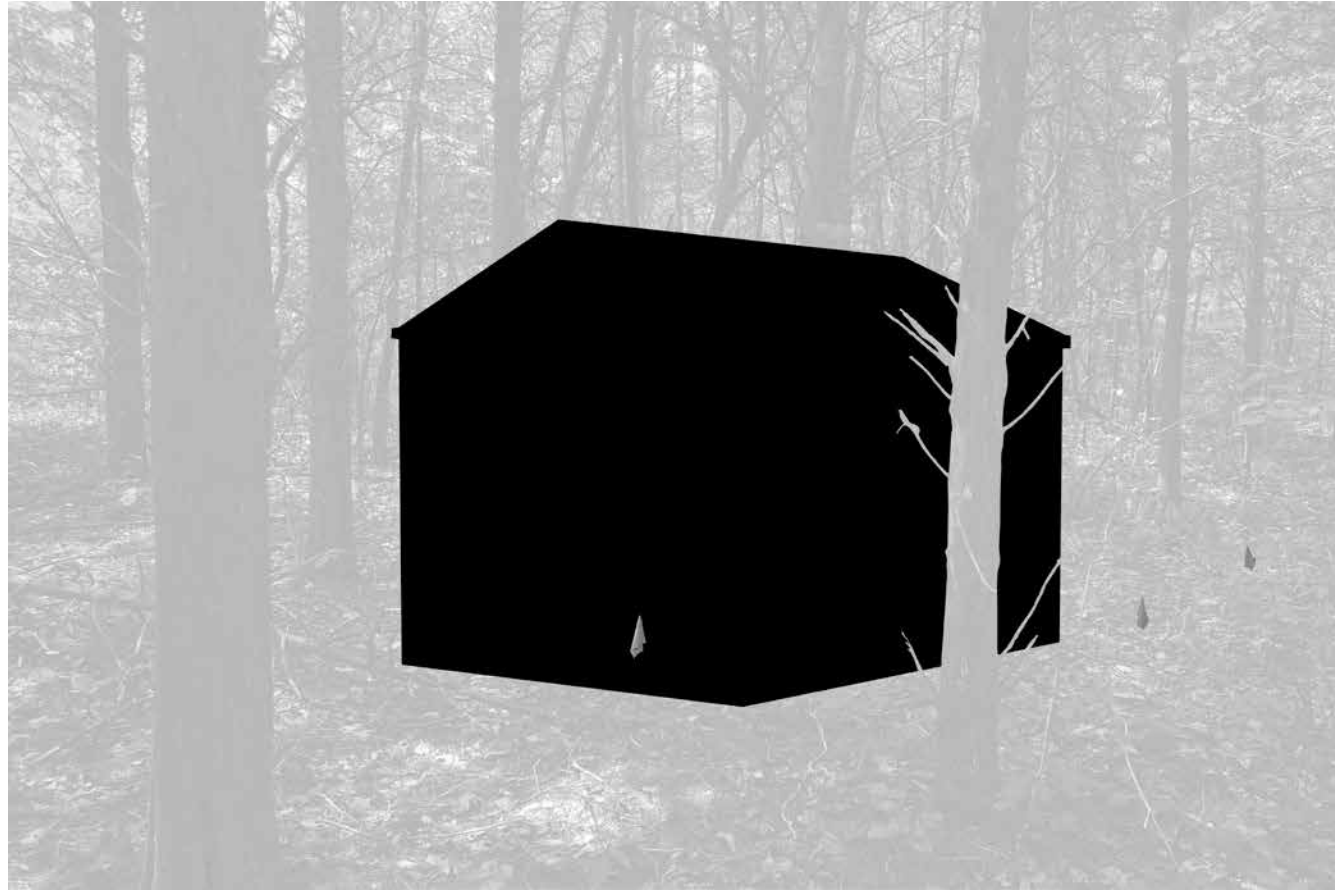
Robert Tucker, Elsmere, New Jersey, 2002, 22 x 44 inches



Lincoln School, East St. Louis, Illinois, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Bruce School, Future City, Illinois, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Millers Grove, Shawnee National Forest, Illinois, 2003, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Washington School, Mt. Vernon, Illinois, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Ambidexter Institute, Springfield, Illinois, 2008, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Booker T. Washington School, Columbus, Indiana, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Lyles Station Consolidated School, Lyles Station, Indiana, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Division Street School, New Albany, Indiana, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



South Lynn Street School, Seymour, Indiana, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



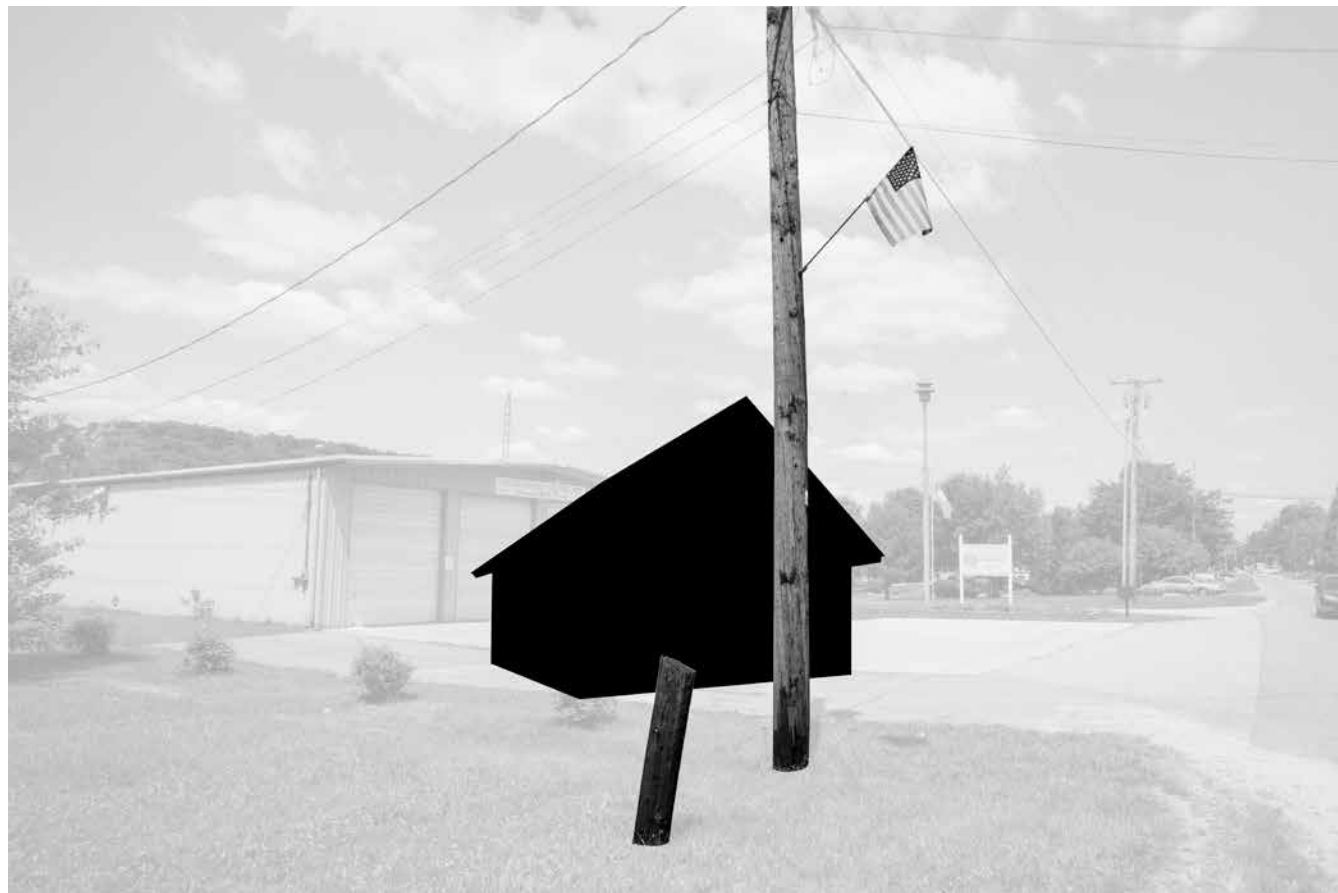
Franklin Street School, Cape May, New Jersey, 2002, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Manitou Park School, Berkeley, New Jersey, 2004, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Carpenter Street School, Woodbury, New Jersey, 2004, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Burlington, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Harriet Beecher Stowe School, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Elizabeth Harvey School, Harveysburg, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Red Hill, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



East High School, Xenia, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/2 x 20 inches



South School, Yellow Springs, Ohio, 2007, 13 1/2 x 20 inches



James Adams School, Coatesville, Pennsylvania, 2009, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Thomas Meehan School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2010, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Franklin Street School, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 2009, 13 1/3 x 20 inches



Douglass Singerly School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2010, 13 1/3 x 20 inches

SELECTIONS FROM *MANIFEST* (2009-PRESENT)



Anti-Slavery Alphabet, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches

Opposite: Broken Glass, Paul Robeson House Collection and the Arts Council of Princeton, Princeton, New Jersey (detail), 2017, 32 x 40 inches



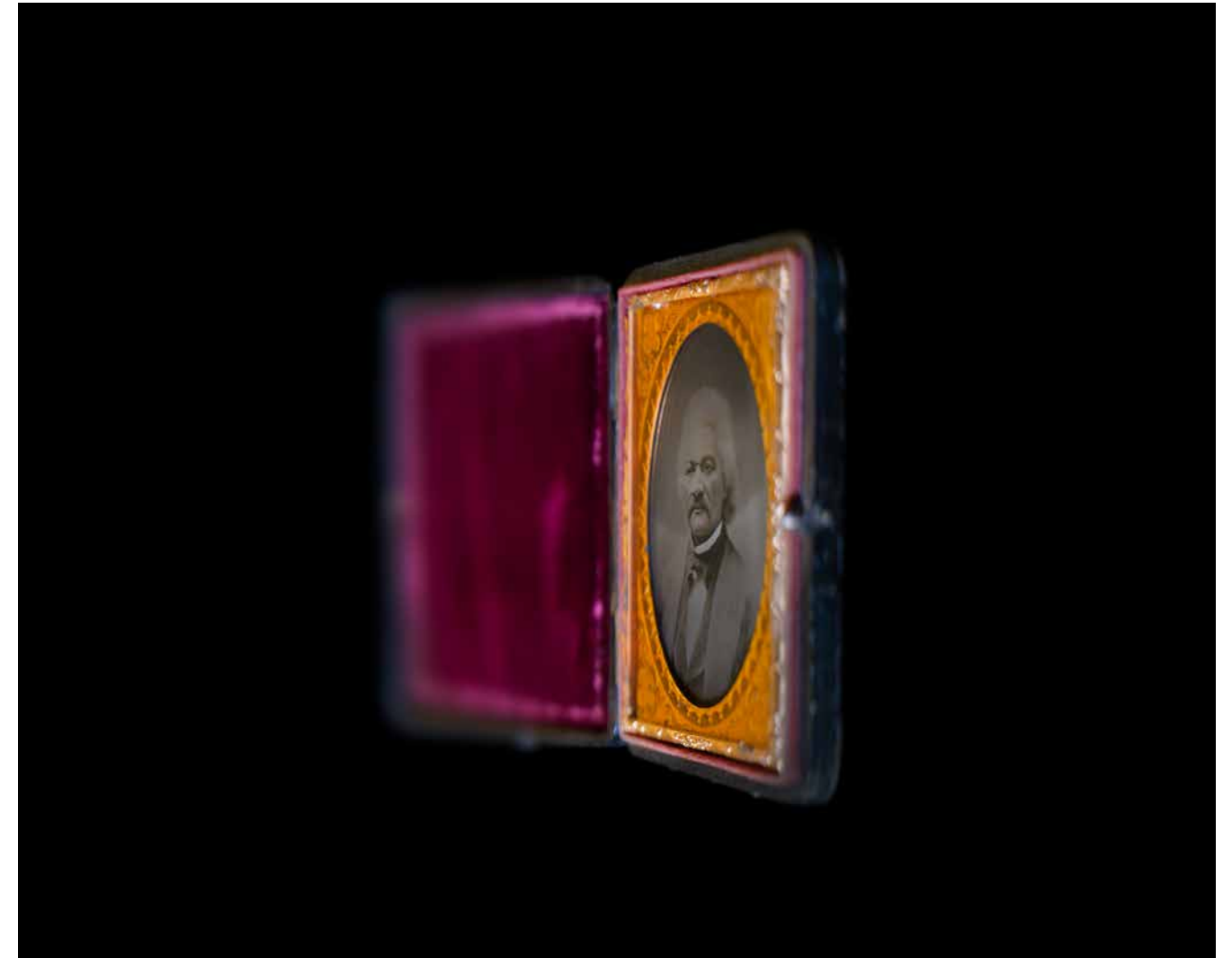
Ellen Craft, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches



Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, 1882, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 2023, 32 x 40 inches



Drum, Dan Desdunes Band, Great Plains Black History Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 2011, 32 x 40 inches



Ambrotype of Frederick Douglass, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC, 2016, 32 x 40 inches



Vest, Jimi Hendrix, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC (detail), 2016, 32 x 40 inches

Biography

Wendel A. White was born in Newark, New Jersey and grew up in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. He was awarded a BFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York and an MFA in photography from the University of Texas at Austin. White taught photography at the School of Visual Arts, NY; The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, NY; the International Center for Photography, NY; Rochester Institute of Technology, NY. He is currently Distinguished Professor of Art at Stockton University, NJ.

White has received various awards and fellowships including Doctor of Arts (h.c.), Oakland University, MI; the Robert Gardner Fellowship in Photography, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University; John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Photography; three artist fellowships from the New Jersey State Council for the Arts; Bunn Lectureship in Photography and grants from EnFoco; Center, Santa Fe; the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; and various artist's residencies.

White's work is represented in distinguished collections, including National Gallery of Art, DC; Mint Museum, NC; Duke University, NC; New Jersey State Museum, NJ; California Institute for Integral Studies, CA; Graham Foundation for the Advancement of the Fine Arts, IL; En Foco, NY; Rochester Institute of Technology, NY; The Museum of Fine Art, Houston, TX; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL; Haverford College, PA; University of Delaware, DE; University of Alabama, AL; and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, NY.

White has served on the boards of directors for the Society for Photographic Education, New Jersey Council for the Humanities, and The Print Center in Philadelphia. He has also served on the Kodak Educational Advisory Council, NJ Save Outdoor Sculpture, the Atlantic City Historical Museum, Atlantic City Free Library Foundation, New Jersey Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, and the New Jersey Black Culture and Heritage Foundation.

Recent projects include *Manifest*; *Thirteen Colonies*; *Red Summer*; *Schools for the Colored*; *Village of Peace: An African American Community in Israel*; *Small Towns*, *Black Lives*; and others.

Acknowledgements

Wendel White's concurrent exhibitions at Swarthmore College and this accompanying catalog were jointly organized by staff in both the List Gallery and Swarthmore College Libraries, including: Andrea Packard, director of the Swarthmore College Art Collection and List Gallery curator; Tess Wei, List Gallery exhibitions manager and associate curator; Susan Dreher, visual initiatives and exhibitions librarian; and Ceilia Caust-Ellenbogen, associate curator, Friends Historical Library. Additional support was provided by Caitlin Goodman, Friends Historical Library archivist, and Amy McColl, associate director, collection management and discovery and tricollege licensing librarian. Our work was also made possible through the leadership of Ron Tarver, associate professor and chair in the Program in Art; Jordan Landes, curator, Friends Historical Library; and Anne Houston, director of libraries and College librarian, Swarthmore College.

We are deeply grateful to Wendel White for his wide-ranging expertise and close attention to historical sites and objects—both at Swarthmore and throughout the country. His creative practice and extensive photographic portfolios embody exemplary standards of civic engagement, creativity, and collaboration. We are also grateful to Julie L. McGee, associate professor of Africana Studies and Art History and director of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Center at the University of Delaware, for her insightful essay.

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Cover: *Marshalltown School, Mannington, New Jersey* (detail), 2008, 13½ x 20 inches

Frontispiece: *“Old Charlotte,” Daguerreotype, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania* (detail), 2023, 32 x 40 inches

Back cover: *The History of the Rise, Progress, & Accomplishment of Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament, Thomas Clarkson, 1808, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania* (detail), 2023, 32 x 40 inches

