



Welcome to

The History of The CJ Walker School/Philadelphia M.B.C



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The South Park Community

The community of South Park, Kansas was founded in 1887 as an integrated community. By 1900, four black families had settled in the town of 250 residents. South Park continued to grow and became a part of Merriam when it incorporated in 1950.

In 1888, Johnson County School District No. 90 was organized to serve the educational needs of the children of South Park. A one-room schoolhouse known as Madam C. J. Walker School was built to educate both black and white students, but by 1900, the school district began separating students based on race.

As new structures were built for the white students, the original building continued to serve as the schoolhouse for black children. By 1947, the original school building, had been expanded to two rooms and served 40 black students. With poor lighting, inadequate heating, and outdoor plumbing, Walker School was clearly inferior.

In 1947, a new South Park Elementary School opened for white children, but black children were not allowed to attend. Black parents appealed the segregation to the school board as well as the Johnson County Court. Their appeals were denied.

A group of parents, teachers, and concerned citizens then filed a lawsuit against the school district. This lawsuit, *Webb v. School District No. 90*, paved the way for the 1954 *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education*, a landmark case influencing integration.

With the aid of Esther Brown, a white woman who lived in Merriam, black parents organized a boycott of Walker Elementary School, and children attended classes in private homes.

Corinthian Nutter and Hazel McCray-Weddington continued to teach the 39 children whose parents removed them from Walker School. Despite threats and harassment, Esther Brown continued her fight for the desegregation of South Park Elementary School until black students were admitted to the school in 1949.



About the Images

From top to bottom

- Esther Brown - One of the most influential people involved in the desegregation of South Park School, was Merriam resident Esther Brown.

Photograph Source: Johnson County Museum

- Corinthian Nutter and class - Students from Walker School are pictured with teacher Corinthian Nutter in 1946. Mrs. Nutter taught grades 1-4 at Walker School.

Photograph Source: Johnson County Museum

- Cinderella pageant at Walker School - Pictured are Patricia Black and Ernest Turner

Photograph Source: Johnson County Museum

Did you know?

Now the home of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Walker Elementary School bears a historical marker that serves as a testament to the school's place in history. The City of Merriam named Brown Park in honor of Esther Brown. Located at 51st and Grandview, the park features a historical marker commemorating Esther Brown's fight for desegregation.

Photograph Source: Bill Curtis and Johnson County Museum







Johnson
County
Archives

WALKER SCHOOL

Site of Former Madam
C.J. Walker School. Built
about 1860 to House the
Black Students of the
South Park Area Until 1949

Marian Walker Person
2000



P. Ex 1.



Fig 6.

