

Highgate remained for just a few months before moving to another position. While in Darlington she began to write a novella—a metaphorical Civil War Christian love story called *Congojoco*--that was published sequentially in issues of the *Christian Recorder*, a publication of the AME Church that continues today. The continuation of Highgate's story and that of her replacement, Mary Watson, will be the subject of the next pamphlet.

There is a collection of Edmonia Highgate's letters from the AMA on site at the HSM.

\*\*\*\*\*

The HSM is searching for descendants of teachers and community leaders who helped to establish Hosanna School and McComas Institute. The Museum wants to recognize and invite them to the Sesquicentennial celebration on April 7, 2017. If you know descendants from the following partial list of persons:

Hosanna Affiliates - Joseph Harris, Thomas P. Norton, Robert and Joseph Peaco, William H. James, William Wallace, Stephen S. Wilson, Jerome B. Armstrong, George W. Presberry, Hampton Washington  
McComas Institute Affiliates - George and Mary Johnson, Peter and Jacob Bishop, Charles and Abraham Waters, John Henry and John Butler, please have them contact Hosanna.

Page 4



*Carolyn Highgate Morgan (l) and William Baldwin Highgate (r), Edmonia Highgate's sister and brother who were also teachers*

\*\*\*\*\*

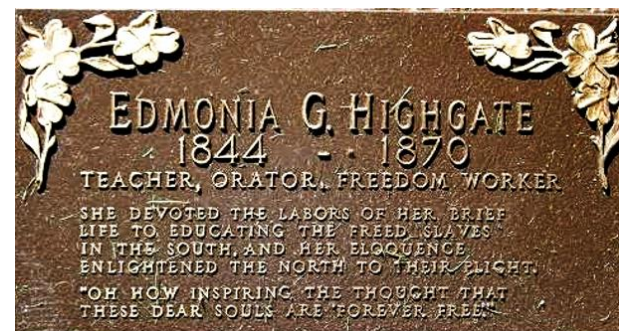
*Celebrate 150 years with HSM with keynote and book signing by Dr. Freeman A. Hrabowski III, named by Time Magazine as one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World." For details contact Hosanna.*

Website: [www.hosannaschoolmuseum.org](http://www.hosannaschoolmuseum.org)  
 Email: [info@hosannaschoolmuseum.org](mailto:info@hosannaschoolmuseum.org)  
 Phone: 410-457-4161

Page 5

Author: Iris Leigh Barnes, M.A.  
 Copy Editor: Jim Chrismer  
 Layout Editor: Margaret Ferguson  
 Reviewers: T. Roxann Redd-Wallace, Joan Wiggins, Stephen Smith, Jerome Hersl, and Debbie Gibbons  
[harfordcampaign42.1@gmail.com](mailto:harfordcampaign42.1@gmail.com)

## African-American History of Harford County, Maryland A Weekly Publication



### Carrying Light and Knowledge Into Dark Places

**Edmonia Highgate:**  
 the First teacher at Darlington  
 School

**Pamphlet 0062**  
**March 10, 2017**

### Sharing Our History Through Research and Discussion



*Cover: The gravemarker of Miss Edmonia Highgate located at Oakwood Cemetery, Syracuse, New York.*

In preparing to celebrate its sesquicentennial during 2017, Hosanna School Museum (HSM) conducted in-depth research into its social history. While investigations continue, this pamphlet provides an exciting snapshot of some of what has been discovered so far.

The precursor to Hosanna, named the Darlington School, was a schoolroom established within Hosanna African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, in 1865 by Miss Edmonia Highgate. The American Missionary Association (AMA) assigned Highgate to Darlington, Maryland, where community leaders supported her.

Deciding to teach African Americans in the South in the aftermath of the Civil War took tremendous courage, especially for a young Black woman. Education of Blacks threatened conservative Whites, who often harassed and occasionally attacked both teachers and students. Edmonia Highgate clearly understood the situation and requirements of the mission, yet felt compelled to offer her service. In 1864, soon after the Emancipation Proclamation, and while the war still raged, she wrote to

the AMA requesting a placement in the South: "I am about twenty years of age and strong and healthy. I know just what self-denial, self-discipline and domestic qualifications are needed for the work and modestly trust that with God's help I could labor advantageously in the field for my newly freed brethren..."

Highgate was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1844. Her relatively affluent, formerly enslaved parents, Charles and Hannah Highgate, were involved in the abolitionist movement in the North. After high school, Highgate taught in Pennsylvania, and then served as a principal in New York. She was among the many supporters of abolitionism to respond to the call by the AMA to travel south to aid those who had survived slavery or had been kept ignorant.

Founded in 1846 in Albany, the AMA was a Christian organization that boasted a diverse membership of both Black and White leaders in the anti-slavery cause. In time, it founded more than 500 schools and colleges in the South for African Americans during and after the Civil War.

Highgate was both a fundraiser and a teacher for the AMA between 1864 and 1870. Her first posting was to Norfolk, Virginia. However, the stress and

pressure of the work and the challenges of life in the South soon overwhelmed her. Reluctantly, Highgate returned to Syracuse in the summer of 1864 to recuperate.

While at home, Highgate accepted an invitation to speak about her work at the October 1864 Colored Men's Convention in Syracuse, where renowned Marylander and former slave Frederick Douglass introduced her to the delegates. One delegate to the assembly remarked that "Miss Highgate urged the Convention to trust in God and press on, and not abate one jot or tittle [a minute marking in Hebrew writing] until the glorious day of jubilee shall come." Women were rarely present at these conventions, but Edmonia Highgate was one of two females at this gathering—the other was Baltimore native, abolitionist and poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

Highgate was eager to return to her work in the South. In the spring of 1865 the AMA sent her to Darlington where she established the schoolroom within Hosanna Church. At this time the church was a log cabin structure that sat on a knoll above the current school building. At the beginning the school served about 40 students, side by side, in a range of youth and adult ages.