

Lincoln Hall

State College Historic Site Marker Dedication

Friday, April 20, 2012 3:45 – 4:30pm



"Lincoln Hall" 1940s

Presented by:

Borough of State College

Penn State Alumni Association

Penn State Black Alumni Reunion

Penn State Office of Educational Equity

Paul Robeson Cultural Center

History and Significance of Lincoln Hall

The circa 1910 structure was a rooming house for male African-American students at the Pennsylvania State College from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. Known as “Lincoln Hall” – *for the U.S. president credited for freeing the slaves*- the boarding house could accommodate 6-8 students and was operated by Harry and Rosa Gifford, their children Bessie and Emanuel, and the latter’s wife, Agnes. The family had moved north from Mississippi to become fraternity house cooks at *Theta Chi, Phi Gamma Delta and Zeta Beta Tau*..

Due to an unofficial campus housing policy at the college from about 1930 until 1946, Black males could only choose to room at Lincoln Hall or at a limited number of private homes. The very few Black female students could reside in the dorms. At times Lincoln Hall residents made up half the African-American student enrollment, making it the center of Black life at Penn State.

The Giffords and other Black cooks assisted students by employing them to work for rent and meals. This network, though born out of segregation, is credited for nurturing, supporting and encouraging an early generation of African American students.

Some early Lincoln Hall roomers of note include: Wallace Triplett III ‘49, the first Black varsity football player and former NFL player; Henry “Barney” Ewell ‘47, Olympic gold medalist; Roger K. Williams ‘46, vice president of academic affairs at Morgan State College; and James H. Robinson ‘49, associate dean and director at Jefferson Medical School. Other known residents of Lincoln Hall were Ernest Lowe ‘49, Perry Smith ‘48, Mitchell Williams ‘49, Rufus O. Williams ‘48, Charles Murray ‘50, Clayton Wilson ‘49, Hope Winborne ‘50, Bert Lancaster ‘50, and Rushu Karnge. A later resident, Barton A. Fields ‘53, became Secretary of the Commonwealth (PA). This group included several founding members of the Penn State chapters of Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi fraternities.

Lincoln Hall Historical Marker Dedication Agenda

April 20, 2012

Welcome – Elizabeth A. Goreham, Mayor of State College (PA)

History of Lincoln Hall - Darryl Daisey '83, Penn State Black History Project, and Black Alumni Reunion Committee

Reflections of Lincoln Hall -Former Lincoln Hall Boarders - Wally Triplett '49, and Clayton Wilson III '49

Additional Reflections – Statement from R. Seth Williams '89, Philadelphia District Attorney

Recollections of Emanuel Gifford – Dick Jones '60, Theta Chi Fraternity

PSU Student Comments - Celiena Bady, President, Penn State Chapter of the NAACP

*Reception to follow at Paul Robeson Cultural Center

www.blackhistory.psu.edu

Early Lincoln Hall Residents



Wally Triplett



Dr. Roger Williams



Henry "Barney" Ewell



1949 – Agnes and Emanuel Gifford (seated) along with half of the Black student at Penn State College

www.blackhistory.psu.edu