



MRS. RACHEL STEVENSON' DAY

A Lil Girl was born on August 19, 1882 in Salem County, New Jersey to Charles H. Thomas and Rebecca Byard Thomas. Her parents named her Rachel, after her maternal grandmother. Rachel was the 5th of eleven children, six sons and five daughters. There were five of the children born during the month of August. Ten of the children were born in Salem County, and one son, the youngest was born in Chester. She was about seven when her parents came to Chester: and about ten when the family moved into the house which is her present home on Edwards Street.

Rachel Thomas was about twenty-three when she was united in holy wedlock to Harry Stevenson.

Mrs. Stevenson began working as a “helper” in the Sun Ship yards about 1917, and later worked for twenty-two years on the Matron Staff where she maintained the office-suite of John G. Pew, Sr.

In May 1942, John G. Pew announced that the Sun Ship would open Yard 4 for the exclusive employment of black men. In less than two years Mr. Pew was presented and award by the Association of Negroes in Industry, where he announced that 12,000 of the 33,000 employees were black men. He also announced that all employees would receive equal pay for equal work.

This story made headlines around the world: “On May 10, 1943, the “Marine Eagle” the first ship built completely by Negroes was launched at the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company. Chester, Pennsylvania.

The Philadelphia Inquirer gave a whole page to the news story, one account reads as follows: “John G. Pew, Jr. called for Mrs. Stevenson, and asked her to crack-the champagne bottle on the “Eagle’s” bow. She said her knees shook and she trembled

when he made the request and, “I Said, No” – but he said “Yes”, so I said, “I’ll do it”

Mrs. Stevenson therefore becomes the first black woman ever to launch a ship of the specifications of the “Marine Eagle”. The “Eagle” was a Maritime Commission ship built for special war transport missions.”

Celebration and Honor

On next Sunday, August 15th during the 9 AM Worship Services and following benediction, we shall process to the F. D. Jones Community Center, the members and friends of St. Daniel’s Church will honor Mrs. Stevenson as we celebrate her 100th birthday: August 19, 1882 – August 19, 1982.

Expressions

Mrs. Rachel Stevenson
Our Lady Of The Century

Mrs. Rachel Stevenson’s 100th birthday will be honored in the following ways:

- Letters from notable persons like Bishop Herbert Skeete, Resident Bishop of Eastern Pennsylvania Conference; President Ronald Reagan, President of the United States; the Governor of the State of Pennsylvania; Mayor of the City of Chester Pennsylvania; State Assemblyman; Attorney Robert Wright Jr. and others.
- A “Book of Remembrance” will be presented.
- Prayers of thanksgiving will be offered.
- Cake and punch will be served.
- Congratulations and good wishes will be extended

PLEASE NOTE: Every member and friend is asked to bring a greeting card and present it in person to “Mrs. Rachel Stevenson – Our Lady Of The Century”