

April 20, 2015  
Al Schnegelberger  
Historian and Board Member  
Friends of Manual

Dear Mr. Steve Hammond,

As a fellow graduate of Manual High School you have an appreciation for the education that you received there. With the legacy of the school following your mother in 1946 and your grandmother before here in 1901 you have an appreciation of the history that has been made both at the school and by its graduates. As the school's Historian, I have the pleasure of being able to document these accomplishments and share them with others so that they too can appreciate the legacy of Manual High School.

Both your grandmother, Zipporah Marcella (Joseph) Parks and you mother, Zipporah Joseph (Parks) Hammond, had what I believe to be genuine milestone accomplishments while attending Manual Training High School that have made history and have positively impacted the city of Denver, the State of Colorado and perhaps even the Nation. In 1901, your grandmother Zipporah M. was the first Black student in Denver to earn the distinction as class valedictorian. The accomplishment generated quite a stir of negative sentiment among some here in the Denver community. This made the headlines in many Black newspapers across the US as illustrated below.

*".... a petition was circulated asking that the usual commencement programme be dispensed with, and that some prominent lecturer be asked to fill the time instead. The faculty had this under consideration when the matter became public, and such general indignation was aroused that all idea of altering the usual arrangements- was resigned. Miss Joseph was therefore accorded the honor for which she had labored so faithfully, and which she had so unquestionably earned. ..." Topeka Plaindealer, July 5, 1901*

It was your grandfather, Peter Joseph, who made the matter public and worked proactively on Zipporah's behalf to get it resolved. This accomplishment was a big deal in Denver, for the State of Colorado and the Nation. Zipporah M. went on to college at the University of Denver, taught school in other cities. She became a social worker and perhaps the first Black truant officer in the Denver Public School system before her death in 1934. Her death made front page news.

You mother, Zipporah J., had significant accomplishments of her own. Thank you for bringing to my attention the nomination you are planning to the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame. Like your grandmother, your mother Zipporah J. also was a good student. In 1939, she won the Morey Prize for reading. This was a oral competition for young women established in 1896 by Chester Morey. You mother was the first Black to with the prize as described in this Denver newspaper article.

*“Miss Zipporah Parks, a Junior at Manual Training High School, is the charming daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William E. Parks, and brings signal honor to the Race as its first pupil to win the Morey Prize in the forty-fifth annual Reading Contest, held in the school auditorium Wednesday, October 25th.” From a Denver newspaper*

It may seem trivial now, but in 1939 this was a very big deal. It broke down important barriers for minority women’s achievements that previous were reserved only for White students. After graduating from Manual in 1941 your mother enrolled at the University of Colorado and as you know was the first Black nursing student to graduate from there in 1946. Zipporah really was a Colorado pioneer of significance, and her distinguished accomplishments ultimately went beyond her profession. She also was an historian and a dedicated volunteer at the Denver Public Library for many years and spent countless hours working through thousands of photographs to identify people and locations. As an archivist and historian myself, I can appreciate the effort that went in to this endeavor. Your mother’s knowledge, patience and persistence has resulted in the library having a priceless collection of documented photos that captures a significant part of northeast Denver history from the 1920’s to the 1970’s.

Having reviewed the distinguished accomplishments of your Mother, "Zipporah Parks Hammond"; she is an extremely deserving candidate for the "COLORADO WOMENS HALL OF FAME". As the Historian for Manual High School and a board member of Friends of Manual, I give my full and enthusiastic support for your nomination. Zipporah's selection is well deserved and long overdue. The timing is right for your nomination to be successful.

Zipporah was a dedicated professional and trailblazer. Her accomplishments and contributions are a good example of the amazing accomplishments of the residents in our city and State. Her Manual accomplishments are part of the legacy that I work hard to document and highlight for the students who have followed her. She is a role model. We are proud to support Zipporah’s nomination for induction to the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame and ask that you please call on us if we can further assist you in this regard.

Sincerely;  
Al Schnegelberger

Manual High School Class of 1960  
Historian