

# SEGREGATION AT TRAP POND STATE PARK

While there was no segregation required by law in Delaware's state park system during the 1950s and 1960s, numerous press accounts and interviews indicate Trap Pond's beach areas were segregated. Jason Beach was for Black visitors; Headquarters Beach (across the pond) was for white visitors.

**"[Coming] from the north, that was sort of a shocker."**

— Pete Geldof, Superintendent of Delaware State Parks in 1963, reflecting on segregation at Trap Pond State Park

## SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

By the early 1960s, disparities between Jason Beach and Headquarters Beach were evident. Complaints were mounting, and local legislators became concerned.



### Roads

While the road to Headquarters Beach was paved, the dirt road leading to Jason Beach was full of ruts and often muddy.



### Amenities

The pavilions, bathhouse, and fireplaces at Headquarters Beach were well-maintained while those at Jason Beach were falling into disrepair.



### Concessions

While the food concession at Headquarters Beach was in good shape and fully-stocked, Jason Beach's was poorly maintained, understocked, and often closed.

**"[Today,] I'm glad we're trying to be as inclusive as we can because then we really have the history of Trap Pond – that everyone enjoyed this, whether we were segregated, and now integrated, that we all enjoyed this beautiful park."**

— Jonathan Kellam, Councilman, Third Ward, Town of Laurel, 2021

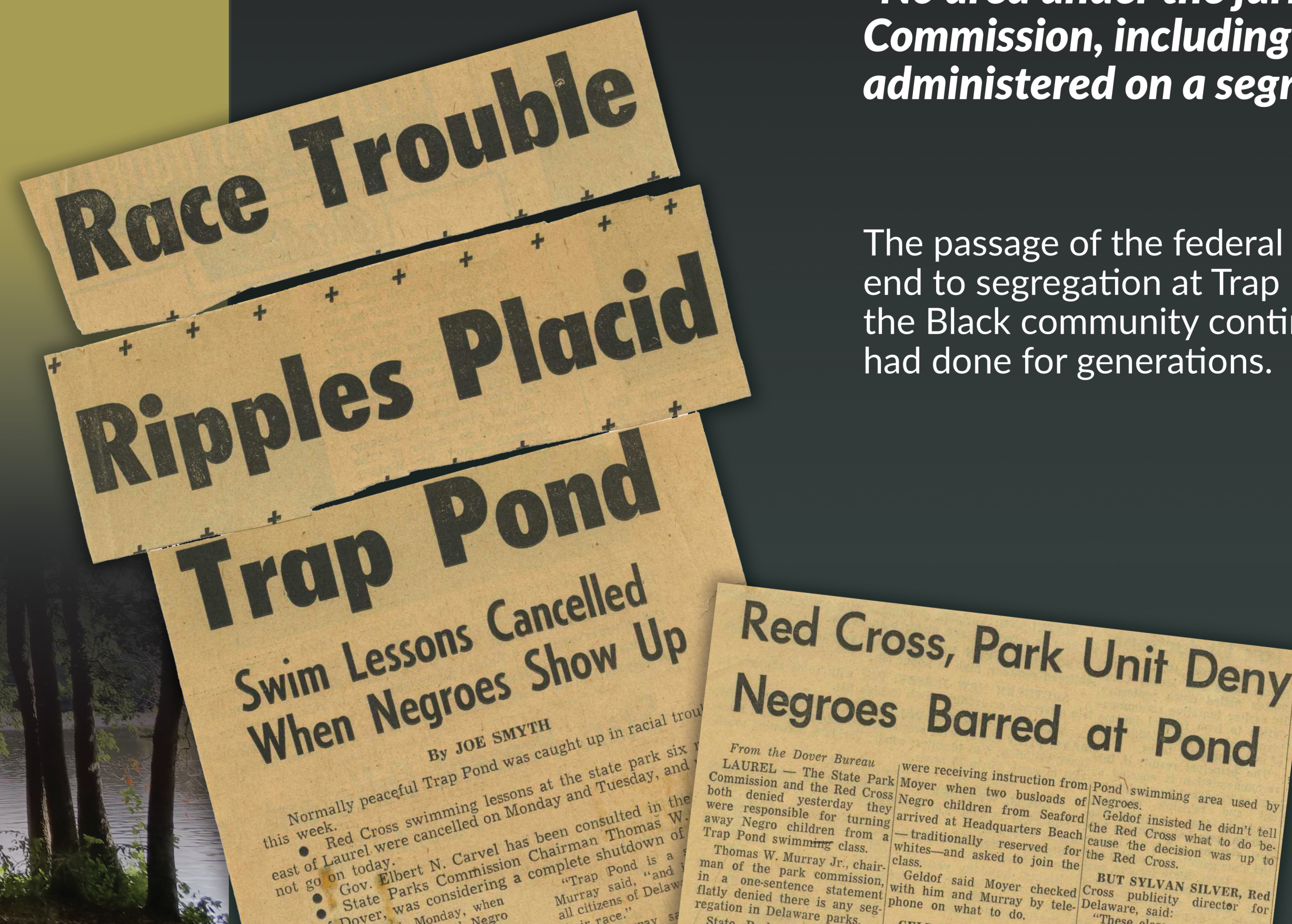
## AN UNWELCOMING INCIDENT

In July 1963, three busloads of African American children arrived at Headquarters Beach for a Red Cross Swim Lesson. Park staff turned the children away, noting that the Seaford youth were scheduled for a different week, and canceled all swim lessons for the day. After outcry from the Red Cross, NAACP, and members of the public, the State Park Commission addressed the "non-official" segregation:

**"No area under the jurisdiction of the State Park Commission, including Trap Pond, is or will be administered on a segregated basis."**

— Delaware State Park Commission, 1963

The passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 underscored the end to segregation at Trap Pond and all other state parks. Even so, the Black community continued to use Jason Beach as their families had done for generations.



Area newspapers relayed the events of the incident.

Left: Delaware State News, July 31, 1963  
Right: The Morning News, August 1, 1963

This project would not have been possible without the countless hours of research provided by former Park Historian, George Contant.

To hear and read more about the history of Jason Beach, scan this QR code

