

# History of

## Anderson-Livsey Elementary School

Anderson-Livsey Elementary, which opened its doors to students in August of 2010, actually had a different name when it was first named by the Gwinnett County Board of Education. It was to be called Grace Snell Elementary School in honor of Grace Brooks Snell, a long-time teacher and a member of the prominent Snell family. However, at its meeting on December 10 in 2009, the School Board officially changed the names of two schools and in doing so found a way to honor, the Livsey's, the Anderson's and the Snell's... three families with long histories in Gwinnett County. The new Shiloh Cluster elementary school, formerly called Snell Elementary, would be Anderson-Livsey Elementary and the new South Gwinnett Cluster middle school, formerly referred to as Midway Middle, would be called Grace Snell Middle.

The new name for the elementary school actually came about through the district's school naming process, in which the district received several possible names for the new elementary school, including suggestions to name the facility after the Anderson and Livsey families or the Promised Land community. Gwinnett's Promised Land is a community south of Centerville where the new school is located. The Anderson and Livsey families are two of the area's original African American families. Gwinnett Historian Elliott Brack's modern history of Gwinnett County— "Gwinnett: A little above Atlanta"— mentions both families. It notes that Robert Livsey acquired 110 acres in the "Promised Land" area in the early 1920s, paying \$2,500 for the parcel. His ancestors lived on this land prior to the Civil War, and many of his descendants still live in the area.

In recommending the changes in the two schools' names, CEO/Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks recognized

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 4521 Centerville Hwy.  
Snellville, GA 30039

The following have served as principals of Anderson-Livsey Elementary School:

2010–2011	Lawanna Owens-Twaites
2011–2017	Janice Warren
2017–Present	Christine Knox

**School Colors:** Black and silver

**School Mascot:** Generals

Thank you to Mr. Willie Anderson, Ms. Cecilia Anderson, Mr. Thomas Livsey, Mrs. Dorethia Livsey, and Mrs. Lois Thomas for providing information *regarding our community's history*.

the uniqueness of this situation. "While we followed our traditional school naming process, which has served us well over the years, this situation warranted further review," he said. "As we learned more about the Anderson and Livsey families and their historical significance to the community, and considered the wishes of both the Snell and the Livsey families, it became clear that we should revisit this decision."

With input from the families, the Board of Education voted to rename the elementary school located on Centerville Highway, changing its name from Snell Elementary to Anderson-Livsey Elementary. The Board also moved to change the name of the new middle school in the South Gwinnett Cluster from its proposed name of Midway Middle to a new name, Grace Snell Middle.

"Renaming the middle school in Mrs. Snell's honor is appropriate," according to Superintendent Wilbanks, "as she



### Anderson-Livsey Elementary School

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Gwinnett County Board of Education  
Daniel D. Seckinger - Chairman  
Dr. Mary Kay Murphy - Vice Chairman  
Carole Boyce  
Dr. Robert McClure  
Louise Radloff

CEO/Superintendent  
J. Alvin Wilbanks

Architect  
Lindsay, Pope, Brayfield & Associates, Inc.

Contractor  
Carroll Daniel Construction Company

2010

taught students in the middle grades for a number of years. Additionally, the new name for the elementary school provides the school district a way to recognize the families and the community in which that new school is located.”

District IV School Board member Dr. Robert McClure expressed his support for the decision, saying “We are pleased to be able to honor these great families, which are counted among Gwinnett’s First Families. This change acknowledges the contributions of the Andersons, the Livseys, and the Snells, and does so within the communities in which the families live.”

The Anderson and Livsey families are two prominent families of Gwinnett County who reside in the community now known as “The Promised Land Community.” The Andersons and the Livseys, along with several families, purchased large portions of land within this community from an Irish immigrant named Thomas McGuire. It must have seemed like the “Promised Land” to Thomas McGuire who settled on a 956 acre farm in the early 1800’s, which he won in a land lottery. Located just south of Centerville, at the intersection of Lee Road and Centerville Hwy 124 in Snellville, Georgia, is the old Thomas McGuire House. This house is now owned by the Livsey Family. Today, the Anderson and the Livsey families continue to be proud residents of what was first known as “The Bethel Community.”

The history of the Promised Land Community is shared along with many African-American families who were land owners and residents of the community, and these families were contributors to its development. As entrepreneurs, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Mitchell Anderson owned and operated the only African-American grocery store within the Bethel community in the 1930’s. The revival of the Promised Land Community emerged when Thomas & Dorethia Livsey opened The Promised Land Grocery Store in 1970. The store continues to serve the community today.



The Promised Land Plantation, now owned by the Livsey family.



Bruce Street High School



Members and friends of the Anderson and Livsey families celebrate the announcement of Anderson-Livsey Elementary School, joined by J. Alvin Wilbanks, CEO/Superintendent, and Dr. Robert McClure, Board member. From left: Sarah Lumpkins, Dorethia Livsey, Tom Livsey, Willie Anderson, Mr. Wilbanks, Eron Moore, Thomas Livsey, and Dr. McClure.

The Promised Land Community has a heritage of being industrious, diligent, and of having a high regard for education. In the 1930’s, many families were farmers who worked hard and instilled within their children the importance of education. During this time, the New Bethel AME Church served as a school for African-American students from the first through the seventh grade. Because public transportation was not available for African-American students, most of the children within the community were unable to attend school beyond the seventh grade. Education for African-American students beyond the seventh grade was provided at Bruce Street High School, which was located approximately seven miles away in DeKalb County. The only other public school available was Hooper-Renwick High School, located several miles away in Lawrenceville.

The church became not only a place of worship, but a place to offer academic, social, and economic development for the community. There were several families

that made outstanding contributions to the New Bethel AME Church and played pivotal roles in the building of the church. Their patriarchs and matriarchs worshipped together, just as the younger generations are doing today. Through the church, which has served as the focal point of the community, faith, education, honesty, hard-work, achievement, and service were instilled. The members have worked faithfully and the fruits of their labor have produced entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, educators, politicians, and success in several various professions.

Today, this vibrant community is emerging as one of Gwinnett County’s prospering communities, and the opening of Anderson-Livsey Elementary School, offers a renewed spirit of heritage, commitment, accomplishment, and unity. This honor gives credence to the dreams and aspirations of the Anderson and Livsey families. They are grateful for such an honor and look forward to many years of learning that will take place at the new school. Their vision echoes the motto of the school, “Providing Learning that Lasts a Lifetime.”