



Carol W. Martin/Greensboro History Museum Collection

# PROFILES OF PROMINENT AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN GREENSBORO

February is African-American History Month and a great number of African-Americans have contributed mightily to the history of Greensboro, NC. These men and women were educators, doctors, poets, business leaders, lawyers and athletes.

## 1. George Moses Horton

**George Moses Horton** (1798?-1883?) was an early African American poet.

Horton was born a slave in Northampton County, NC, and later moved to Chatham County, NC, which led to contact with students on the nearby campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he would later be employed as a laborer.

In 1829, a collection of Horton's poetry entitled *The Hope of Liberty* was published. This was republished as *Poems by a Slave* (1837) and again in 1838, in combination with the work of Phillis Wheatley. A second collection, *The Poetical Works of George Moses Horton*, was published in 1845. Following the Civil War, Horton published his last collection of poems, *Naked Genius* (1865), and shortly after moved to Philadelphia.

Interestingly, Horton could read and compose poems entirely in his head before he learned to write. About 1832, the wife of a Chapel Hill professor taught him to write, and manuscripts of acrostic poems Horton composed in his own hand still survive.

Horton's last years are obscure and the exact date of his death is unknown.

Though Horton had no particular connection to Greensboro during his lifetime, our McGirt-Horton Library, which serves a largely African American community in northeast Greensboro, is named for him as well as another poet who does have a local connection, James E. McGirt. It was dedicated in 1989.

## 2. Harmon Unthank

**Harmon Unthank** (ca. 1827-1894), a former slave, was a leader of the African American community of Warnersville.

Warnersville was formed in Greensboro following the Civil War with the assistance of Philadelphia Quakers, in particular a passionate supporter of the freedmen named Yardley Warner. In 1867, Warner purchased 35 ½ acres in present-day Greensboro which were divided into lots to be sold to African Americans.

Harmon Unthank was one of the first purchasers of a lot (on McCulloch St.), and there he erected a large two-story house for his family. "The boss," as Unthank was later known, subsequently acted as the Philadelphia Quakers' sales agent for the lots and is credited with naming the community after Yardley Warner.

Unthank was a member of the Board of Directors of First National Bank, a carpenter and owned a significant amount of land. Politically, he was associated with the Radical Republican cause and Judge Albion Tourgée, an early advocate for the civil rights of African Americans and later novelist of works about the Reconstruction era, such as *A Fool's Errand* (1880). It is believed that one of the characters in *A Fool's Errand* was based upon Unthank.

Unfortunately, most of the historic structures of old Warnersville, including Unthank's home, were lost to urban renewal during the 1960s.

Unthank is believed to be buried in an unmarked grave in Union Cemetery, where grave markers for both his wife and son can be found today.

### **3. Rev. Matthew Alston**

**Rev. Matthew Alston** (ca.1821-1884) was an important leader of the African American community in Greensboro in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War.

According to his obituary, he was born a slave in North Carolina and entered the ministry in 1865, having been ordained at the Southern Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church held in Georgia in 1866. He was subsequently very active as a presiding elder in the leadership of both the A.M.E. and Methodist Episcopal churches.

As leader of the congregation, Alston was instrumental in the construction of the original Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church (now known as St. Matthew's United Methodist). The original church was built in 1866, but unfortunately torn down about 1970 during urban renewal efforts. But this remains the oldest black congregation in Greensboro.

Contemporary sources indicate the founding of Bennett College, which held its inaugural class at Warnersville Methodist Episcopal Church in 1873, was due largely to the success of Alston in persuading the Freedmen's Aid Society to provide assistance.

Alston is buried at Union Cemetery.

### **4. Dr. James Elmer Dellinger**

**Dr. James Elmer Dellinger** (1862-1920) was a prominent African American physician in Greensboro.

Born at Lowesville in Lincoln County, NC, Dellinger came from humble beginnings in a rural farming community. He attended the public schools, apparently graduating from the Zion Wesley Institute in Salisbury (later renamed Livingstone College) in 1886. Dellinger then entered Shaw University in Raleigh to study medicine, a four-year course of study which he completed in three. He also studied at Harvard.

After graduating medical school in 1892, Dellinger was first employed as Shaw's resident physician at the Leonard Medical Hospital, then moved to Greensboro where he was chair of chemistry at the Agricultural & Mechanical College (now NC A&T) as well as the college physician. Dellinger also seems to have had a private practice in Greensboro and may have specialized in work with consumptives.

During his very active life in Greensboro's African American community, Dellinger was involved in Republican Party politics (he attended the Republican National Conventions of 1892 and 1896), advocated for Baptist Sunday Schools, and was president of the Pioneer Building & Loan Association. Dellinger also organized and commanded a company of African American soldiers (the "Maine Memorial Light Infantry") during the Spanish American War, though the brief conflict ended before he and his men could reach the theatre of war.

He is buried in Greensboro's Maplewood Cemetery.

Among the Greensboro History Museum's artifacts is Dr. Dellinger's black doctor's bag.

## **5. Jacob R. "Jim" Nocho**

**Jacob R. "Jim" Nocho** (1840-1912), worked as a railroad mail agent for the Federal government for many years and was referred to in a 1925 *Daily Record* article as "one of the best known negroes[,] not only in this city but throughout the state. . . ."

Nocho was a native Pennsylvanian, likely the son of a laborer of mixed race in Lancaster County, PA, named Edward Nocho. Though Jacob Nocho is not identified in the rolls of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), he was in Greensboro at war's end, "remembering it [later] as a pleasant city through which he drove teams of horses," and was probably employed as a non-combatant teamster by the U.S. Army.

Following the Civil War, Nocho attended Lincoln University in Oxford, PA, from which he graduated with a Master of Arts degree in 1869. He then made his way back to Greensboro to teach in the employ of the Freedman's Bureau; Nocho is also identified as principal of one of Greensboro's early Graded Schools for Negroes.

About 1871, Nocho became employed as a railroad postal clerk on the Greensboro to Goldsboro line, a position which he would hold for many years. However, he continued his involvement in education, as he is listed on the advisory board of Albion Academy of Franklinton, NC, in 1892.

Guilford deeds indicate Nocho owned a number of properties, and at his death in 1912 his worth was estimated at \$20,000-30,000, a substantial sum for the time. According to his obituary, he largely avoided politics. He also served as an elder of the St. James Presbyterian Church.

Nocho is buried at Greensboro's Union Cemetery.

Nocho Park, which is named for him, is important as Greensboro's first park and recreation center designated for the use of African Americans. It was established about 1932.

## **6. William Blackstone Windsor**

**William Blackstone Windsor** (1879-1932) was a prominent African American educator.

A native of Reidsville, NC, Windsor was son of a Rockingham County teacher named George A. Windsor.

Windsor earned an A.B. (1899) and A.M. degrees from Bennett College, where he was active in student organizations such as the Y.M.C.A., of which he served as president in 1897.

No later than 1902, he became a teacher in Greensboro. For many years, Windsor was principal of the Warnersville Graded School (also known as "Colored School No. 2"); later, he was supervisor or superintendent of all Negro schools in Greensboro. Windsor also briefly acted as head of Bennett College in 1916, and served on Bennett's Board of Trustees during the 1910s and '20s.

The files of the *Greensboro Daily Record* preserve a fascinating story of Windsor's role as an early activist in efforts to contest racial segregation in Greensboro. In 1914, Windsor purchased what was described as the "old Washburn house" in a white neighborhood on Gorrell Street. The affront to the social norms of that day caused considerable indignation in the white community and resulted in passage of a segregation ordinance by the City Commissioners of Greensboro which read in part, "That it shall be unlawful for any negro to occupy as a residence . . . any home upon any street . . . on which a greater number of houses are occupied as residences by white people than are occupied as residences by negroes." However, the ordinance also had a provision that it would not affect the location of residences previous to its

passage. Windsor entered the afternoon meeting after the City Commissioners had passed the ordinance and rather dramatically announced that “he was sorry, but he had moved into the house in the forenoon” – i.e., before the ordinance was passed – so, it did not apply to him. City Commissioners responded with an agreement to meet again in a few days to try to sort the matter out. At this meeting, a committee of twenty-five concerned citizens presented a petition to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners to have Windsor removed both from his new Gorrell St. residence, as well as from his position at Warnersville School.

Ultimately, Windsor was forced to sell his Gorrell St. property at a loss; and he also seems to have lost his job, at least briefly, though he was subsequently appointed superintendent of Greensboro’s Negro schools. The 1914 ordinance is briefly referenced by William Chafe in his *Civilities and Civil Rights* (1980), though there is no mention of Windsor or the circumstances which gave rise to the ordinance.

Windsor was also involved in the establishment of Greensboro’s Carnegie Negro Library, and edited an African American newspaper called the *Greensboro Herald*.

Tragically, Windsor was killed in 1932 when struck by a car while crossing Market Street in Greensboro. He was buried in Newark, NJ.

The Windsor Community Center (opened in 1937) was named for him.

## **7. Dr. George C. Simkins**

**Dr. George C. Simkins** (1924-2001) was a dentist and civil rights activist in Greensboro. His efforts as an advocate for the civil rights of African Americans were multifaceted and highly influential.

A native of Greensboro, Simkins graduated from Dudley High School (1940), and earned degrees from Talladega College in Alabama (1943) and the Meharry School of Denistry in Nashville, Tennessee (1948).

Dr. Simkins’ civil rights efforts first came to the fore with his challenge to the segregation of the Gillespie Park Golf Course. Though built in 1940 partly funded by WPA monies from the federal government, the City-run golf course was originally designated as “whites only.” In 1949, operation of Gillespie as a segregated course was challenged by African Americans who did not have access to a comparable facility. In order to comply with the “separate but equal doctrine,” the City of Greensboro agreed to build a golf course for African Americans. This facility opened at Nocho Park in 1950. In addition, the City of Greensboro attempted to avoid

further challenges to the segregation of the Gillespie Park course by leasing it to a private club which would continue to operate it as a “whites only” facility.

Nonetheless, on December 7, 1955, African American golfers led by Dr. Simkins (who together became known as the “Greensboro Six”) attempted to play the Gillespie Park course and were arrested for trespassing. They were convicted, but their sentences were eventually commuted. In 1957, Simkins won a judgment of racial discrimination against the City of Greensboro, which temporarily closed both the Gillespie Park and Nocho Park golf courses rather than desegregate. Gillespie Park reopened to all people in 1962.

Simkins also fought to end segregation in health care, which relegated African Americans to inferior treatment in inadequately funded segregated hospitals. Citing federal funding and using the equal protection argument, Simkins and other plaintiffs brought suit against the “whites only” Moses Cone and Wesley Long hospitals in Greensboro. In 1962, a district court sided with the hospitals, but on appeal the decision was overturned. *Simkins v. Cone (1963)* is considered a landmark case in prohibiting racial discrimination in hospitals.

In 1970, Dr. Simkins joined in a petition with black parents to demand the immediate desegregation of Greensboro’s schools, which had still not been completed though the Supreme Court’s *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision had been rendered in 1954. Judge Edward Stanley sided with Simkins and the parents, and in 1971 Greensboro became one of the last cities in North Carolina to integrate its schools.

Beyond his challenges to the segregation of golf courses, hospitals and schools, Simkins also helped integrate other public facilities such as tennis courts and pools, served as president of the Greensboro NAACP for some twenty-five years, and was active in advocating for voter registration and more effective district representation, especially through the Greensboro Citizens Association (formed 1949), which later became known as the “Simkins PAC.”

When he died in 2001, Simkins was rightly regarded as “the preeminent African American leader in Greensboro during the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” as Hal Seiber put it.

Simkins is buried at Piedmont Memorial Park. Both the Simkins Sports Pavilion at Barber Park and the George C. Simkins Elementary School are named for him. A statue of Simkins was dedicated on the grounds of the Guilford County Courthouse in 2016.

## **8. Vance H. Chavis**

**Vance H. Chavis** (1906-1998) was a prominent African American educator and politician in Greensboro.

Born in Wadesboro, NC, Chavis received a B.S. (1929) from Charlotte's Johnson C. Smith University (then Biddle University) and later did graduate study at NC Central University, as well as several other prestigious universities.

Upon graduation, Chavis immediately joined the faculty of what was then the brand new James B. Dudley High School in Greensboro. He taught physics, biology and general science at Dudley from 1929 to 1955, and was later principal of Lincoln Junior High School.

Chavis was a tremendous influence upon the many African Americans in the community who studied under him, teaching his students to reject Jim Crow and segregation in all its forms. Many of his former pupils went on to lead in the civil rights struggle.

He was also very active politically. In 1949, Chavis helped organize the Greensboro Citizens Association, which advocated especially for voter registration and other means of increasing African American political participation. This group played a vital role in electing the first African American (Dr. William Hampton) to City Council in 1951.

Later, Chavis himself would be elected to the Greensboro City Council. He served two terms, from 1969 to 1973, an important period which at last saw the desegregation of Greensboro's schools (1971) and the emergence of busing as a major issue. Chavis is also said to be the first African American male in the United States to be appointed to a redevelopment commission.

The Vance Chavis Branch of the Greensboro Public Library system was named for him in 1990.

## **9. Bob McAdoo**

**Robert Allen "Bob" McAdoo** (1951- ) is probably the most successful athlete native to Greensboro.

Born and raised here, he attended Ben L. Smith High School, where he excelled in several sports and led the basketball team to the state semifinals. McAdoo then matriculated to Vincennes Junior College in Indiana, where he led their basketball team to a National Championship in 1970 and was named a Junior College All-American, before transferring to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1971.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, McAdoo helped lead the 1971-72 Tar Heels to an ACC Championship and the NCAA Tournament semifinals before losing to Florida State. In his only year with the Tar Heels, he averaged better than 19 points and 10 rebounds a game and was named a first team All-American.

McAdoo began his professional basketball career with the Buffalo Braves. He was the 1973 NBA Rookie of the Year and was named the league's MVP in 1975 when he averaged 34.5 points and 14.1 rebounds per game. He played for several other NBA teams, having his greatest success in the 1980s as sixth man with the Los Angeles Lakers, whom he helped win a pair of NBA championships.

He concluded his playing days in Italy, retiring in 1993, and has for many years been associated with the Miami Heat as an assistant coach and scout.

McAdoo became a Hall of Famer in 2000.

## **10. Judge Henry Frye**

**Judge Henry Ell Frye** (1932- ) has had a long and distinguished career as an African American attorney, politician and jurist.

A native of Richmond County, North Carolina, Frye graduated from Ellerbe High School (1949) and North Carolina A&T University (1953), and later served as an Air Force captain in Korea and Japan before returning to his home state to study law at the University of North Carolina. He graduated from the law school in 1959.

During his career, Frye broke many racial barriers. He was, for instance, the first African American first-year student to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Law School. And in 1963, Frye became the first African American to work in a U.S. Attorney's office in North Carolina.

Frye entered politics in 1968 and became the first African American to gain election to the North Carolina House of Representatives since 1900. After over a decade's service in the State House and several years in the North Carolina Senate, in 1983 Frye became the first African American appointed to a seat on the North Carolina Supreme Court and later (1999) the first African American to be appointed to the State's highest legal post, that of Chief Justice.

Since his retirement in 2000, Judge Frye has received many accolades and honors, including selection by the North Carolina Press Association in 2011 as North Carolinian of the Year.

He was the subject of a biography by historian Howard Covington in 2013, *Henry Frye: North Carolina's First African American Chief Justice*.

## **11. Abraham Hendrickson Peeler**

**Abraham Hendrickson Peeler** (1904-1991) was an important African American educator in Greensboro.

Born and raised in Greensboro's Warnersville community, Peeler was a son of the pastor of St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Silas A. Peeler, who also served as president of Bennett College.

Peeler graduated from the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1920, then moved on to Morehouse College in Atlanta, from which he graduated in 1922. He later attended Columbia University, where he earned a Master's degree in 1947. Peeler also studied at the University of Wisconsin and Ohio State.

He began his career in education in Winston-Salem, but Peeler returned to Greensboro in 1931 where he became principal of J.C. Price School. He would remain at J.C. Price until 1969 and have a profound impact on the lives of many who grew up in Greensboro's African American community. During his time at J.C. Price, the school also built an auditorium and added a radio station.

In addition, Peeler was involved in the establishment of Nocho Park, an advocate of for scouting, and was the first African American to serve on the Greensboro Recreation Commission (1947). He also took an active role in preserving African American history and joined the board of the Greensboro Historical Museum following his retirement.

Peeler Recreation Center is named for him.

## **12. James Ephraim McGirt**

**James Ephraim McGirt** (1874-1930) was an African American writer who spent much of his life in Greensboro.

McGirt was born near Lumberton, NC, in Robeson County, but his family later moved to Greensboro where he attended Bennett College, graduating in 1895. He was the son of Mack and Ellen McGirt.

In 1899, he published his first book, a collection of poetry titled *Avenging the Maine, a Drunken A.B., and Other Poems*. His other works included *Some Simple Songs and a Few More Ambitious Attempts* (1901), another collection of verse, *For Your Sweet Sake: Poems* (1906), and also a collection of short stories, *The Triumph of Ephraim* (1907).

McGirt lived in Philadelphia for a number of years where he also published a serial called *McGirt's Magazine* (1903-10).

After the magazine folded, he returned to Greensboro to reside with his parents and jointly managed the Star Hair Grower Manufacturing Company with his sister, Maggie.

The McGirt-Horton Library in Greensboro honors McGirt, as well as another African-American poet, George Moses Horton.

### **13. James Irvin “Jimmie” Barber**

**James Irvin “Jimmie” Barber** (1917-1985) was a prominent African American educator and politician.

Born near Trenton in Jones County, NC, Barber was the eldest son in a family of thirteen children.

He initially came to Greensboro to attend North Carolina A&T University on a basketball scholarship. Though Barber’s study was interrupted by service in WWII, he returned to A&T after the war, where he earned his degree in 1947.

After a brief teaching stint in Trenton, Barber attended graduate school at New York University where he earned a Master’s degree in education and guidance. He then taught for a year at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama before accepting the position of Assistant Dean of Men at A&T in 1953. He had a long and distinguished career at NC A&T.

Barber was elected to Greensboro’s City Council in 1969 and served six terms before he resigned in 1981. He was known as the “People’s Man,” and for the bow-tie he wore. His leadership approach was a quiet one, but as the *News and Record* editorialized on his death, Barber did much “behind the scenes to improve the lot of southeast Greensboro and of black citizens.”

Greensboro’s Barber Park, dedicated in 1989, was named for him.

### **14. James Benson Dudley**

**James Benson Dudley** (1859-1925) was a prominent African American educator and for nearly thirty years president of North Carolina A&T University.

Dudley was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, to slaves in the household of former governor Edward B. Dudley. He was first educated in a Freedman’s Bureau school and later attended public schools and the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. He took college degrees from

Raleigh's Shaw College (1881) and Livingstone College (M.A., 1897) in Salisbury, and was later awarded an honorary doctorate of letters degree by Wilberforce University.

He began teaching in the public schools in 1880, first in Sampson County and later in Wilmington. During the 1880s and '90s, Dudley also edited the *Wilmington Chronicle*. He engaged in Wilmington politics during the 1890s (he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1896), and took an active role in quelling the violence associated with the infamous Wilmington Race Riot of 1898.

In 1895, Dudley was appointed to the Board of Trustees of what was then called the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race, which was established under the Morrill Land-Grant Acts and was the first public college for African-Americans in North Carolina. When the first president of the college, Dr. John O. Crosby, resigned in 1896, Dudley was appointed to succeed him.

During his tenure, Dudley improved the financial standing of the College, and dramatically increased the number of buildings on campus, as well as the size of the student body and faculty. He also did much to build support for the College, both within and without the African American community.

Dudley would serve as president of the College – which became the Agricultural and Technical College in 1915 – until his death in 1925.

James B. Dudley High School, founded in 1929 and Greensboro's first high school for African Americans, is named for him. He was buried in Wilmington.

## **15. John Allen Tarpley**

**John Allen Tarpley** (1902-1992) was an important African American educator who served for many years as principal of Dudley High School.

A native of Dallas, Texas, Tarpley graduated with an A.B. from Wiley College in Marshall, TX, in 1922. He came to Greensboro that same year to teach biology and Latin at Bennett College, where the city's the first high school for African Americans was then located.

After teaching for some years at Bennett, Tarpley was named principal of Dudley High School when it first opened in 1929, and he became administrative supervisor of Negro students in 1932 upon the death of William B. Windsor. He continued as principal at Dudley until his retirement in 1965.

Tarpley eventually earned a Master's degree from the University of Michigan (1939), did additional graduate work at Ohio State University, and was later awarded an honorary doctorate by his Texas alma mater, Wiley College.

His students remember him as a strict disciplinarian, but a loving "father figure" as well; faculty found him demanding of excellence, but tirelessly supportive. Tarpley worked very hard to improve the quality of teaching at Dudley, for example, encouraging teachers there to pursue additional graduate study.

In his *Civilities and Civil Rights* (1980), historian William Chafe wrote, "The achievements of Greensboro's black schools reflected in large part the genius of John Tarpley."

Dudley High School's J.A. Tarpley Stadium is named in honor of him.

## **16. Charlotte Hawkins Brown**

**Charlotte Hawkins Brown** (1883-1961) was a distinguished African American educator who is best known for the establishment of the Palmer Memorial Institute.

Brown was born near Henderson, NC (Vance County), but moved to Cambridge, Mass., when she was a young child, and there she benefited from a superior education then unavailable to most black women in the era of the Jim Crow south. In Cambridge she also met the president of Wellesley College, Alice Freeman Palmer, who provided financial assistance for her study at the State Normal School in Salem, Mass.

In 1901, Brown returned to North Carolina and the following year began a school for African Americans at Sedalia, just east of Greensboro, which she named after her Cambridge benefactor. From meager beginnings, Brown's tireless efforts to raise funds both in Boston as well as in Greensboro eventually bore fruit in a thriving institution which would be nationally recognized and educate hundreds. Her supporters included prominent Boston philanthropist Galen L. Stone, Charles Duncan McIver, first president of the State Normal and Industrial School at Greensboro (now UNCG), and Harvard College President Charles W. Eliot.

Brown later returned north to study at Wellesley and lecture at schools such as Radcliffe and Howard University. She also received several honorary degrees for her work, including doctorates from Lincoln and Wilberforce universities. Like many African Americans of her time, Brown was active in various organizations which promoted racial harmony, including the Southern Commission for Interracial Cooperation.

Dr. Brown resigned her presidency of Palmer Institute in 1952, and died in Greensboro in 1961. She was buried at Sedalia on the site of the Palmer campus.

Palmer Memorial Institute closed its doors in 1971, but the campus (which contains about a dozen buildings constructed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century) has been preserved as a state historic site since its official opening in 1987.

## **17. The Greensboro Four**

**The Greensboro Four.** One of the most important events in the history of civil rights took place on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, when four young African American men, who were students at North Carolina A&T University, sat down at a lunch counter at the Woolworth's 5 & 10 Department Store in downtown Greensboro to protest the store's policy of racial segregation. Thus began the famous Greensboro sit-ins.

These young men are known as the "Greensboro Four." They were Joseph Alfred McNeil, Franklin Eugene McCain, Jibreel Kazan and David Leinail Richmond.

**Joseph McNeil** (1942- ), a native of Wilmington, NC, earned a BS in engineering physics from North Carolina A&T in 1963, then had a long and successful career in the U.S. Air Force, eventually rising to the rank of brigadier general. He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including honorary doctorates from North Carolina A&T University, St. John's University, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and Malloy College. He received the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal from the Smithsonian Institution in 2010.

**Franklin McCain** (1941-2014), who was born in Union County, NC, graduated from North Carolina A&T with bachelor's degrees in both chemistry and biology in 1964, and subsequently also did graduate work at A&T and Princeton. He worked for the Celanese Corporation in Charlotte for many years, served on the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina, as well as other university boards, and was a recipient of the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal. He also received an honorary doctorate from A&T in 1991.

**Jibreel Kazan** (1941- ) was born Ezell A. Blair Jr. in Greensboro and graduated from Dudley High School before entering A&T in 1959. After graduating from A&T in 1963, he studied at Howard University, Massachusetts University and the New England Conservatory of Music. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by North Carolina A&T in 1991, and the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal by the Smithsonian Institution in 2010.

**David Leinail Richmond** (1941-1990), like Kazan, also was a Greensboro native who graduated from Dudley High School. He left A&T without graduating, and resided in Greensboro and

Franklin, in western North Carolina. Richmond received the Levi Coffin Award from the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce in 1980, and was a posthumous recipient of an honorary doctorate by A&T (1991) and the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal (2010).

In the weeks following the Greensboro protests at Woolworth's, similar sit-ins began elsewhere. Needless to say, the actions of these four courageous young men – in protesting racial discrimination and as a catalyst to the emerging non-violent civil rights movement – was of incalculable historic importance.

Woolworth's 5 & 10 Department Store is today the site of the International Civil Rights Museum.

### **18. Dr. Ronald E. McNair**

**Dr. Ronald E. "Ron" McNair** (1950-1986) is best remembered as one of the astronauts who died in the tragic Space Shuttle *Challenger* launch on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1986.

Born in Lake City, SC, a small town south of Florence, McNair is connected to Greensboro through his attendance at North Carolina A&T University, from which he received a B.S. in physics in 1971. He subsequently received a Ph.D. in physics from M.I.T. (1976).

McNair was selected for NASA's astronaut program in 1978, and was the second African American in space when he first flew on the *Challenger* in 1984.

Dr. McNair's life is memorialized by the Dr. Ronald E. McNair Memorial Park (1992) and Ronald McNair Life History Center (2011) at Lake City. McNair's remains were reinterred in a tomb at the park in 2004.

The building which houses the McNair Life History Center in Lake City was formerly a library. In 1959, young McNair, who was already very interested in science and technology, attempted to check out books from the library and was refused because of his race. He declined to leave until he was allowed to borrow the books and the librarian and local authorities finally gave in. The story of McNair's defiance is told in the children's book, *Ron's Big Mission* (2009), by Corrine J. Naden and Rose J. Blue.

McNair is honored near Greensboro by the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School, which is located in Browns Summit.

### **19. Maj. Mattie Donnell Hicks**

**Maj. Mattie Donnell Hicks** (1914-2004) was a nurse in the United States Army for over two decades.

A native of Greensboro and one of ten children, Hicks graduated from Dudley High School (1933) and received a diploma in nursing from the Grady Hospital School of Nursing in Atlanta. She later did post-graduate work in public health in Richmond, VA.

Ms. Hicks entered the Nursing Corps of the Army as a Second Lieutenant in 1945, just weeks before the war ended. During her career she saw service at various stations across the United States, as well as in Korea, Germany, South America and Japan. She was eventually promoted to Major.

Beginning in 1951, Hicks spent 2 ½ years in Korea and Japan. Her work at the 11<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital during the Korean War, specializing in renal care, was particularly notable, as this facility was among the first to support patients with kidney dialysis machines. She was also part of a mercy mission to aid the injured following an earthquake in Chile in 1960.

Her decorations included the WWII Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Meritorious Unit Citation and the United Nations Service Medal.

Hicks retired from the Army in 1966 and returned to Greensboro where she spent the remainder of her life.

## **20. Dr. Loretta Lynch**

**Dr. Loretta Lynch** (1959- ) was the first African American woman to serve as Attorney General of the United States.

Lynch was born in Greensboro, the daughter of Rev. Lorenzo A. Lynch, who served as pastor at Greensboro's Providence Baptist Church. The family moved to Durham in 1965.

Her father was active in civil rights and ran for mayor of Durham in 1973. Judge Henry Frye reminisced that Lynch's father would carry her on his shoulders as a toddler when he attended meetings related to the Woolworth sit-ins.

Lynch graduated from Durham High School in 1977 and from Harvard University, from which she received a B.A. in 1981. She then entered Harvard Law School, graduating with a Juris Doctorate in 1984.

After law school, she practiced in New York before her appointment as a federal prosecutor in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York in 1990. She subsequently twice led that office (1999-2001 and 2010-15) as United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. From 2001-10, she worked as an attorney for a private firm.

In late 2014, President Barack Obama appointed Lynch to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Attorney General Eric Holder. Her appointment as the 83<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Attorney General was approved by the U.S. Senate in April, 2015.

## **21. Elreta Melton Alexander-Ralston**

**Elreta Melton Alexander-Ralston** (1919-1998) was the first African American woman to be elected a judge in North Carolina and only the second in the United States. She also achieved many other firsts for African American women in the legal profession.

Born in Smithfield, NC, Alexander-Ralston was the youngest daughter of a Baptist minister. The family moved to Danville, Virginia, shortly after her birth, then to Greensboro when she was twelve. She graduated from Dudley High School at fifteen, and earned a B.S. in music from North Carolina A&T in 1937.

A few years later, Alexander-Ralston was admitted to the Columbia Law School and became the first African American woman to graduate from the school in 1945. She passed the North Carolina Bar exam in 1947 and gained another first: the first African American woman to practice law in the state.

Alexander-Ralston built a successful practice in Greensboro, and gained yet another milestone, becoming the first African American woman to argue a case before the North Carolina Supreme Court (*McKinley v. Hinnant*, 1955).

In 1968, Alexander-Ralston made history again when she won a district court race to become the first African American woman to be elected judge in NC. She won re-election as a district court judge in 1972, 1976 and 1980, and might well have been elected to the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1974, had she been willing to conceal her race and gender. She was entirely unwilling to do so, however, and was defeated in the Republican primary by a candidate completely lacking judicial experience.

Alexander-Ralston retired from the judiciary in 1981 and was a senior partner in Alexander-Ralston, Speckhard and Speckhard until 1995.

After she died in 1998, the ashes of this remarkable lady were scattered in a small grove behind a Greensboro nursing home.

## **22. Margaret Tynes**

**Margaret Tynes** (1919- ) is an internationally known operatic singer.

Born in Saluda, Virginia, in the eastern tidewater section of that state, her family later moved to Lynchburg and eventually Greensboro, where her father, J.W. Tynes, was for many years minister of the Providence Baptist Church.

A gifted prodigy, Tynes won a singing competition with a \$500 prize at the tender age of six.

Tynes attended Dudley High School and was tutored there for four years by Eloise Penn, who was then over the music program. She then matriculated to North Carolina A&T where she studied under choir director Warner Lawson. Tynes graduated from NC A&T with a B.S in 1941, and attended the Julliard School of Music before earning a Masters in Music Education from Columbia University in 1945. NC A&T awarded her a Doctor of Humanities in 1967.

During a remarkable career in which she performed throughout Europe and in Canada and the United States, she worked with legendary figures such as Harry Belafonte, Duke Ellington, Gian Carlo Menotti, Thomas Shippers and Luchino Visconti, and appeared with leading opera companies such as the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna Statsopera, Prague Opera, Budapest Opera, Bologna Opera and Barcelona Liceo.

In 1961, Tynes was married to Hans von Klier (1934-2000), a Czech-born industrial designer, and resided for many years in an apartment on Milan, Italy's Viale Coni Zugna.

She last performed at age seventy-five. In 2001, she donated her papers to NC A&T.

## **23. Ida Freeman Jenkins**

**Ida Freeman Jenkins** (1911-2015) was a distinguished African American teacher at Dudley High School and North Carolina A&T University.

Born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Jenkins graduated from the Lincoln Normal School in Marion, Alabama, in 1928, then attended Talladega College before coming to Greensboro about 1934 to attend NC A&T, from which she graduated with a B.S in social studies in 1937. She later earned

an M.S. from NC A&T; Jenkins also studied at the University of Michigan, UNC-Chapel Hill and UNCG.

Jenkins had a long teaching career which spanned nearly four decades. She was head of social studies at James B. Dudley High School at her retirement in 1970, and also taught African American history at NC A&T. Her students included members of the “Greensboro Four” (the NC A&T students famous for the Greensboro sit-ins at Woolworth’s 5&10) and Josephine Boyd, who was the first African American to attend Grimsley High School.

She saw the future in our youth. Jenkins once said, “We have to teach them to look beyond the immediate – to consider what might lie ahead in our world.”

Jenkins established the Ida F. Jenkins Scholarship for English and theater majors at NC A&T, and the Coley-Jenkins Independent Living Center for the elderly (which is part of the Henry and Shirley Frye Retirement Community) is named for her and another former Dudley teacher, Nell Coley.

#### **24. Waldo C. Falkener**

**Waldo C. Falkener** (1902-1992) was a civil rights activist and one of the first African Americans to serve on the Greensboro City Council.

Falkener was born to a distinguished academic family in Greensboro. His father, Henry Hall Falkener, was one of the charter members of the Agricultural and Mechanical College’s faculty (now NC A&T) and his mother, Margaret Mitchell Falkener, was also an early member of the College’s faculty and became the first woman to serve as supervisor of Guilford County’s schools for African Americans.

His parents sent Waldo to the famous Tuskegee Institute, and Falkener later graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, TN.

Falkener’s civil rights efforts first attracted wide attention when he joined Dr. George C. Simkins in lobbying for the desegregation of the Gillespie Park Golf Course in 1949. He was only the second African American to serve on the Greensboro City Council (1959-63), and was thus on the Council during the famous Woolworth’s sit-ins in 1960. He was active on the public works and finance committees of the City Council.

Waldo C. Falkener Elementary School is named for him. He is buried at Lakeview Memorial Park.

## **25. Dr. William Milford Hampton**

**Dr. William Milford Hampton** (1912-1960) was the first African American to be elected to the Greensboro City Council.

A native of Englewood, New Jersey, Hampton came to Greensboro about 1940 and was employed as the house physician at the all-black L. Richardson Memorial Hospital. He was a 1934 graduate of Alfred University in Alfred, New York, and received his subsequent medical training at the Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN.

In his *Civilities and Civil Rights* (1980), William Chafe described Hampton as a “quiet, unassuming man . . . known throughout the black community” for his work at the hospital and “an ideal, responsible spokesman for black interests.” During the City Council election of 1951, Hampton benefited from the help of the Greensboro Citizens Association, which organized and registered black voters to support him, and polled an impressive 54% of the vote. Hampton was elected to a second term in 1953, and in 1955 he was appointed to the Board of Education. As a councilman, he was effective in drawing attention to unpaved streets and other inequities in services to African Americans in the community.

Hampton ironically died just a few days after the Greensboro sit-ins began, in February, 1960. He is buried in Piedmont Memorial Park.

Hampton Elementary School (now called the Hampton University Partnership Magnet School) was named in his honor in 1964.

## **26. Dr. Willa Beatrice Player**

**Dr. Willa Beatrice Player** (1909-2003) had a long and distinguished career at Bennett College.

Though born in Jackson, Mississippi, Player’s family subsequently moved to Akron, Ohio, where she completed her public school education in 1925. She graduated from Ohio Wesleyan in 1929, received an M.A. from Oberlin College in 1930, and later earned a Ph.D. from Columbia University. She also studied at the University of Grenoble in France, receiving the Certificat D’Etudes in 1935.

Beginning in 1930, Player held a number of important positions at Bennett, culminating in her service as the College’s President from 1956-66. Her invitation to Dr. Martin Luther King to speak at Bennett in 1958 is now seen as an important impetus to the Woolworth’s sit-ins. Many Bennett students joined the Greensboro Four in their protests in 1960.

In 1966, she left Bennett College to work at the U.S. Department of Education (then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare). She retired in 1986.

She achieved many firsts in her academic career, including being the first African American woman to serve as president of an accredited four-year liberal arts college.

Bennett College's Willa B. Player Hall, a residence hall designated for seniors at the college, is named for her.

## **27. David W. Morehead**

**David W. Morehead** (1918-2003) served for many years as Executive Director of the Hayes-Taylor YMCA.

Born in Greensboro, Morehead was a 1936 graduate of Dudley High School and worked for the Pomona Terra Cotta Company and Vick Chemical before eventually a bachelor's in sociology from North Carolina A&T University.

Morehead, who is said to have been present at the ground-breaking for the Hayes-Taylor YMCA, gradually worked his way up through the organization, becoming its Youth Director in 1943 and Executive Director in 1949. He held this last position until 1971.

Built in 1939, the Hayes-Taylor YMCA was the first YMCA in Greensboro available to the African American community and was an important meeting place for African Americans during the civil rights movement. The facility was also used by future basketball stars, such as Bob McAdoo and Harlem Globetrotter "Curley" Neal.

After leaving Hayes-Taylor YMCA, Morehead worked in consumer and community services for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs. He also served on the Board of Trustees of North Carolina A&T University for many years.

Morehead traced his family roots to slaves in the Blandwood Mansion household of Governor John Motley Morehead.

## **28. Dr. Josephine Ophelia Boyd Bradley**

**Dr. Josephine Ophelia Boyd Bradley** (1940-2015) was the first African American student to integrate a whites-only high school in North Carolina.

A native of Greensboro who grew up in an African American community near Pisgah Church Rd., on September 4, 1957 she transferred from Dudley High School to Greensboro High School (now Grimsley), becoming the first black student in the school. Though white students subjected her to insults and harassment on a daily basis, she endured and graduated from the school with honors.

In 2004, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote of Bradley's experience, "Over the next nine months, the daily jeers were backed up by a fusillade of snowballs and eggs, hurled at a target who stood 4 feet 11 and weighed 102 pounds. In the cafeteria, boys spat in her food and squirted ketchup in her lap. Tacks were placed on her seat, and ink spilled on her books."

Following her graduation from Greensboro High School in 1958, Boyd went on to earn a B.A. in political science from North Carolina Central University, a masters in social work from Michigan State, and both a Masters in women's studies and a Ph.D. in African American studies (1995) from Emory University in Atlanta.

Her dissertation, "School Desegregation in Greensboro, North Carolina, 1954-1958," addressed her triumphant integration of Greensboro High.

In addition to social work in East Lansing, Michigan, Dr. Bradley had a distinguished academic career, which included posts at Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA, Tusculum College, Greeneville, TN, and Agnes Scott College, Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA.

She was a professor of African American Studies at Clark Atlanta University for nearly two decades. Grimsley High School belatedly honored her achievement in integrating the school in 2005.

## **29. Rev. Otis Hairston, Sr.**

**Rev. Otis Hairston, Sr.** (1918-2000) was a local minister and an advocate for civil rights in Greensboro.

He was a native of Greensboro, a graduate of Dudley High School, and earned a B.A. in journalism from Shaw University in 1941. He also received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Shaw in 1968.

In 1958, he took over as pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church from his father, Rev. J.T. Hairston, and he continued to lead the church until 1992.

Hairston was very active during the civil rights era, leading marches and demonstrations, and he was arrested several times. But as a follower of Dr. King, he was committed to non-violent protest, and he is especially remembered for his role in suppressing violence during the 1960s.

Upon his death in 2000, former Mayor Carson Bain remembered Hairston “defused a lot of tension,” as also did former Mayor Jim Melvin, who like Bain noted his “calming influence” and considered him “one of the truly great leaders of our town.”

Rev. Hairston was involved with many organizations in Greensboro, such as the United Way, Human Relations Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Industries of the Blind and Greensboro Urban Ministries, to name just a few. In the 1960s, he and Shiloh Baptist also took the lead in building subsidized housing for the needy; this effort resulted in the J.T. Hairston Memorial Apartments, named for his father, whose ministry at Shiloh Baptist began in 1907.

The Otis L. Hairston Middle School (2001) and the Otis L. Hairston Family Life Center are named for him.

### **30. Charles Henry Moore**

**Charles Henry Moore** (1855-1952) was an important early leader and pioneer in African American education in Greensboro.

A native of Wilmington, NC, Moore’s father was of Scots-Irish ancestry, while his mother was African American. About 1870 or so, members of the prominent DeRosset family of Wilmington brought young Moore to the attention of George Kidder, a wealthy lumber dealer. Kidder apparently helped him gain admission to Amherst College, from which he became one of the first African American graduates in 1878.

Moore made his way to Greensboro that same year to become principal of the Negro Graded School. Classes for 150 pupils were then held in very crowded conditions in the St. James Presbyterian Church. But through Moore’s efforts the Percy Street Graded School for Negroes was built in 1880 (this was the first graded school building to be erected for African Americans in North Carolina).

Shifting his focus to higher education, Moore became a teacher of ancient languages at Bennett College in the late 1880s, then assumed a leading role in the founding of the North Carolina Agricultural & Mechanical College (now North Carolina A&T) in 1891. He was one of two African Americans to serve on the A&M College’s first Board of Trustees, and he was also on the College’s faculty for many years, where he was chair of the English Dept.

During a very active and varied career, Moore helped organize the Negro North Carolina Teachers' Association, served as regional director of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and assisted with the establishment of the L. Richardson Memorial Hospital. Ca. 1908-11, he also worked for a time with Booker T. Washington as vice-president and national organizer of the National Negro Business League. Still later, he was the North Carolina State Inspector of Negro Schools.

In 1920, when women won the right to vote, Moore led Republican efforts to register African American women in North Carolina.

Charles H. Moore Elementary School (opened 1935) was named for him.