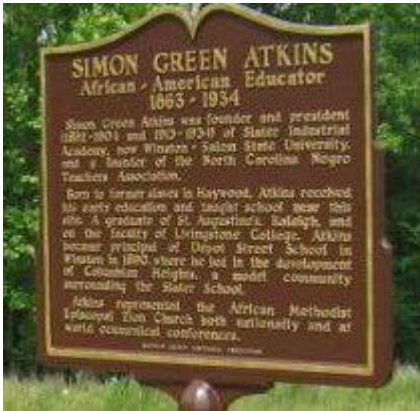


Historic Marker Dedicated to Dr. Simon Green Atkins Saturday, June 11, 2005

by Jane Pyle



Historic marker dedicated to Simon Green Atkins on June 11, 2005. Text of marker is at right. Details below.

SIMON GREEN ATKINS African-American Educator 1863-1934

Simon Green Atkins was founder and president (1892-1904 and 1913-1934) of Slater Industrial Academy, now Winston-Salem State University, and a founder of the North Carolina Negro Teachers Association.

Born to former slaves in Haywood, Atkins received his early education and taught school near this site. A graduate of St. Augustine's, Raleigh, and on the faculty of Livingstone College, Atkins became principal of Depot Street School in Winston in 1890, where he led in the development of Columbian Heights, a model community surrounding the Slater School.

Atkins represented the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church both nationally and at world ecumenical conferences.

Chatham County Historical Association

A marker honoring the achievements of Simon Green Atkins was dedicated in Haywood, Chatham County, on June 11, 2005, the 142nd anniversary of his birth. The marker, a large cast-aluminum sign with gold letters on a dark brown background, is placed near the historical location of the school where Atkins received his early education and began his teaching career in 1884.



Margaret Pollard, recently retired from the Chatham County Board of Commissioners who presided at the ceremony, called on the Rev. Norma Bryant, pastor of Liberty Chapel Church, which provided space for the erection of the marker, to give an invocation to start the ceremony.

Ms. Pollard then recognized invited guests Mike Cross and Bunkey Morgan from the Board of Commissioners; Joe Hackney, N.C. House of Representatives; Bob Atwater, U.S. House of Representatives; Mary Hayes Holmes, retired Chatham County Commissioner and former president of the Chatham County Historical Association. The program continued with welcome greetings from the Rev. John W. Simons, president of the Chatham County Historical Association and sponsor of the memorial marker, and Bunkey Morgan, chairman of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners, generous donors of financial assistance to complete the project.

Mrs. Simona Atkins Allen, granddaughter of Simon Green Atkins, recognized the many family members who attended the ceremony, among them Mrs. Mary Atkins Bruce and her daughter Barbara Davis of Washington, D.C., Mrs. Caroline Hamblin Tucker of Mechanicsville, Virginia, and Craig Hamblin, student at Hampton College and family genealogist; Harvey Allen, Sr., Harvey Allen, Jr. and Harvey Allen III (grandson-in-law, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson of the honoree) of Winston-Salem. Also recognized were Mrs. Bernice Atkins Martin, Miss Mabel Atkins, Thurlia Martin, Eydie Martin and her daughter Destinee and Herbert Flack.

Speakers at the brief dedication and unveiling ceremony remarked on the remarkable career of a man from rural North Carolina. Dr. Jeffrey Crowe, Deputy Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources in the Office of Archives and History, pointed out that Atkins's career began as African-Americans in North Carolina were deprived of the right to vote and then subjected to segregation and Jim Crow.

A number of attendees honored their alma mater by wearing red, and several were part of the program. Jonathan Martin, executive assistant to the Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University, pointed out that the university had been selected as the best of schools in its category for the past four years. Ashley Nicole Knight of Pittsboro, an entering freshman, and Kasseem Smith of Sanford, beginning his final undergraduate year, jointly unveiled the marker.

Emphasizing Atkins's devotion to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, his work as church secretary for twenty years, and his role as Secretary of Education of the church during a seven-year leave from Slater, the Rev. Jace Cox of Union Grove A.M.E. Zion Church, brought greetings from the Presiding Bishop of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District. Also honoring Atkins as well as contributing to the morning's event were members of Rose Hill and Mt. View A.M.E. Zion Churches, who provided a luncheon for the nearly seventy-five people who attended the ceremony.

Photos from the June 11, 2005 Dedication



Dr. Jeffrey Crow, Deputy Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, spoke of Simon Green Atkins's achievements during his career from the 1890s to 1930s.



Atkins descendants attending, left to right, Herbert Flack, Durham; Eydie Martin and daughter Destinee, Cary; Thurlia Martin, Mrs. Bernice Atkins Martin, Sanford, and Mabel Atkins. Eydie, great grandniece of Simon Green Atkins, spoke at the dedication ceremony on 11 June 2005 in Haywood, Chatham County.



Descendants of Simon Green Atkins, left to right: Caroline Hamblin Tucker, Mechanicsville, VA; Harvey Allen, Jr.; Harvey Allen III; Barbara Bruce Davis and Mary Atkins Bruce, Washington, D.C.; Simona Atkins Allen and Harvey Allen, Sr., Winston-Salem; and Craig Hamblin, West Virginia.



Jane Pyle, Chatham County Historical Association, talks with Jonathan Martin, executive assistant to the chancellor, Winston-Salem State University, following the dedication ceremony on 11 June 2005.

Simon Green Atkins, 1863-1934

Dr. Simon Green Atkins, founder and first president of Winston-Salem State University, was born 11 June 1863 in Haywood, North Carolina, to Allen and Eliza Atkins, farmers and former slaves, two years prior to the ending of legalized slavery. Haywood, at the confluence of the Haw and Deep Rivers, flourished from soon after the Revolutionary War until the railroad and Moncure began to overshadow it in the late 1800s. It had been considered as a location of both the state capital and the state university and was the locus of the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company in the 1850s.

An astute student, the young Atkins exhibited a zeal for education, which was brought to the community by teachers from St. Augustine's Normal Collegiate Institute in Raleigh. After a short time as a teacher in the community school, Atkins enrolled at St. Augustine's in 1880 and following graduation returned to Haywood to teach. His aptitude and competence as a teacher was recognized by Dr. Joseph Charles Price, President of Livingstone College in Salisbury, N.C., who invited him to head up Livingstone's grammar school department in 1884.

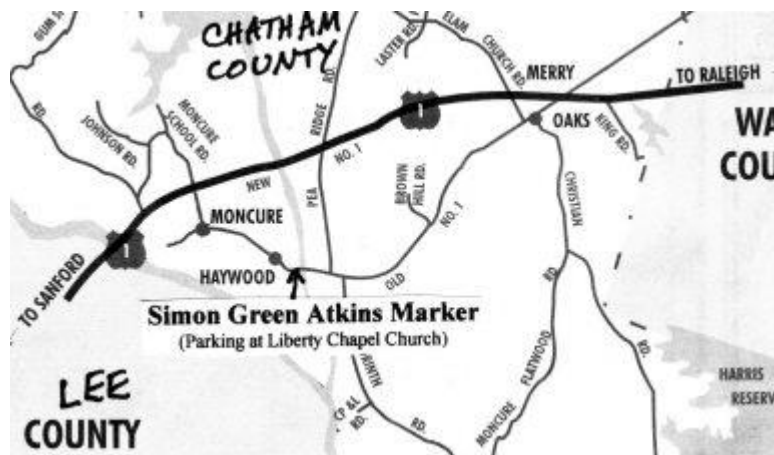
In 1890 the city of Winston offered Atkins the job of principal at the Depot Street School. In addition to his work as teacher and administrator, Atkins worked to start a college for African-Americans and to develop the community of Columbian Heights. Slater Industrial Academy later became Slater Industrial and Normal School (1895), Winston-Salem Teachers College (1925), Winston-Salem State College (1963), and after 1972, Winston-Salem State University.

From 1904 to 1911, Atkins gave up his duties as president of Slater Industrial and Normal School to work as Secretary of Education for the African American Episcopal Zion Church; he was also church secretary for twenty years. Atkins traveled extensively throughout the United States and represented the AME Zion Church at international ecumenical conferences in London (1901 and 1921) and Toronto (1911).

Atkins was married in 1889 to Oleona Pegram of New Bern, North Carolina, and they had nine children, one of whom, Francis L. Atkins, succeeded his father as President of Winston-Salem Teachers College in 1934.

Sources:

<http://www.wssu.edu/archives> ; *Chatham County 1771-1971* by Wade Hadley, Doris Horton, and Nell Strowd, 1971; *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, edited by William S. Powell, 1979; and *The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina, Vol. I*, edited by Philip Henry and Carol Speas, 1990



Simon Green Atkins Marker Location