

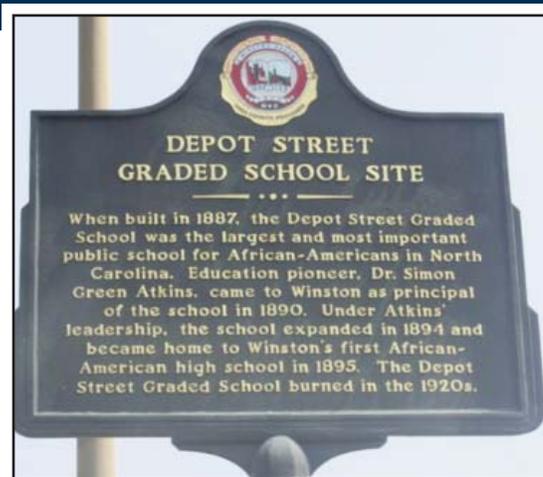
HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Depot Street Graded School Site

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Depot Street (today's Patterson Avenue) was a key element of African-American life in Winston. Initially developed as a result of its proximity to tobacco factories, the Depot Street area was the business, cultural, and social hub of the black community. In addition to single-family and multi-family housing, Depot Street was home to black real estate offices, doctors' and lawyers' offices, drugstores, printing presses, barbershops, beauty shops, funeral homes, churches, movie theaters and cafes. Depot Street was also a center for education. Due to the availability of space, several churches in the area, such as St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church and First Baptist Church, provided places to educate African-American children during the late 19th century until the Depot Street School opened.

The Depot Street Graded School was completed and opened for classes in December of 1887, and was the first public school for African-Americans in Winston. The 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show the "East Winston Graded School (Colored)" on the east side of Depot Street between East Sixth and East Seventh Streets. School board minutes described it as a "commodious two-story frame structure...at a cost, including grounds and furniture, of \$8,500. It contains eight school rooms, large halls, the upper of which can readily be adapted for office and library." However, the school only offered primary education and limited industrial training for Winston's



black students. This was to change with the arrival of Simon Green Atkins who came to Winston in 1890 to serve as the new principal of the Depot Street Graded School. Under Atkins's leadership, the school was expanded in 1894 to contain 11 classrooms and an auditorium. In 1895, the school became home to the first African-American high school in Winston. As such, the Depot Street Graded School had become the largest and most important public school for African-Americans in North Carolina.

Mr. George Hamilton Willis, who had earned an A.B. degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, succeeded Dr. Atkins in 1895 as principal at the school. Mr. Simeon Alonzo Smith succeeded Willis in 1900. After Mr. Smith retired, Mr. U.S. Reynolds became principal of the school. In 1924, after the Depot Street Graded School had burned, the East 14th Street School was built as a Colored Graded School.



Depot Street Graded School, 1899
Courtesy of Forsyth County
Public Library Photograph
Collection



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>