

# HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

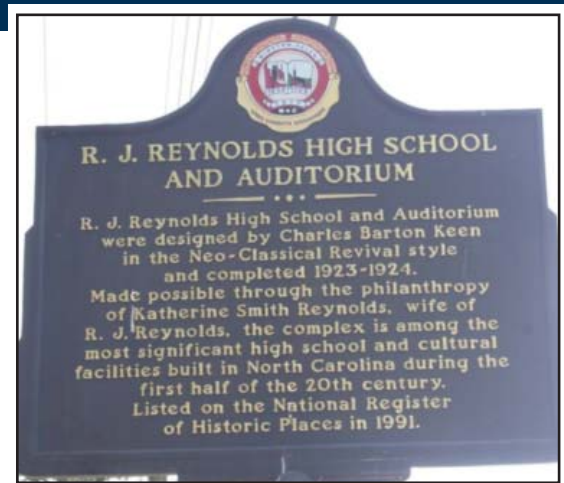
## R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium

301 N. Hawthorne Road

R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium were designed by Philadelphia architect Charles Barton Keen in the Neo-Classical Revival style. Completed in 1923-1924, R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium is among the most significant high school complexes and cultural facilities built in North Carolina during the first half of the 20th century. Although the school is frequently referred to as a single entity, it actually consists of several separate historic buildings, including the main school building, the auditorium, a gymnasium, and the power house.

The R.J. Reynolds High School building is an imposing three-story rectangular building, sitting on a high brick water table. The auditorium features a massive pedimented portico with Corinthian columns and pilasters. Both buildings are constructed of Flemish brick bond with glazed headers, along with an ashlar-cut Indiana limestone trim.

Since completion in 1924, the school site has played a direct and continuous role in the educational and cultural life of Winston-Salem, reflecting the early 20th century view that a large school complex, including an



auditorium, a library, and athletic facilities, was a definite asset to the community. The building of R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium is the direct result of three factors: 1) the increased importance placed on education statewide in North Carolina in the early years of the 20th century; 2) Winston-Salem's rapid growth in both population and wealth during that time; and, 3) the patronage of the city's leading families. Set on an imposing site overlooking Winston-Salem, the high school and auditorium with classical details and formal proportions were hailed in local newspapers as the finest such structures in the South. The curriculum, with its equal emphasis on traditional subjects and vocational training, was praised by educators and local citizens as innovative and the finest in education for the city's young people.



*R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium, 1927*  
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection

Charles Barton Keen of Philadelphia, at the request of Katherine Smith Reynolds, designed the buildings using Thomas Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia as his model. The university model was purposeful. In the 1920's, only about five percent of the high school population would go on to college; consequently, those involved with the planning of the facility wished to provide students with as fine a facility as possible. This hope was realized, in large part, through the generosity of the Reynolds and Hanes families. Katherine Smith Reynolds donated the purchase price of the land and the construction cost of the auditorium. The Hanes families donated a 47-acre tract of land adjacent to the high school site to be developed as a park to serve both Reynolds High School and the city. Thus, the R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium complex, through an imposing design, innovative curriculum, and private patronage, stands as one of the finest secondary education facilities built in North Carolina and the South prior to World War II. Today the complex remains in use as a high school facility and the auditorium hosts school and community events.



In 1991, the R.J. Reynolds High School and Auditorium complex was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

<http://www.rjrhs.org/>



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

