

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

George Black House and Brickyard

The property located at 111 Dellabrook Road was the home and brickyard of George H. Black from 1934 until his death in 1980 at the age of 101. Son of a former slave, George Black came to Winston-Salem as a boy, hauled bricks for a white brickmaker, and soon after started his own brickyard. He continued to make bricks in the traditional way, by hand, for many decades of his century-long life, and to teach others the dying craft even into his nineties. Black established an outstanding reputation for bricks of quality and durability as early as the 1920s. As a result, his bricks were used in Winston-Salem's finest houses, in churches, banks, businesses, hospitals, restorations, in Colonial Williamsburg and Old Salem, in walls and walks in Winston-Salem, across the state, and the Southeast. In the 20th century, George Black was nationally and internationally recognized for his 18th and 19th century craft.

Initially, handmade "soft-mud" bricks were produced in molds by hand. By the mid 19th century, however,



machines were invented that duplicated the hand molding process, and by the 20th century, most brickmakers were using very efficient brick-making machines and hand molding had become uncommon. In spite of these advances, George Black continued to make bricks as they had been made in the preceding centuries. His traditional technique took him to Colonial Williamsburg in 1931 to work as a brickmaker in the early years of restoration there, and his continued success took him back to Williamsburg in the 1970s to serve as a consultant and instructor.

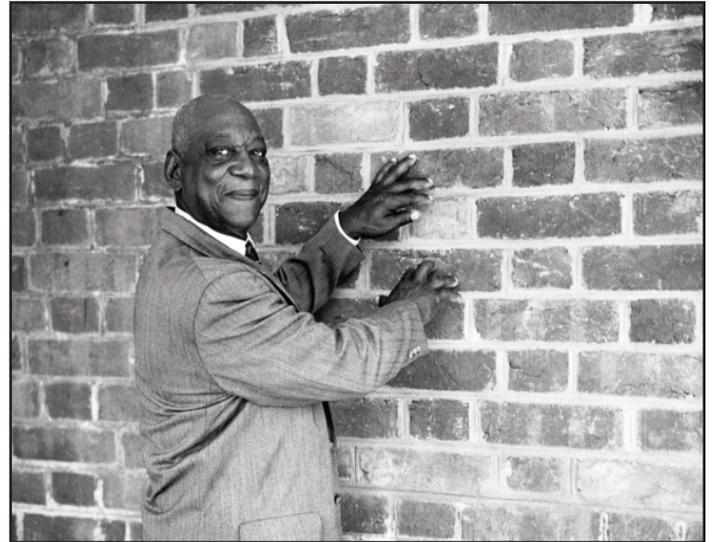


The George Black House and Brickyard is significant for several reasons, including its important association with the traditional industry of producing bricks by hand and its association with George Black, an individual whose bricks and brickmaking techniques were a specific contribution to the nation's history. Black's association with the site on Dellabrook Road began in 1934 when he moved there, continued into the 1940s when he opened his brickyard at the site, and ended at his death in 1980, representing a significant 46 year period.

Of particular note is that in 1970, when Black was 91 years old, Charles Kuralt spotlighted him for his "On the Road" television series. As a result of this story, the State Department asked Black to travel to Guyana to teach people to make bricks. Black was in Guyana for several months; under his direction, the villagers there learned to make 10,000-24,000 bricks per day. Black became a national and international hero; he visited the White House, the governor gave him special recognition, and President Nixon used him in a re-election advertisement. The property at 111 Dellabrook Road is the property with which Black is most personally associated. Of note is that the site contains strong archaeological potential, which has the potential to add significantly to our understanding of brickmaking technology.

In 2000, the George Black House and Brickyard was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as being nationally significant. Less than 4% of all

properties on the National Register are listed as being nationally significant. In 2011, the property was designated as a Forsyth County Local Historic Landmark. Plans are currently being prepared to restore the property as a living history interpretative site, whereby future generations can learn the fine art and craft of traditional brickmaking.



George Black at the Rededication of Salem Tavern, 1956
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection



George Black in Brickyard
Courtesy of Winston-Salem African-American Survey,
Langdon E. Oppermann



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

George Black House and Brickyard
National Register Nomination
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY1296.pdf>



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