

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

African-American West End

From the late 19th century through the first quarter of the 20th century, residential development in what is today Winston-Salem flourished for both white and African-American citizens. A pattern seen with this residential growth was the development of African-American neighborhoods that could be termed “pocket neighborhoods.” In general, these areas were fairly small in size and located adjacent to larger, white neighborhoods. Sadly, many of these important resources have vanished. The West End African-American area, located south and east of the central West End neighborhood, was one of these significant African-American enclaves.

Little is known about the earliest establishment of this community as an African-American neighborhood. The 1891 *Bird's-Eye View of Winston-Salem* map shows a few buildings in the area around S. Green and S. Broad Streets, but the central portion of the neighborhood, which included Granville and Watkins Streets, is shown as a still-undeveloped wooded hill. Research shows that the land had been owned by Nathaniel T. Watkins, a white man who died about 1891. Watkins died without a will; however, he did leave behind a considerable estate that consisted principally of unimproved lots and lands. Watkins was part owner of Watkins, Burton & Watkins, a general merchandise store, and according to records, lived at the northeast corner of E. Second and N. Church Streets. An 1897 document indicates that several lots in



the African-American West End area were rented to tenants, apparently before Watkins's death. Additionally, Winston's 1906 City Directory records African-Americans living on Watkins Street.

African-Americans lived on Watkins, Granville, and Peachtree Streets, and Peachtree Alley, as well as other



African-American West End Area Site



streets, now gone. Peachtree Street was located east of and parallel to Granville Street. Peachtree Alley was north of and parallel to Watkins Street. Overall, the neighborhood became home to a growing number of working-class families. Many of the African-American women who lived in the area were domestic workers for families in West End. The men of the neighborhood worked primarily in the city's many

factories. The 1906 and 1912 City Directories show that the African-American residents of the neighborhood worked in such professions as laborers, porters, drivers, tobacco workers, railroad workers, and carpenters.

The neighborhood was partially destroyed by the introduction of new roadways. The East-West Expressway (now Business 40/US 421) cut through the southern portion of the neighborhood; Peters Creek Parkway was built perpendicular to the East-West Expressway and brought with it an interchange that destroyed additional houses and blocks of the neighbor-

hood. Sadly, these transportation projects contributed to the neighborhood's decline in the last half of the 20th century. The recent construction of Winston-Salem's new baseball stadium resulted in the complete loss of this noteworthy neighborhood.

In 2006, the West End Reunion organization was formed; each year the group holds a large reunion where former residents meet to reminisce about the neighborhood and remember the once-thriving area where there was a strong sense of kinship and cooperation and an outstanding history.



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<http://www2.journalnow.com/news/2011/may/02/wsopin01-marker-undercores-need-to-remember-the-a-ar-991763/>



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