

Early School

Right is an early Sunday school class at First Institutional Baptist Church in Winston-Salem during the early 1900s. Sunday Schools represented one of the strongest auxiliaries of the beginning Baptist churches in the city, in some cases serving as predecessors to the churches. First Institutional later merged with West End Baptist to become United Metropolitan Baptist Church. Photo provided by church historian, Joseph E. Bradshaw.



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Mt. Zion's Johnson Built On Holland Foundation

The man who coined the phrase "Father" Holland to refer to Baptist church pioneer Rev. George W. Holland, and who did a prodigious amount of church organizing himself was Rev. George W. Johnson, first pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church.

He was born in Person County in May 1856. A precocious youngster, Johnson began seminary studies after being baptized by Rev. Harrison Scott at the High Street Baptist Church in Danville, Va. in 1871. He studied for three years at Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. under Dr. G.M.P. King.

Upon graduation, Rev. Johnson pastored in Lexington, Chestnut, Oak Grove and Kernersville before coming to Mount Zion in 1889.

According to Baptist historian Rev. J.A. Whitted, Johnson assisted in the organization of New Bethel

Baptist Church, Happy Hill Baptist, Kernersville Baptist, Shiloh Baptist, and the First Baptist Church of Trenton, N.J.

The Mount Zion pastor became moderator of the Rowan Baptist Association and set a precedent by visiting every church in the association.

The minister was also instrumental in the formation of the city's second black-owned bank, People's Savings and Trust Co. That institution later merged into the first such institution, Forsyth Savings and Trust Co., run by J.S. Hill.

Whitted paid the following tribute to Johnson: "As a financier, Dr. Johnson has no equal. He has the confidence, and the respect of all Winston-Salem. He is fully qualified to take up where 'Father Holland,' as he always called him, took off."

Dr. Atkins Helps Found Church

By Mrs. Alma H. Cardwell

In the little town of Salem, there were some communities known as Brushyfork, Happy Hill, and Columbian Heights. These communities consisted of dirt roads, dense woods, and a few buildings. This property belonged to the Inside Land Improvement Company.

This company decided to develop this property and sell the land. Since this property was so close to Salem College for white women some of the affiliates of this institution decided to purchase some of this land, if not all of it. These affiliates included C.B. Watson and Company, The People's National Bank, H.E. Fries and others.

There were only a few houses in each of the previously named communities. In the Columbian Heights Community there was a church called People's Church which was named after the People's National Bank. The people in this community attended this church.

At this time there were quite a few learned black men living in and around the city of Winston-Salem, such as: Dr. J.E.C. Smeeds, S.G. Atkins, A.J. Brown, J.T. Clanton, W.E. Noel and others.

In 1890, Dr. S.G. Atkins saw the need for better housing conditions and home owning for black people. When the community of Columbian Heights was being developed, Dr. Atkins suggested that the promoters open it up for black people.

After much consideration the promoters decided to do so. Dr. Atkins had the support of the most prominent blacks and whites of the city at that time.

Early in 1891 or 1892, Dr. Atkins moved into Columbian Heights and other blacks followed. Some of these followers were: Locke Gibson, L.W. Foster, J.W. Hayes, Rev. N.D. Pearson, J.S. Hill, W.M. Scales, J.T. Clanton, and others.

After making the move into Columbian Heights, Dr. Atkins saw the need for the People's Church. The People's Church in the Columbian Heights community was a little isolated lonely building.

It stood far over on the hillside east of Salem which is known now as Stadium Drive. The people from the various communities attended People's Church.

Later on Dr. Atkins saw the need for a school in the community. After much consideration he found that

People's Church was more suitable for classes than any other building in the community. So here the first classes were held in 1892 for what was to become Slater Industrial School and now Winston-Salem State University. This church sat on the corner of two little dirt roads which later took on the names of Atkins and Slater.

Through Dr. Atkins' faith and hard work, and with the backing and support of his co-workers and friends of both races, Dr. Atkins was donated this site by Col. William A. Blair. School was held in People's Church until Lamson Hall was built. Lamson Hall was the first permanent building constructed on campus in 1896. It was built of bricks made by the students themselves.

The community and the church grew so rapidly until the members of People's Church saw the need for another church in the city of Winston-Salem.

Through Dr. Atkins who was affiliated with Dr. Goler (the president of Livingstone College) and with the help of others, the land on Depot Street which was owned by Dr. Goler was purchased on August 6, 1889.

Thus was built the church named Old Goler A.M.E. Zion Church. The members on the trustee board of this church were: K. Howard, John Smith, W.M. Nelson, C.T. Ross, R.E. Clement, and others.

Between 1905 and 1917, the white trustee board made a deed to People's Church. The names on this deed were: W.M. Scales, W.E. Noel, Locke Gibson, and Rev. N.D. Pearson. These men who became the trustees of People's Church changed the name of the church to People's Choice A.M.E. Zion Church. The church stood on the corner of dirt roads which the trustees and Dr. Atkins later named Atkins St. and Idabelle Avenue.

In 1959, People's Choice Church was sold because of highway construction. However, it stood on the corner of Atkins Street and Stadium Drive until 1962. It was then moved to the corner of 25th Street and Bowen Blvd.

During the years to follow, the name of People's Choice A.M.E. Zion Church was changed to John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church. This name change was authorized by the congregation and by a resolution passed by the Quarterly Conference at a special called business meeting held October 24, 1967. The name change in accordance with the church Denominational Area of the A.M.E. Zion Church, the Rt. Rev. W.J. Walls.

The church is presently pastored by Rev. Alvin E. Damon (1976-1980).

Seeds

from page 15

of Winston-Salem and Shiloh Baptist Church.

In the same year that Shiloh was being created, a Sunday School began to meet in the home of Rev. P.R.D. Gore, in the western part of Winston. It was called the West End Sunday School.

Rev. Gore began the school by inviting a few of his neighbors in the Brookstown Avenue and Burke Street area to come to his home Sunday morning. Together, they studied the Bible, the only book most had seen. Each person would read a verse and a general discussion would follow.

Not far from those sessions was the organizing sessions for a Baptist church to serve the area. Rev. Gore united the organizing Sunday School with the

church when it was created in 1893.

As was the case with the other early black Baptist churches, "Father" Holland and his deacons were instrumental in forming the West End Baptist Church.

By 1895, the congregation moved to from the house where meetings had been held to a building on Brookstown Avenue. Rev. Gore then wished the worshippers well as he accepted the call of a church in Hickory.

Pastors who succeeded him included: Rev. Joshua Perry, Rev. Joseph Lewis, Rev. Atkins, Rev. Gradshaw and Rev. Williston.

Rev. J.W. Jones took over the pastorate in 1900 to serve for 15 years.

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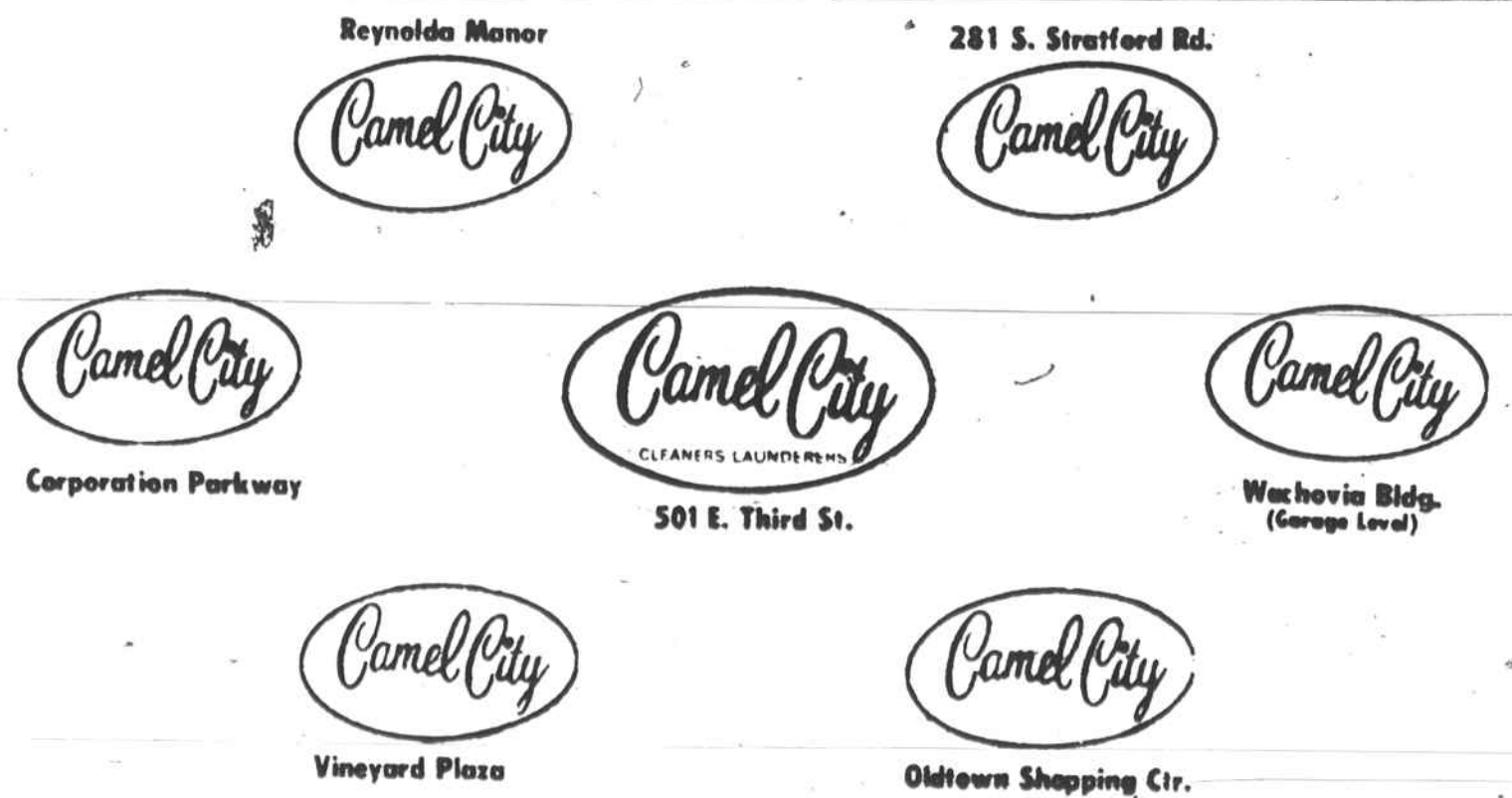
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