

Black Society from page 11

they started. "My uncles went up to Detroit and bought a second-hand bus. They drove it all the way back. Then, my uncle, my father and my other uncle took turns driving it back and forth from Columbian Heights to Church Street."

Soon the Morgans were not alone. Arthur Hill and Eddie Richardson drove a jitney from downtown up Liberty Street to East 14th. George Dillahunt drove the "Lightening Express" to East Winston. Other jitney owners were Elijah T. Miller, Fred Smith, Charlie Peoples and H.H. Hairston.

The jitneys came about because of the deficiencies of the streetcar service for blacks, recalls Hampton Haith, former general manager of Safe Bus Company.

"The streetcars had to go along designated routes which were not convenient to blacks," said Haith. "They ran north, southeast and west and the eastern terminal was where the old City Memorial Hospital was."

However, he noted that the buses did not have the best of conditions. "The streets were muddy when it rained. You almost had to use chains. Claremont Avenue was a mudbath up to 4th Street."

Early in 1926, C.T. Woodland, director of the Patterson Avenue YMCA, called together the bus drivers to consider merging their operations. On April 26, 1926, Safe Bus Co. was chartered with Harvey Morgan as its first president.

Freed from unnecessary competition, the company flourished through the remainder of the '20s and even during the Depression years of the 1930s. By 1947, Color magazine, an-Ebony-like full-color publication, wrote about Safe Bus, "The world's largest Negro bus company." Then Safe Bus carried 7 million passengers per year on 54 buses operated by 104 drivers.

Another milestone during the 1920s was the creation of the George Moses Horton branch of the Carnegie Public Library in the YWCA building on Chestnut Street. This small room with several hundred books was the forerunner of the current East Winston library. The first librarian was Mrs. R.S. Hairston.

As the decade ended, the Great Depression began to take hold among the black population of Winston-Salem. Placed in a bind because of the poverty of its clients was the Forsyth Savings and Trust Company.

Founder J.S. Hill had died in 1923 and W.S. Scales replaced him as president, a move the Scales family history calls his "biggest mistake."

The directors were forced to ask Wachovia Bank and Trust, at the time the Southeast's largest bank, to take over the assets of Forsyth Savings and Trust.

However, the directors each had put up their own assets to cover the bank's assets. "There was John Smith, H.H. Turner, George Hill, Scales, myself and my mother, Mrs. Sare Hill Edmondson and her husband, H.M. Edmondson. We all had to put up real estate and other property to guarantee the assets."

"We all took a loss on it," said Hill. "But, the thing that many people don't realize was that we didn't have to do it. We did it because we didn't want people to take a loss."

Forsyth's building which stood on the current site of the Wachovia Building became a branch of the larger bank.



Second home of Y...

Above, the second home of the Patterson Avenue branch of the YMCA. The first building was the old Depot Street School at the present site of the Y. In 1934, the Y moved to this location a few doors away. Below, a former Jitney has been refurbished as a part of the Safe Bus Fleet.



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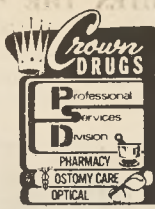
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