

Of a series on the detailed history of
the Bahá'í Faith in
North Carolina
Part 3 - Beyond episodic in the State

by Steven Kolins

* a work of scholarship which is always unfolding, authoritative understandings should be directed to
Bahá'í institutions

Presented at the first Summer Seminar in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in North Carolina

August 3-5, 2018 at the Efland Bahá'í Center, 119 Maple St., Efland, NC, 27243

Sponsored by the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Orange County, NC

From “Part 2” of the Bahá’í Faith in NC - a few isolated Baha’is -

- Felice and Frederick Sadgwar of Wilmington from 1918
- Hubert Parris had links to the Faith back to 1902 and joined by 1942 (no picture)
- later known as Sarah Pereira, born of a Raleigh native mother, lived in Raleigh 1933-1942 and returned in 1950s
- Terah Cowart Smith was born into privilege she was largely stripped of and grew to other ideas across 1936 to 1989 visiting Sarah in 1938 and living in Greensboro from 1956



Courtesy Cape Fear Museum of History and Science, Wilmington, NC



The first Seven Year Plan (1937-1944)

At first what little activity there was in NC just continued. Wilmington and then Raleigh both failed to continue development past that of individuals. There also continued to be sporadic mentions of Bahá'ís in the state's newspapers of events far off or related to the Faith including the obituary of Mrs. Hooper Harris.

The first Seven Year Plan had intra-and-international goals. The initial stated goal inside the US was to have Bahá'ís present in every state - this developed to be a goal of actually raising an Assembly in every state.

There were about 2584 identified Bahá'ís in the US and 64 assemblies at the beginning of the Plan in 1937.& 153 Bahá'ís moved from cities having Assemblies to one of 28 goal cities as part of the first organizing plan - an average of five plus per goal city.&& Adding previous or new Bahá'ís in most of those cities, they achieved Assembly status. In addition to pioneers there was a system of traveling speakers on the Faith.

Some Bahá'ís moved to NC in the later 1930s.*

- **Florence Steinbauer** and **Muriel Stilson** pioneered to Greensboro from New York City

- **Margaret Atwater** moved to Asheville NC from Florida**

& The Baha'is of America - The growth of a religious movement, by Mike McMullen, NYU Press, 2015, p. 38

&& The growth and spread of the Baha'i Faith, by Arthur Hampson, PhD, Department of Geography, University of Hawaii, May, 1980, UMI ID 8022655.

* The Seven Year Plan, *The Bahá'í World*, vol 9, 1940-1944, see p. 219

** Baha'i teaching seeks to bring religious unity, by Margaret Atwater, *The Miami News* (Miami, Florida) 18 Jul 1937, Page 15

In late 1941 National Assembly member and later Hand of the Cause Dorothy Beecher Baker made the local newspaper when she spoke at Guilford College in Greensboro. This was part of a wider sweep through NC and other states.*

The *Baha'i News* reported in August 1942 of Ruth Moffett back to March and April having success presenting the religion in Greensboro followed by three pioneers. The *Greensboro Daily News*& was more specific mentioning her on March 3rd reporting she was coming next week with a schedule of talks at the Richardson Memorial Center auditorium, later converted into the Greensboro Historical Museum, in the evenings and at the Colonial Inn in the afternoons. While she was there, Louis Gregory was traveling through NC southwards and spoke at Shaw University, a high school in Clayton, and the Students National Youth Administration in Rocky Mount.** Moffett had talks in various places, a display of the Bahá'í Temple, and radio broadcasts on what was then station WGBG, (later known as WKEW.) She had gone to a Naw-Ruz observance in Columbia, SC, returned March 25, and continued her lectures at the Colonial Inn March 26. According to the *Baha'i News* report a study group formed of 17 people and three Baha'is. Mary Louise Hogshead Sawyer was one of the study group. Sawyer was born in Salem, moved to Greensboro at an early age, married Joseph Sawyer in 1919, learned of the Faith from newspaper coverage of Ruth Moffet's efforts in spring 1942.&&

* "Baha'i leader speaks at Guilford", *Greensboro Daily News*, November 11, 1941, p. 12
"Religious movement objectives explained", *The Greensboro Record*, November 11, 1941, p. 3
Current Bahá'í activities (1943-1944), *The Bahá'í World*, vol 9, 1940-1944, see p. 71

& National and Regional Teaching Activities, *Baha'i News*, pp. 4-5
https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers (July 2018)

&& Obituaries: Louise H. Sawyer, *Greensboro News and Record*, (Greensboro, NC), November 7, 1996

Adrienne Ellis, who interrupted college, and **Eva Lee Flack**, were two of the pioneers mentioned - they had planned to move to Asheville but pioneered to Greensboro by November of 1942.* Ellis discussed some of the background in a *World Order* article.** Ellis had attended the Geyserville (pre-Bosch) Bahá'í school in California in July 1942 and hadn't particularly thought of pioneering. She struck up a conversation with Eva Lee Flack and together they considered the subject generally of pioneering as a main subject of the school that year. Ellis' family was from Missouri, born of slave ancestors, though she was born and raised in Arizona. Flack was from Los Angeles. There was a teaching conference in the Fall of 1942 in Greenville SC and Moffett, Ellis, and Flack were among the attendees,& though in between her activities in the Spring and this Fall conference Moffett squeezed in a period presentations in Wilmington Delaware.&& But even at the SC conference Moffett made sure Bahá'ís were in the news.*** Though the conference was racially integrated there were differences about how proactive to be in public about integrated meetings - there were comments that Greensboro white society was being estranged because of the integrated meetings.& Indeed one SC attendee at the conference is said to have reported the conference to the FBI and that they had replied with warnings of communism about one of the Bahá'ís specifically by name, though Dr Louis Venters says the accusation was often used against any integration oriented organization in the South.

* **Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'ís in North America, 1898-2004** ed by Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, Richard Walter Thomas, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2006; Sadie Rebecca Johnson Ellis, by Adrienne Reeves, see especially p. 273.

** "You, Too, Can Pioneer," by Adrienne Ellis, *World Order* Vol 8, issue 12, March, 1943, pp. 415-9

& Most great reconstruction: The Baha'i faith in Jim Crow South Carolina, 1898-1965, PhD dissertation by Venters III, Louis E., Colleges of Arts and Sciences University of South Carolina, 2010, isbn through BiblioBazaar as 9781243741752, UMI Number: 3402846, pages = 238, 249, 259-260.

&& "On Oct. 13 Mrs. Robert Lee Moffett, *The News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware)21 Sep 1942, p. 8

"Baha'i Faith lectures to be concluded today", *The News Journal* (Wilmington, Delaware)2 Nov 1942, p. 15

*** "Temple's exterior nears completion", *The Greenville News* (Greenville, South Carolina)15 Nov 1942, p.18

In 1942-43 Eva Lee Flack married another pioneer to Greensboro, Charles McAllister, and Adrienne Ellis married William A. Reeves who was not then a Bahá'í. Meetings in Greensboro were insisted on being integrated too.* above



The Greensboro Spiritual Assembly was elected in later April, 1943,** fulfilling a goal of the Seven Year Plan. The members of the Assembly, although pictured, are not named. They probably include pioneers Adrienne Ellis Reeves, Eva Lee Flack McAllister, Florence Steinbauer, Muriel Stilson, and native born Mary Louise Hogshead Sawyer. Three are as yet unknown including one man. It was an integrated Assembly in a segregated South.

Others present were travel teacher Virginia Camelon who was speaking at the local court rm #2.&& Hubert Parris, then of Rich Square, NC, was present the day the assembly formed and formally joined the Faith that day.^

** Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Greensboro, North Carolina..., *Baha'i News*, Nov 1942, n166, p. 3

&& "Speaker Announced", *Greensboro Daily News*, April 7, 1943, p. 4

"Baha'i lecture set", *Greensboro Daily News*, April 7, 1943, p. 5

^ Roger M. Dahl (July 6, 2016), *Correspondence to Steven Kolins*, Wilmette, IL.: National Bahá'í Archives, United States

In 1943-44 Marion Little spoke at Guilford and A&T Colleges at Greensboro, during a trip for the national teaching committee before heading south.

There were scattered isolated Bahá'ís in a few cities and towns. The regional teaching committee for 1943 is published but doesn't note who is living where - Terah Cowart-Smith, Birdie Cunningham, Esther Seago, Betty Shook, Doris Ebbert, Ludo Dadrowski, Louise Sawyer, Eva McAllister, Christine Bidwell - but Sawyer and McAllister, at least, were from Greensboro.^

In January-February 1943, Gregory made another tour through NC and spoke at NC State College in Durham, Bennett and A&T Colleges in Greensboro, then back to the NC State College in Durham and Louisburg College on the way back through a second time.* Bernice and Roy Williams are known to have lived in Rocky Mount, about 1943, before moving to Greenville, SC. Decades later Roy Williams was laid to rest in the same cemetery plot as the Sadgwar family. Williams was mentioned as very active as an African-American as early as 1918 in New York City and embarked on his own travels for the Faith.** How they arrived in Rocky Mount before this period is not known and according to Venters PhD they hadn't been there long.&

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro_NC_newspapers (July, 2018)

^ [National and regional Baha'i committees 1942 - 1943](#), *Baha'i News*, July 1942, p. 4

* [Current Bahá'í activities \(1943-1944\)](#), *The Bahá'í World*, vol 9, 1940-1944, see p. 74

** **To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America**, by Gayle Morrison, 1 January 1982, published by Bahá'í Pub. Trust, isbn 978-0-87743-171-8, pp. 59, 97, 100-110

& [Most great reconstruction: The Baha'i faith in Jim Crow South Carolina, 1898-1965](#), PhD dissertation by Venters III, Louis E., Â Colleges of Arts and Sciences University of South Carolina, 2010, isbn through BiblioBazaar as 9781243741752, UMI Number: 3402846, p. 250

In 1937 there were about 2600 identified Bahá'ís in the US and 64 assemblies at the beginning of the Plan in 1937.* By the end of the first Seven Year Plan, timed to the centenary of the Declaration of the Bab, there were about 4800 Bahá'ís in the US among 92 assemblies. A "directory" of the locations of Bahá'ís for 1943-4 was published in Bahá'í World vol 9 and noted one assembly, no registered groups, and 9 places with isolated Bahá'ís in the state.** That's about 20 people - up from around 2-4 over the last decade.

* **The Baha'is of America - The growth of a religious movement**, by Mike McMullen, NYU Press, 2015, p. 38, 39

** Baha'i Directory (1943-1944). The Bahá'í World, vol 9, 1940-1944, see pp. 661, 665, 670

A period of activity was begins in Greensboro. From January through February there were about weekly meetings in the Greensboro area. Names mentioned begin with Marion Little visiting and Helen T. Inderlied, moved from Binghamton NY, Terah Cowart Smith's old home area, is mentioned speaking at a series most of the rest of this period and a few others too. There is no coverage of events until mid-April. Immediately before the national convention then national assembly member and Temple engineer Allen B. McDaniel gave a couple talks followed by Stanwood Cobb returned at the end of April. In May it was announced by Inderlied that local Baha'is would attend centenary program at Wilmette at the Bahá'í Temple - Louise Sawyer was that year's delegate to the national convention and the Declaration of the Báb's centennial observances. {{Fact}}

Meetings continue apace in Greensboro - in homes of Bahá'ís, and traveling speakers coming into the state as well as some Greensboro Bahá'ís traveling elsewhere. Terah Cowart-Smith spoke at Western Carolina Teachers College, Woman's College of UNC; Stanwood Cobb at the same Woman's College of UNC and Greensboro College; and Adrienne Ellis (Reeves) at several sites in Fayetteville - Morris Brown College, State Teachers College and EE Smith high school.* Adrienne Ellis took a job as a reporter for the Greensboro *The Future Outlook* African-American newspaper in May 1945.

In 1945-46 lone Bahá'ís were reported in 7 cities - Asheville, Kannapolis, Lenoir, New River, Raleigh, Rich Square (this would have been Mr. Parris), and Winston-Salem.** The later directory from 1949-50 listed isolated Bahá'ís in 10 cities - Asheville, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Durham, Fairview, Hendersonville, High Point, Lenoir, Rich Square, and Salisbury.& And the list from 1953-54 notes isolated Bahá'ís in 14 cities - Bryson City, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Hendersonville, High Point, Kannapolis, Lenoir, Orrum, Raleigh, Rich Square, Salisbury, Washington, and Winston-Salem.&&

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers (July, 2018)

* International survey of current Bahá'í activities in the East and West; College Teaching, by Horace Holley, *The Bahá'í World*, vol 10, see p. 84

** *Bahá'í Directory 1945-46: Cities and postal zones having isolated believers*; North Carolina, *The Bahá'í World*, vol 10, see p. 772

& *Bahá'í Directory 1949-50: Localities having isolated believers*; North Carolina, *The Bahá'í World*, vol 11, see p. 538

&& *Isolated Centers*, *The Bahá'í World*, vol 12, p. 741

Then there is the first longer article in the *Baha'i News* reviewing Bahá'ís in NC in November 1945. It noted the Assembly of Greensboro was hosting special Feasts for Bahá'ís near Greensboro and extension work in Durham and Fayetteville. W. Kenneth Christian undertook a speaking tour including Greenville as reported in *Baha'i News* June of 1945, and was a faculty at East Carolina Teacher's College* (later ECU) - where he was approached by William (Bill) Tucker, who then joined the Faith in 1946& before the Greensboro Assembly and graduated 1947.**

1946 was also when an Air Force picture of the Bahá'í Temple was printed in the Duplin Times of Kenansville, NC, right about the close of the first Seven Year Plan. In Greensboro Kay Whitemore took on the role of public events with announcing Margery McCormick coming to town, and then a Center at 235 ½ North Green St was announced for meetings that continued into the 1950s.

* Faculty and Administration, **Tecoan**, East Carolina Teacher's College, Greenville, NC, 1946, p. 16

& Dr. William Tucker and Bernice Tucker; Workers for the Oneness of Mankind, Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Asheville (Oct. 1999)

** Senior class, **Tecoan**, East Carolina Teacher's College, Greenville, NC, 1947, p. 44

[https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News'](https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News'_) (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers (July 2018)

"Landmark for Peace", *The Duplin Times*,
Kenansville, NC, July 12, 1946, p. 1



The second Seven Year Plan, from 1946 to 1953, and the main goal inside the US was just the consolidation of the achievements won - most of the plan was oriented to Post War South America and Europe with large contingents of pioneers and coordinated efforts.

For those that did not go abroad, events continued to develop in NC. Twenty four people are mentioned attending a regional conference at Greensboro in April, 1947 - presenters included Annie Romer, Margaret Ruhe, (chair of the GA/NC/SC regional teaching committee,) Helen Bishop, Katherine McPhee, and Paul Haney and mentioned in the Greensboro *Daily News*. Adrienne Ellis Reeves was in California by 1947.

The Canadian community separated into its own NSA in 1948.* In 1949 the next regional conference was to be held in Asheville but was canceled on account of a polio scare at the time - instead one was later held in Atlanta. Terah Cowart-Smith gave her first talk in Greensboro in mid-January, 1949. Sporadic meetings were held on UNC-Chapel Hill campus in 1949 - Mildred Danforth and Alice Dudley are mentioned. Danforth was elected as the state delegate to the national convention. Businessman Henry Broadhurst, out of High Point and who had appeared in Bahá'í activities in 1934 in Milwaukee was also mentioned and he would give several talks for the Faith in the 1950s in Greensboro. According to *The Robesonian* of Lumberton Mr. and Mrs. L. Paul Harris met locals,** and Mara Edmonstone wrote a letter to the editor of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* on the Faith in 1950.& Bill Tucker was living in Chicago finishing a study in Optometry at Northern Illinois College of Optometry and married Bernice (Bunny) Buettner, and from there they moved to Rocky Mount, “often in the face of ostracism, criticism and threats to their home, business, and family for their efforts at integrated meetings and services.”&&

* **The Baha'is of America - The growth of a religious movement**, by Mike McMullen, NYU Press, 2015, p. 39

** [Travelers enroute to Cuba visit here](#), *The Robesonian* (Lumberton, North Carolina)14 Feb 1950, p. 7

& [The Baha'i Program](#), by Mara Edmonstone, *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, North Carolina)19 Feb 1950, p. 23

&& Dr. William Tucker and Bernice Tucker; Workers for the Oneness of Mankind, Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Asheville (Oct. 1999) - I recommend viewing any of the several interviews Bill Tucker has given over the years.

[https://bahaikipedia.org/North Carolina in the "Baha'i News"](https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News'_) (July 2018)

[https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage of the Bahá'í Faith in Greensboro, NC, newspapers](https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers) (July 2018)

[https://bahaikipedia.org/The Bahá'í Faith at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](https://bahaikipedia.org/The_Bahá'í_Faith_at_the_University_of_North_Carolina_at_Chapel_Hill) (July 2018)

The Greensboro community is listed in the 1951-2 phonebook. Several well known speakers gave talks - A. K. Kalantar and Bill Tucker gave talks in Greensboro and Alain Locke returned to NC giving the keynote address at a education conference at North Carolina College in Durham in April.* A regional conference in Greensboro included Mrs. Joseph (Louise) Sawyer, Bill Tucker, Grace von der Heydt, and Martha Fettig in Greensboro. An Asheville newspaper mentioned a coming Holy Year for the religion:** that was "The Great Jubilee", October 1952 to October 1953, commemorating the centenary of the birth of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyah-Chal.&

In 1953 the Ten Year Crusade began - again most of the attention was on international development across South and Central America and Europe but extending into Africa and the South Pacific. Five of the nine national assembly members of the US resigned to go pioneering and overall the US was responsible for about 1/3rd of the steps taken for the world wide Plan.&&

Nevertheless there was some orientation to intra-national progress as well. In June 1953 Hand of the Cause Shu'a'u'llah `Ala'i talked at meeting at the Greensboro Center accompanied by T. Samandari and N. M Firoozi who used to work in Greensboro. Though others who would be Hands of the Cause had visited NC before this, Shu'a'u'llah Ala'i was the first siting Hand of the Cause to visit the state. Unfortunately the local newspaper coverage emphasized the political troubles of the times in Iran and `Ala'i refused to address those issues and emphasized the need for spiritual values. After the fact, in August, it was announced in the *Baha'i News* that then living Persian Hands of the Cause would tour the American communities - Greensboro, NC, was on the list to be visited. A difficulty is that the Greensboro Assembly collapsed that year though it still hosted the state convention at the end of the year. Louise Sawyer pioneered to Durham. Carolyn Prevost (Wootten) encountered Ludmila Van Sombeek at the dedication of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette.&& Carolyn had encountered the Faith in her home town of Baltimore in her early twenties.&&&

* Alaine Locke to address conference on Education, *The Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, PA)14 Apr 1951, p. 2

** Baha'i members prepare for their holy year, *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, North Carolina)9 Oct 1952, p. 25

& The 1950s, Chronology of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths and related history, based on **A Basic Baha'i Chronology** by Glenn Cameron and Wendi Momen, bahai-library.com

&& Conversation with Carolyn Prevost re Early Bahá'ís of this Area, Chapel Hill Assembly Archives, unknown interviewer, undated, (before formation of the Orange County Assembly.) Note the dedication was May 2, 1953 - Bruce W. Whitmore. **The Dawning Place**. Baha'i Publishing Trust. 1984. ISBN 0-87743-193-0, p. 230

&&& Biography of Carolyn Annie Prévost, (Pronounced Pray-voh), by Donna Rabiã™a Wootten Samsa her eldest daughter, Compiled for Bahaã™i historian Steven Kolins January 8, 2017

https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News' (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/The_Bahá'í_Faith_at_the_University_of_North_Carolina_at_Chapel_Hill (July 2018)

Things pick up in 1954, though alas it begins with news of the crash of the jetliner carrying then Hand of the Cause Dorothy Beecher Baker, mentioned in NC news as well.* The Greensboro community held its fifth World Religion Day with a talk by Betty Koyl at the Center - one of the last at that early Center.

Edgar Olson is first mentioned hosting meetings at UNC-Chapel Hill starting February. Then Walter R. Wootten and James F. Ginnent are visible there by April. Activity there was reasonably constant into 1956. Edgar Olson turns out to have been chair of the Area Teaching Committee and spoke at a Central Atlantic States conference held in Asheville.** In the *Baha'i News* Durham is listed as a goal city for NC for the Central Atlantic States region in March, 1954. Sometime this year John Kolstoe visited Hubert Parris as mentioned earlier. Homefront pioneers were mentioned arriving in North Carolina in April, 1954: Frances Falvey was pointed out going to Raleigh, Betty Koyl to Winston-Salem, and Ethel Murray in Asheville.

Someone, withholding her name, is commented visiting Shaw University, planning a meeting in Chapel Hill, and being visible in other meetings. Walter Wootten had served in the Korean War and learned of the Faith in Hawaii and Walter and Carolyn married in August 1954 in Washington DC, she at the age of 25, & he one year younger. && In an oral interview^ Carolyn (Wootten) Prevost recalled arriving in Durham in 1954 and mentions other members of the community: Georgia Haithe and Kim Kinney (F. Kimball Kinney) joined the Faith in 1954 in the area and in Raleigh she recalled Frances Falvey was from California and allowed to have black visitors to her apartment by her landlord. She also recalled others - Bill Tolen(sp?), Ralph Wiggins, and commented that Louise Sawyer "just being Louise" approached Durham native and African American Carlotta Holmes. Kinney had just begun work at WFMY-TV in Greensboro after moving from Albuquerque where he worked for station KOAT. ^^ On moving to NC Carolyn worked as a secretary at UNC-Chapel Hill, while unable to afford living in Chapel Hill at the time.&

* Two Americans listed among missing in jetliner crash, *The Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC) 11 Jan 1954, p. 1

** Baha'i meeting scheduled at YWCA Saturday, *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, North Carolina) 28 May 1954, p. 32

& Biography of Carolyn Annie Prévost, (Pronounced Pray-voh), by Donna Rabi'a Wootten Samsa her eldest daughter, Compiled for Baha'i™ historian Steven Kolins January 8, 2017

&& *Walter R. Wootten*, Find-a-grave, by Armantia, Mar 07, 2016

^ Conversation with Carolyn Prevost re Early Bahá'ís of this Area, Chapel Hill Assembly Archives, ^ unknown interviewer, undated, (before formation of the Orange County Assembly.)

^^ *Stations, Broadcasting * Telecasting*, Sep 13, 1954, p. 82

https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News' (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro_NC_newspapers (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/The_Bahá'í_Faith_at_the_University_of_North_Carolina_at_Chapel_Hill (July 2018)

In July William Tucker, who had an integrated reception for his optometry practice including training his staff to be respectful,* was holding public meetings on the religion in Rocky Mount and some were on the radio.**

Ludmila, Mrs. George, Van Sombeek, in the process of getting married and moving to NC, was reported as a new member of the re-designated national inter-racial committee in September. George and Ludmila Van Sombeek pioneered to Durham having moved from Brooklyn. Ludmila was a nurse who fled World War I to the United States by marrying Adolph George Bechtold, learned of the Baha'i Faith from Marie Foote in Brooklyn, New York, and joined the Faith in 1922. Her first appearance in newspapers was supporting a black school for children in 1930 and concerns of African Americans would follow through most of her life. She was active in some Race Amity Conventions and was visible in some African-American newspapers such as *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Chicago Defender*, and the *New York Age* before coming to NC. She also became the first guild-licensed female optician in the country and whether in Baha'i circles or not, served in volunteer associations her whole life. After being a widower some years Ludmila appears as married to George Van Sombeek shortly before moving to NC. George had been working with the Bahá'ís and establishing the first relationships with the UN some years earlier.

* Dr. William Tucker and Bernice Tucker; Workers for the Oneness of Mankind, Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Asheville (Oct. 1999)

** "Dr. William Tucker on Final Program", *The Evening Telegram*, Rocky Mount, NC, July 12, 1954, p. 9

https://bahaikipedia.org/North_Carolina_in_the_'Baha'i_News' (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/Coverage_of_the_Bahá'í_Faith_in_Greensboro,_NC,_newspapers (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/The_Bahá'í_Faith_at_the_University_of_North_Carolina_at_Chapel_Hill (July 2018)

https://bahaikipedia.org/Ludmila_Ott_Bechtold_Van_Sombeek (July, 2018)

In Raleigh Flavey was in a mention of the Faith in the *Raleigh News and Observer* about Proclamation Day.* In Greensboro in mid-September Annie Romer wrote a letter to editor on the Faith. A few days later it is announced Pearle Easterbrook would talk at the local headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee. Mrs. C. R. Simmons was noted the vice-chair of the community and it held a Birth of Bahá'u'lláh observance in November.

October 1954 then Auxiliary Board member Sarah Martin Pereira was named attending the (first) Blue Ridge Bahá'í Conference, held outside of Asheville, and that 75 people attended. It was also noted in the local newspaper.** The facilities in the picture in *Baha'i News* appears to be the Robert E. Lee Hall of the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly. Faces from the picture would be from this period of activity of Bahá'ís in the state and the Triangle.



Believers gathered at Blue Ridge Assembly, North Carolina..., *Baha'i News*, Oct 1954, n284, p. 13

Ludmilla Van Sombeek is in the far right, dark clothing with a name label on her lapel. Identifying more faces is welcomed.

Frances Falvey and Mrs Harold J Wilson were noted in Raleigh and went to the state convention that elected William Tucker as the delegate to the national convention in December.

* Baha'i Faith, *News and Observer* Wednesday, September 22, 1954 Raleigh, NC, Page: 5

** World Faith meet opened at assembly, *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, NC)29 Aug 1954, p. 42

Believers gathered at Blue Ridge Assembly, North Carolina..., *Baha'i News*, Oct 1954, n284, p. 13



Believers gathered at Blue Ridge Assembly, North Carolina, for the first major Bahá'í Conference to be held in the South.

This is a grainy many time copied photo, but I think I can count 12 African-Americans in this picture - and they are not clumped together.
But there were almost no kids.