

# **Survey and Research Report on the Reginald Armistice Hawkins House**

**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Reginald Armistice Hawkins House is located at 1703 Madison Avenue, Charlotte, NC

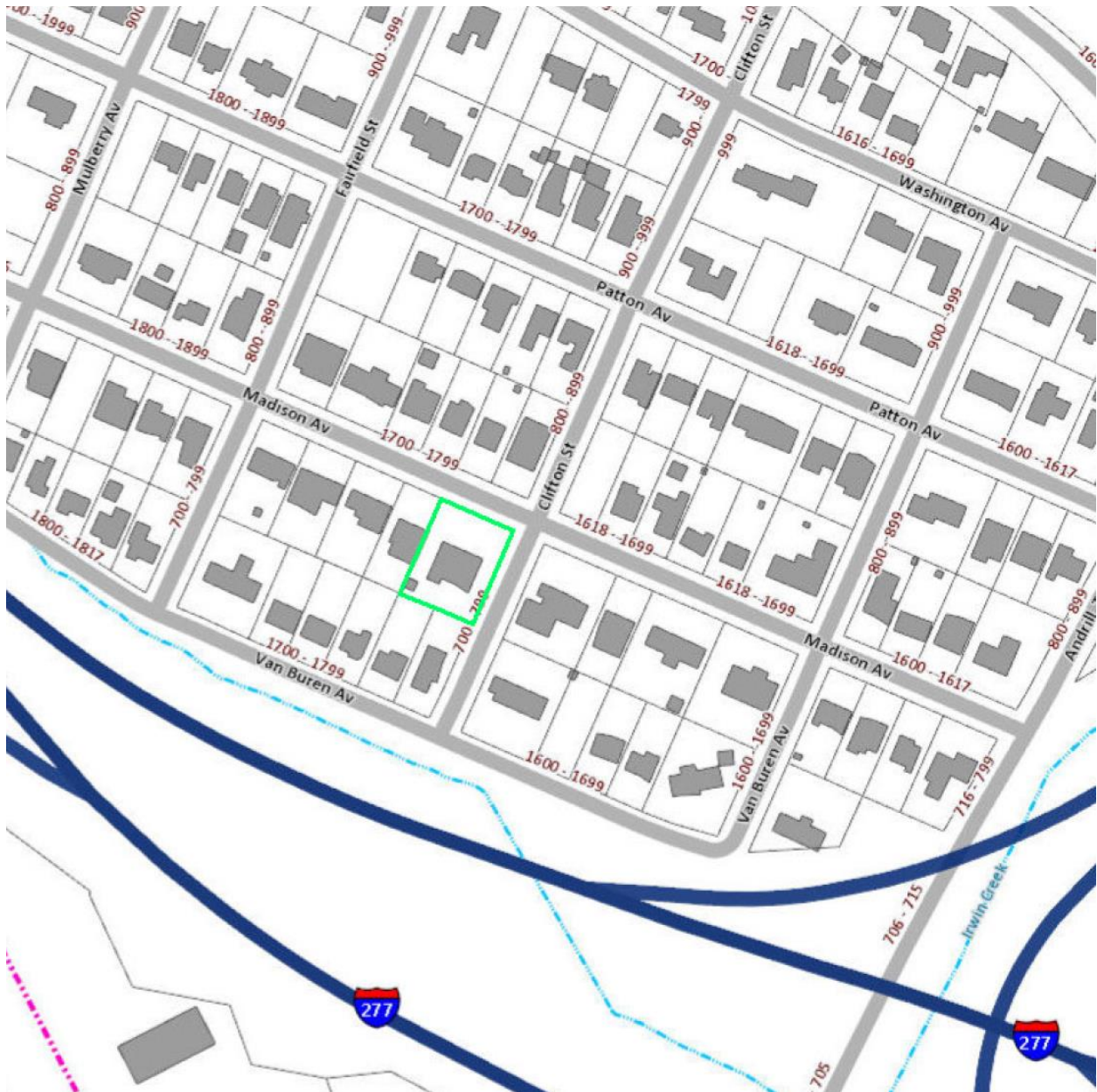
**2. Name and address of the current owner of the property:**

Jeffrey Michael Neff and Samantha C. Taylor  
1703 Madison Avenue  
Charlotte, NC 28216

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.



4. A map depicting the location of the property:



5. **Current Tax Parcel Reference and Deed to the property:** The tax parcel number for the property is 07839808. The most recent deed for the property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Books 33089-230.

6. **A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Tom Hanchett.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S 160A-400.5.**

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as the Reginald Armistice Hawkins House possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Reginald Armistice Hawkins House is significant for its association with Reginald Armistice Hawkins, Charlotte's most outspoken and persistent activist during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s – 1960s

2) The Reginald Armistice Hawkins House was one of four homes of Charlotte Civil Rights leaders that were bombed in 1965.

3) During the decades that Hawkins resided at 1703 Madison Avenue, from the early 1950s into the 1980s, he did much to reshape race relations in Charlotte. His impact was felt far from the Queen City, as well – directly in his work to open North Carolina medicine to all, in his education lawsuit that ended North Carolina's discriminatory Pearsall Plan, and in his participation in Swann – and indirectly in the headlines that his activism generated year after year in the national press.

**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description in this report demonstrates that the property known as the Reginald Armistice Hawkins House meets this criterion.

**9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the property is \$467,900.

**10. Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation:** The interior and exterior of the house, and the land associated with tax parcel.

**11. Date of Preparation of this Report:** February 7, 2019

Prepared by: Dr. Tom Hanchett and Stewart Gray



## Historical Essay



Dr. Reginald Hawkins was Charlotte's most outspoken and persistent activist during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s – 1960s.<sup>1</sup> His protests played key roles in desegregating the

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<sup>1</sup> No book-length study of Hawkins' activism yet exists, but several scholarly articles, theses and dissertations point the way. The most useful include: Douglas, Davison M., "The Quest for Freedom in the Post-Brown South: Desegregation and White Self-Interest," **Chicago-Kent Law Review**, 1994, pp. 689 – 755. On-line

at: <http://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2973&context=cklawreview>;  
Richardson, Michael B., "Not Gradually... But Now': Reginald Hawkins, Black Leadership, and Desegregation in Charlotte, North Carolina," **North Carolina Historical Review**, Vol. 82, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 347-379. On-line at: <https://docslide.com.br/documents/not-gradually-but-now-reginald-hawkins-black-leadership-and-desegregation.html>; Faulkenbury, Terry Evan, "Telenegro': Reginald Hawkins, Black Power, and the 1968 Gubernatorial Race in North Carolina," Masters Thesis, Department of History, UNC Charlotte, 2012. See also Emiene Wright, "The Militant Dentist: Dr. Reginald

Charlotte airport in 1956, upscale restaurants in 1963, Charlotte Memorial Hospital circa 1963, and much more. One his longest efforts was the series of actions and lawsuits that culminated in **Swann v Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education**, the landmark 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision that brought court-ordered busing to the nation.

His house at 1703 Madison Avenue was one of four homes of Charlotte Civil Rights leaders that were bombed in 1965.

During the decades that he resided here, from the early 1950s into the 1980s, Hawkins did much to reshape race relations in Charlotte. His impact was felt far from the Queen City, as well – directly in his work to open North Carolina medicine to all, in his education lawsuit that ended North Carolina’s discriminatory Pearsall Plan, and in his participation in *Swann* – and indirectly in the headlines that his activism generated year after year in the national press.

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### ***The making of an activist***

Reginald Hawkins (11.11.1923 - 9.10.2007) grew up in the coastal community of Beaufort, North Carolina. His father Charles C. Hawkins worked for the U.S. Bureau of the Interior, a rare achievement for an African American in the era of segregation. "He was an ethologist, worked at Pivers Island, North Carolina, in fish culture and in ecological surveys in that area," Reginald Hawkins told oral historian Melinda Desmarais. "They evaluated the waters from Nova Scotia to Tortugas, Florida, doing ecological survey, replenishing work and restoring sea life where it was being damaged or destroyed by storms or by pollution."<sup>2</sup> Charles Hawkins and his wife Lorena Smith Hawkins gave their son the middle name Armistice because he was born on Armistice Day, the commemoration of the ending of World War I just five years earlier. It was an apt name for someone who would himself bring victory out of struggle.

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Hawkins,” *Creative Loafing*, February 6, 2013. On-line at: <https://clclt.com/charlotte/the-militant-dentist-dr-reginald-hawkins/Content?oid=3003665>

Hawkins’ papers are at UNC Charlotte: Reginald A. Hawkins Papers, Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC Charlotte. Finding-aid on-line at: <https://findingaids.uncc.edu/repositories/4/resources/218>

A good resource on Charlotte’s Civil Rights history in general is Gaillard, Frye, **The Dream Long Deferred: The Landmark Struggle for Desegregation in Charlotte, North Carolina**, 3rd edition. University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Hawkins, Reginald, oral history interview by Melinda Desmarais, June 11, 2001, Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC Charlotte. Transcript on-line at: <http://nsv.uncc.edu/interview/ohha0077>. Other oral histories of Hawkins include: Hawkins, Reginald, oral history interview by Joseph Mosnier, June 5, 1995, for the Southern Oral History Program, UNC Chapel Hill. Transcript on-line at: <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:5fd6ca2a-398d-404a-8711-f71c3b5ded3b>

After graduating from high school in Beaufort, young Reginald journeyed to Charlotte in the fall of 1941 to enroll at Johnson C. Smith University. He joined Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, a lifelong platform for networking and organizing. His fellow students elected him head of JCSU's Panhellenic Council, the organization that knit together the "divine nine" fraternities and sororities that were so important in the lives of college educated African Americans. Hawk -- as his fellow students called him -- also quickly won notice as one of the school's best athletes, adept in multiple sports. "In 1942 Reginald was the first boxing and wrestling champion at JCSU," noted his obituary. "In 1943 he was quarterback of JCSU's football team, a member of the Varsity 'S' Club and a member of the Hall of Fame."<sup>3</sup> Years later he would donate his golden yellow CIAA letter sweater, received as wrestling champ and later worn in his role as a protest leader, to Levine Museum of the New South.

At JCSU Hawkins began agitating for Civil Rights. Trezzvant Anderson, a crusading black journalist with the **Pittsburgh Courier**, had launched a campaign to get African Americans hired by the Post Office as letter carriers. President Roosevelt had issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941 declaring an end to segregated hiring by the U.S. Government and national black leader A. Philip Randolph was spearheading a national effort to turn that written promise into reality. Hawkins helped Anderson organize student picketers at Charlotte's downtown Post Office.<sup>4</sup> He recalled to Desmarais: "That was my first actual march in protest against segregation—was in 1943 in Charlotte."<sup>5</sup> The campaign took many years, but about 1948 the Charlotte Post Office hired its first ten black letter carriers.<sup>6</sup>

Hawkins may not have been in Charlotte to witness that victory because he was finishing graduate school in dentistry at Howard University -- the epicenter of the emerging Civil Rights movement.<sup>7</sup> Law school dean Charles Hamilton Houston had begun training a network of Civil Rights attorneys in the 1930s for the NAACP, sending them out across the nation. Thurgood Marshall would become the best known, erupting into national prominence when he filed the **Brown v Board of Education** lawsuit in 1951. By the time Hawkins arrived in 1944, Houston had stepped down as Dean, replaced by the equally activist William Hastie who would go on to argue the 1946 **Morgan v West Virginia** case before the Supreme Court which outlawed segregation in interstate transportation. Hastie and other Howard professors, plus Civil Rights

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<sup>3</sup> Hawkins, Reginald, funeral program in the History Room, First United Presbyterian Church, Charlotte.

<sup>4</sup> Griffin, Willie James, **Courier of Crisis, Messenger of Hope: Trezzvant W. Anderson and the Black Freedom Struggle for Economic Justice** (Ph.D. dissertation, UNC Chapel Hill, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Hawkins interview with Desmarais, UNC Charlotte.

<sup>6</sup> "In 1948, Oren and ten other African Americans became the first of their race to be hired by the United States Post Office in Charlotte as Letter Carriers," McCullough, Oren, funeral program in the History Room, First United Presbyterian Church, Charlotte.

<sup>7</sup> Greenberg, Jack, **Crusaders in the Courts: How a Dedicated Band of Lawyers Fought for the Civil Rights Revolution** (Basic Books, 1994). McNeil, Genna Rae, **Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights** (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

leaders from the surrounding Washington, DC, community including Mary Church Terrell, held a seminar on Sunday evenings for budding activists.

Some students in that seminar had devised a new protest tactic in 1943 that succeeded in desegregating a cafeteria near campus.<sup>8</sup> The students calmly marched in small groups to the cafeteria and asked for service. When rebuffed they left, but returned to repeat the process again and again until the management gave in. It was the birth of the "sit-in."

Though Hawkins was in the dental school, not the law school, Howard's activists welcomed him to the Sunday gatherings. "They found out that I was head of the student organization at Johnson C. Smith, and they would invite us Sunday to classes on our constitutional rights," Hawkins told interviewer Desmarais. "After we left the classes, we would go—I mean well it was a seminar type—we'd go down and sit in at the Peoples Drug Store, we would go and picket the National Theatre where they had denied Marian Anderson the right to sing and the Constitution Hall, all that."<sup>9</sup>

Among the participants that Hawkins got to know during the seminars and sit-ins was a slightly older law student from Charlotte. Thomas Wyche, Howard law, class of 1944, had been part of the first sit-in group on April 13, 1943. He and Hawk would make history together when they got back to the Queen City.

Dr. Reginald Hawkins set up his dental practice in Charlotte starting in late 1948. He took time out from 1951 to 1953 during the Korean war to join the U.S Army Dental Corps, where he rose to the rank of Captain. Back in Charlotte he practiced dentistry until retirement in 1987. Medicine was rigidly segregated, so all of Hawkins' income came from African Americans. Not being dependent on white dollars gave him measure of economic freedom. That meant he could speak and act boldly on issues of Civil Rights.

The dental income also meant that Dr. Hawkins could construct a new house for his family in Charlotte's finest African American neighborhood. In 1945 he had married his JCSU sweetheart Catherine Richardson. When Hawk got back from Korea in 1953, the young couple took out a permit to build in the modern and suburban neighborhood being developed north of the campus by JCSU President Dr. H.L. McCrorey: McCrorey Heights.

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### ***Desegregating Charlotte's airport, 1954 - 56***

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<sup>8</sup> Brown, Flora Bryant, "NAACP Sponsored Sit-ins by Howard University Students in Washington, D.C., 1943-1944," **Journal of Negro History**, (Autumn, 2000), pp. 274-286.

<sup>9</sup> Hawkins interview with Desmarais, UNC Charlotte.

Within months of returning from Korea, Dr. Hawkins teamed up with attorney Thomas Wyche to challenge segregation at Charlotte's new airport -- perhaps the earliest successful use of the Howard University sit-in tactic anywhere in the South.

On July 10, 1954 Charlotte proudly opened a new airport terminal. The federal government funded construction and the facility was for "interstate transportation" — which the Supreme Court had ruled (in Dean Hastie's 1946 **Morgan** case) must be desegregated. But Charlotte being a Southern city, local administrators barred African Americans from the terminal's restaurant. Dr. Hawkins and Attorney Wyche decided to mount a challenge — a Howard University-style sit-in. They brought along a pair of McCrorey Heights neighbors, insurance agent W.W. Twitty and Civil Rights attorney Charles V. Bell, and drove out to the airport.

As writer Barry Yeomans recreated the scene years later:

"Reginald Hawkins could feel his heart racing as he and three friends made their way through Douglas Municipal Airport in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dressed in his best Sunday suit, the 30-year-old dentist and Presbyterian minister sought to accomplish a simple task: to sit at the Airport '77' Restaurant, with its big picture windows overlooking the two asphalt runways, and eat his lunch unmolested....

"As he and the others entered the restaurant, the hostess ... said, 'We don't serve blacks here.' ...[The] four brushed past her, spotted an empty table, and took their seats. The ensuing commotion caught the ear of Frank Littlejohn, Charlotte's chief of police, who was at lunch with several city bigwigs. The chief knew Hawkins from previous protests. He walked over to the dentist's table. 'Doctor, won't you all leave?' he said. 'You're embarrassing us.'

"'I'm sorry,' Hawkins replied. 'But we've been embarrassed all our lives.'"<sup>10</sup>

The action won attention in the media, including the **Carolina Times** of Durham. "The Negroes were herded off into a small room adjoining the kitchen of the eating establishment to obtain meals," it reported. The affront meant that Attorney Wyche now had grounds to file suit. Headlined the newspaper: "Queen City Group Seeks Injunction Against City Airport Restaurant; Charge Unconstitutional Bias."<sup>11</sup>

After two years of legal wrangling the airport restaurant did desegregate in 1956. For the moment, it was an isolated victory. In 1960 college students in Greensboro, Charlotte and elsewhere would launch a nationwide Sit-In Movement. And in 1961 students with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) would mount the Freedom Ride, which systematically sought to

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<sup>10</sup> Yeoman, Barry, "A Taste for Tolerance," **AARP The Magazine**, May 1, 2004. "Bias Suit Filed at Air Terminal," **Pittsburgh Courier**, July 17, 1954.

<sup>11</sup> "Queen City Group Seeks Injunction Against City Airport Restaurant; Charge Unconstitutional Bias," *Carolina Times*, July 24, 1954. On-line at: <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn83045120/1954-07-24/ed-1/seq-1/>



“make real” the desegregation of interstate transportation facilities. Attorney Thomas Wyche would be involved in both. But for now, the time was not yet right.

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### *Desegregating hospitals and medical societies, 1950s - 1965*

Even as the airport case was making its way through the courts, Hawkins teamed up with another McCrorey Heights neighbor, Dr. Emery L. Rann, on a crusade against the barriers that blocked African American access to decent healthcare. An alliance of medical men in McCrorey Heights -- Rann and Hawkins plus Dr. Roy S. Wynn, Dr. Rudolph P. Wyche and Dr. Edson E. Blackman -- led a statewide decades-long fight that ultimately changed not just Charlotte but the state of North Carolina.

Racial segregation in medical matters hurt African Americans at two levels. Most obviously, it meant that black patients were barred from white hospitals. Charlotte had one of the South's earliest black hospitals, Good Samaritan, but its facilities never remotely equaled those at city-funded white Charlotte Memorial. Less visible was the behind-the-scenes harm inflicted by segregation of medical societies. In those days before the internet, medical societies with their regular meetings were an important way for doctors to exchange ideas and keep up with the latest science. When white medical societies barred black physicians, it hindered the free flow of ideas — as well as being a calculated insult. The harm deepened during the 1950s. As pressure began to build for desegregation with the Supreme Court's 1954 **Brown v Board** education ruling, hospitals across the South added a new barrier: to become a doctor at a municipal hospital such as Charlotte Memorial, a physician had to be a member of the North Carolina Medical Society. This all-white organization was a private society, thus not affected by Civil Rights laws.

“Foremost in the struggle for hospital availability was Dr. Reginald Hawkins, a practicing dentist and minister,” wrote Dr. Rann years later. During 1961 Hawkins led “Johnson C. Smith University students in picketing the four hospitals and held a prayer vigil on the front lawn of Memorial Hospital. Memorial had opened 38 beds and Mercy 28 for Negro patients in isolated areas. No black doctor had privileges” — in other words, could not visit patients in the white hospitals.<sup>12</sup>

When marches produced no effect, wrote Rann, Dr. Hawkins appealed directly to U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, brother of President John F. Kennedy. Hawkins pointed out that all the hospitals had utilized federal construction funds under the Hill-Burton Act which required equal treatment. Robert Kennedy, known for his willingness to wield federal power for Civil Rights, arranged for three U.S Health Department officials to visit Charlotte on a fact-finding mission on

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<sup>12</sup> Rann, Emery L., Jr., “The Black Physician in Charlotte (A Historical Review),” 1990, self-published manuscript in the collection of the Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. Douglas, Davison M., “The Quest for Freedom,” pp. 725 – 728. Richardson, Michael B., “Not Gradually... But Now.”

August 15, 1962. “Immediately Mr. John Rankin, the Memorial administrator, announced that ‘the doors are open to one and all,’” remembered Rann. In July of 1963, the hospital’s governing council “voted unanimously to remove all barriers” to black physicians. That September newspapers around the South carried an Associated Press story on Emery Rann, “First Negro Doctor Approved for Staff” at Charlotte Memorial Hospital.<sup>13</sup>

The success did not come without tension inside Charlotte’s black leadership. An Associated Press series “The Deepening Crisis” picked up by many newspapers across the nation in August 1963 juxtaposed comments by Dr. Emery Rann and Dr. Reginald Hawkins.<sup>14</sup> “Our demonstrations have simply outgrown their usefulness. It is now time we started negotiating with city council. I don’t see what good we can now derive from an ugly incident which could occur during a demonstration,” said Rann. Hawkins, in contrast, believed in the need for continued protest: “I served in World War II and Korea and I have no intention of stopping my people’s fight for equal rights. We want those rights now. Not gradually ... but now,” demanded Hawkins.” In reality, the approaches of Rann and Hawkins worked well together, attacking from the “inside” and “outside.”

That combination of tactics ultimately opened the medical societies, as well. Dr. Rann took a statewide lead in the early 1950s. He convinced the North Carolina Medical Association to offer a limited “scientific” membership to black doctors in 1954: they might attend conference sessions but could do no socializing. With that foot in the door, Dr. Rann as president of the black Old North State Medical Society and Dr. Hawkins as president of the black Old North State Dental Society kept the pressure on. Finally in 1964 Dr. Emery Rann became part of the first group of African American doctors admitted as equals to the North Carolina Medical Association. Dr. Reginald Hawkins and Attorney Thomas Wyche filed a lawsuit, decided in 1965, that won integration of the North Carolina Dental Society.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rann, “The Black Physician.” Cobb, W. Montague, “The Hospital Integration Story in Charlotte, North Carolina,” **Journal of the National Medical Association** (May 1964), pp. 226 – 229. On-line at: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610795/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2610795/) Halperin, Edward C., “Desegregation of Hospitals and Medical Societies in North Carolina,” **New England Journal of Medicine** (January 1988), pp. 58 – 63.

<sup>14</sup> “What’s It Like to Be a Negro in America? The Deepening Crisis IX,” Associated Press story in the *Bennington* (Vermont) *Banner*, August 8, 1963.

<sup>15</sup> “Dentist Sues Dental Society to End Bias,” **Florida Star** [Jacksonville], April 3, 1960. **Hawkins v. North Carolina Dental Society**, 230 F. Supp. 805 (W.D.N.C. 1964) On-line at: <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/230/805/1413009/>

### ***Opening Charlotte's upscale restaurants and movie theaters to all, 1963***

In 1960 JSCU students organized sit-ins that desegregated Charlotte's lunch counters, the snack bars located in drug stores and dime stores. Events in Greensboro directly inspired the actions; on February 1, 1960 college freshmen at A & T University had walked politely into Greensboro's Woolworth store, sat down and ordered coffee, launching a wave a sit-ins across the South and the nation. The young people may not have known about the Howard University sit-ins seventeen years earlier, but they were indirectly inspired by the technique that Thomas Wyche and Reginald Hawkins had helped spread.

While Charlotte's 1960 sit-ins succeeded in integrating lunch counters, the more elite "white tablecloth" restaurants, as well as cafeterias and movie theaters, remained obstinately segregated. In 1963 Dr. Reginald Hawkins, ever-willing to keep the pressure on for equality, led a protest that put Charlotte in the forefront of national change.<sup>16</sup>

On May 20, 1963, Hawkins mobilized Johnson C. Smith students to protest the continuing segregation in "public accommodations." He chose the date as a reference to the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence demanding freedom from England, which tradition holds was signed on May 20, 1775. The JCSU marched from campus down the hill and across the heart of downtown to the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. There Hawkins gave a short, eloquent speech: "We shall not be pacified with gradualism; we shall not be satisfied with tokenism. We want freedom and we want it now."<sup>17</sup>

Remarkably, Mayor Stan Brookshire, whose office in City Hall adjoined the Courthouse, was ready to listen. It may have helped that Birmingham, Alabama, was on the television news that month. Sheriff Bull Connor triggered international outcry when he turned fire hoses and police dogs on young Civil Rights protestors. That was bad for business, Mayor Brookshire later said, and Charlotte was a quintessential business town. So Brookshire contacted the Chamber of Commerce, all white, with a proposal. Chamber members should join with African American leaders to go two-by-two and desegregate Charlotte's leading restaurants.

It worked. Movie theaters soon followed. Within two weeks Charlotte's transformation made headlines in the **New York Times**. The success came a year before the 1964 US Civil Rights act required desegregation of all public accommodations. Hawkins' protest and Brookshire's response became a key turning point in Charlotte's emergence as a major Southern city.

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### ***The fight for education, 1957 - 1971***

History textbooks point to the Supreme Court's **Brown v Board of Education**, 1954, as the turning point in U.S. school desegregation, but it took many years of hard-fought battles to give **Brown's** promise even a measure of reality. Dr. Reginald Hawkins played a leading role in

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas, Davison M., "The Quest for Freedom," pp. 728 - 738.

<sup>17</sup> Gaillard, Frye, *The Dream Long Deferred*.

that work in Charlotte every step of the way, shaping the racial landscape not only in his city but also in North Carolina and across the United States.

Across the South, white officials proved adept at finding ways to slow meaningful change. Under the Pearsall Plan of 1956, the state of North Carolina turned pupil assignment responsibilities over the local school systems — making it impossible for NAACP to file a statewide suit. White-led school boards then set up purposely difficult processes that required individual black families to apply for transfers to white schools. Compared to outspoken resistance in many other Southern states, North Carolina looked “moderate.” But segregation barely budged.

In March of 1957, Dr. Hawkins and Charlotte-based statewide NAACP president Kelly Alexander led a group of black parents, including Attorney Thomas Wyche, in a meeting with the city's school board officials.<sup>18</sup> They reached an agreement that four black students would attend four white schools that fall. On the first day of classes, September 4, 1957, one of those students unexpectedly made international headlines. When Dorothy Counts walked toward the front steps of Harding High School, an angry, cursing, spitting mob surrounded her. Photos ran on front pages not just in the U.S. but around the world. The noted African American essayist James Baldwin later recalled that the image of Dorothy Counts' quiet courage “with history, jeering at her back,” helped propel him from exile in Paris to return to the U.S. to take part in the Civil Rights movement.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile the national NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) was working with allies on the ground, including Hawkins, to overturn the Pearsall Plan. Despite the courage of Counts and others in 1957, integration was almost nil: “Only one black student attended a white school in Charlotte during the 1959 – 1960 school year,” writes historian Davison Douglas.<sup>20</sup> LDF chief attorney Jack Greenberg, who had worked alongside Thurgood Marshall on **Brown**, partnered with Hawkins and newly arrived Charlotte attorney Julius Chambers to file a lawsuit in December of 1965. It targeted one specific provision of Pearsall, state grants to white students who wanted to go to private schools in order to flee integration, and it also asked that Pearsall itself be invalidated and that desegregation move forward in earnest in Charlotte.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Batchelor, John E., **Race and Education in North Carolina: From Segregation to Desegregation**. (Louisiana State University Press, 2015), p. 59. “NAACP officials and other blacks seek a start toward integration of Charlotte city schools,” negatives shot for a March 30, 1957 *Charlotte Observer* story, in the collection of photographer Don Sturkey, UNC Chapel Hill.

<sup>19</sup> Tomlinson, Tommy, “A Picture Speaks,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 2, 2007. On-line at: [http://tommytomlinson.com/?page\\_id=66](http://tommytomlinson.com/?page_id=66) Raoul Peck, editor, *I Am Not Your Negro: A Companion Edition to the Documentary Film* (Vintage International, 2017), p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Douglas, Davison M., “The Quest for Freedom,” p. 711.

<sup>21</sup> *Hawkins v. North Carolina State Board of Education*, 11 Race Relations Law Reporter 745 (W.D.N.C.1966). Batchelor, **Race and Education**, pp. 108 - 109.

"Court Rules Pearsall Plan Unconstitutional," proclaimed front-page headlines when the Hawkins case was decided in spring of 1966.<sup>22</sup> But for Charlotte's black students it was a hollow victory. The three-judge panel refused to place any desegregation requirements on Charlotte schools.

Fortunately Greenberg and Chambers already had another case moving through the courts. It also involved the Hawkins, Swann, and Morrow families -- through with Swann as the lead plaintiff and Hawkins second, for reasons no one clearly recalls -- plus more than a dozen other parents and children. **Swann et al v Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education** would not only desegregate Charlotte's schools but would make history nationwide.<sup>23</sup>

In the **Swann** case, Attorney Chambers carefully assembled evidence that showed how black and white residential patterns had been affected by government actions over decades: restrictive covenants in deeds, zoning and lending maps, "urban renewal" demolition of in-city black neighborhoods in the 1960s, and more. The evidence convinced Charlotte-based Federal Judge James McMillan that schools would never meaningfully integrate if they simply opened their doors to all. Instead it was necessary to act intentionally to bring students together, including using the tool of busing. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed in 1971. **Swann v Mecklenburg** became landmark case that brought school busing to communities across the United States.

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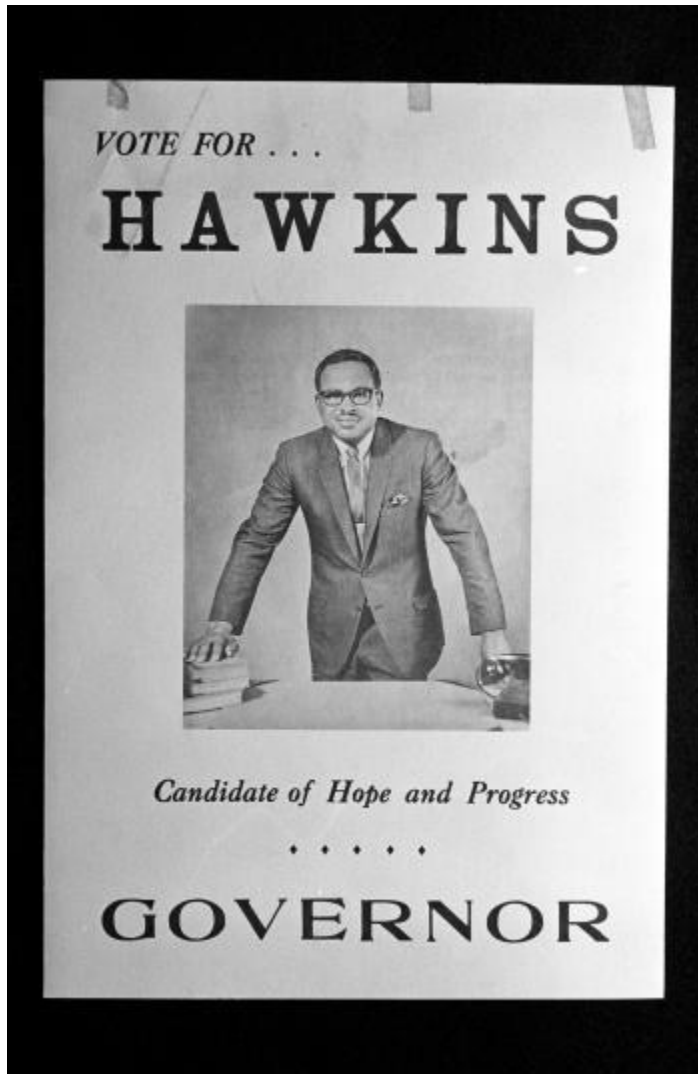
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<sup>22</sup> "Court Rules Pearsall Plan Unconstitutional," **High Point Enterprise**, April 5, 1966. On-line at: [www.newspapers.com/newspage/43108705/](http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/43108705/)

<sup>23</sup> Gaillard, Frye, *The Dream Long Deferred*. Rosen, Richard A. and Joseph Mosnier, *Julius Chambers: A Life in the Legal Struggle for Civil Rights* (UNC Press, 2016).



*Tireless activist*



The episodes above are merely some of the more important in Reginald Hawkins' career as an activist. In addition:

- Hawkins created the Mecklenburg Organization for Political Affairs in the late 1950s which mobilized citizens for dozens of other causes.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas, Davison M., "The Quest for Freedom," p. 720.

- In the mid 1960s Hawkins went to jail for registering voters without administering the so-called "literacy test." That provision of state constitution, instituted as a tool to disfranchise black voters, was negated by the 1965 Voting Rights Act and Hawkins was exonerated.<sup>25</sup>
- In the mid 1960s Hawkins pushed successfully to desegregate Charlotte's YMCA.<sup>26</sup>
- In 1968 Reginald Hawkins ran for Governor, the first African American ever to do so in North Carolina. Rev. Martin Luther King was scheduled to come campaign for Hawkins that April, but sent a last-minute telegram says that he needed to be in Memphis for a protest -- and three days later King fell there to an assassin's bullet. Hawkins ran for governor again in 1972.<sup>27</sup>
- Hawkins led Charlotte's H.O. Graham Metropolitan Church from 1978 to 1985. In the midst of all his other activities, he had earned a Bachelor (1956) and Master (1973) of Divinity from Johnson C. Smith University, becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister.<sup>28</sup>

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### *The house at 1703 Madison Avenue*

From its construction in 1953 - 54, the house at 1703 Madison Avenue functioned as the command center for Reginald Hawkins' activities during the most history-making two decades of his Civil Rights work.<sup>29</sup> It also was the family home where he and wife Catherine raised four children. The house was shot up in August 1965, then bombed that November. After the Hawkins family sold the residence, subsequent owners included pioneering black television newsman Ken Koontz.

Reginald Hawkins' wife Catherine Richardson Hawkins grew up around Johnson C. Smith University, granddaughter of early black professor James D. Martin for whom Martin Street adjacent to campus is named. One of Catherine's sisters, Dr. Annie Louise Richardson, became a Ph.D. botanist -- a rarity for either a woman or an African American in that era -- and headed the National Institute of Science for many years. Another sister, Emily Richardson Ivory, became the wife of minister Rev. Cecil Ivory. He and Reginald Hawkins had been college roommates and fraternity brothers and were cut from similar cloth. Rev. Ivory's exploits as the leading Civil Rights activist in Rock Hill, South Carolina, just south of Charlotte, made national headlines. The Ivory family would eventually build on Van Buren Avenue in

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<sup>25</sup> **State of North Carolina v. Reginald A. Hawkins**, 365 F.2d 559 (4th Cir. 1966) [Voter registration]. On-line at: <https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/272974/state-of-north-carolina-v-reginald-a-hawkins/>

<sup>26</sup> Douglas, Davison M., "The Quest for Freedom," p. 739.

<sup>27</sup> Faulkenbury, Terry Evan, "'Telenegro': Reginald Hawkins, Black Power, and the 1968 Gubernatorial Race in North Carolina," Masters Thesis, Department of History, UNC Charlotte, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Biographical essay, Reginald A. Hawkins Papers, Special Collections, Atkins Library, UNC Charlotte. Finding-aid on-line at: <https://findingaids.uncc.edu/repositories/4/resources/218>

<sup>29</sup> Building permit for 1703 Madison Avenue, September 4, 1953, on microfilm at Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

McCrorey Heights close by the Hawkins house, and today in 2017 daughter-in-law Carlenia Ivory represents that district on Charlotte City Council.

Catherine and Reginald Hawkins raised sons Reggie, Jr., and Wayne B., as well as daughters Pauletta (Bibi) and Lorena in the house on Madison Avenue. Lorena became a medical doctor, Wayne an environmental engineer. Reggie made waves as a student at UNC Chapel Hill where he co-founded the Black Student Movement in 1967, still an important campus institution today in the 2010s.<sup>30</sup> He became a Muslim and as Reginald A. Hawkins Abdullah Salim, Jr., went on to a career as a lawyer in Maryland with an interest in Civil Rights and immigration.

As their household grew, the family added to the dwelling. In 1958 Dr. Hawkins hired Mangie McQueen to construct a big new recreation room on the east side of the residence, featuring a modernistic strip window and a carport.<sup>31</sup> The room's floor was several steps below the rest of the house, opening out at grade level into the back yard. "That rec-room was state of the art. We hadn't seen anything so big and so grand. You know, pool table and ping pong table and shuffleboard on the floor and a bar and all of that," Lorena recalls. "That was the talk of the town. And that's where they [her parents] had the parties.... That was big time to have a room like that. That was unusual."<sup>32</sup> In 1961 Catherine and Hawk took out another permit, asking architect Ferebee & Walters and contractor Andrew Roby to add a new master bedroom at the rear southwest corner the house, including its own bathroom.<sup>33</sup>

In 1965, near the zenith of Dr. Hawkins' Civil Rights activism, the family home on Madison Avenue became the target of violence. "Shots Fired at Charlotte Rights Leader's Home," headlined an August 29 United Press International report that ran in newspapers nationwide.<sup>34</sup> "For the longest time, the bullet hole was still in that window," remembered Lorena in 2017. "And the bullet is still in that wall" in the front bathroom off the living room, agreed Catherine.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Preston Dobbins, Left and Reggie Hawkins, Right," on the website **The Carolina Story: A Virtual Museum of University History**. On-line at: <https://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/show/friday/preston-dobbins--left--and-reg>

<sup>31</sup> Building permit for 1703 Madison Avenue, January 21, 1958, on microfilm at Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

<sup>32</sup> Hawkins, Catherine, with Lorena Hawkins and Darnell Ivory, oral history interview by Tom Hanchett, October 17, 2017, transcript in Hanchett's possession.

<sup>33</sup> Building permit for 1703 Madison Avenue, March 6, 1961, on microfilm at Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

<sup>34</sup> "Shots Fired at Charlotte Rights Leader's Home," **Greenville News**, August 29, 1965. On-line at: [www.newspapers.com/image/188697646/](http://www.newspapers.com/image/188697646/)

<sup>35</sup> Hawkins, Catherine, with Lorena Hawkins and Darnell Ivory, oral history interview by Hanchett.

In the early morning dark of November 22, 1965, assailants struck again, tossing a bomb from Clifton Street across the back yard. "The rec-room, you know, it had all the glass, the rec-room, so that glass shattered," Lorena recalled. "They were probably aiming for their [her parents'] bedroom. But the trees caught it."<sup>36</sup> The bombing was one of four in west Charlotte that night, all targeting Civil Rights leaders: NAACP president Kelly Alexander, his brother Fred Alexander and attorney Julius Chambers. Miraculously, no one was injured. Photos of Dr. Hawkins and police standing in the rubble of the rec-room windows appeared in newspapers across the United States. No arrests were ever made.

Ultimately the pressure took its toll. Critics looked for ways to shut down Hawkins' activism, including launching an investigation that accused him of fraud in the newly created Medicaid system. Hawkins and his wife Catherine divorced and Hawkins moved elsewhere in the 1980s. Hawkins himself had a capacity to alienate people, always pushing. Opponents called him "belligerent," "militant." "He did make people uncomfortable," said Harvey Gantt, who won election as Charlotte's first African American mayor 1983 - 1987. "He called it as he saw it. ... a fearless civil rights worker."<sup>37</sup>

From 1998 to 2004 Ken Koontz owned the Hawkins House. Shortly after beginning college at Johnson C. Smith University in 1969, Koontz made history as the first African American in the newsroom at WBTV, the city's oldest television station, leading to an on-air career that lasted into the 1980s.

A later owner of 1703 Madison Avenue, in the 2010s, is Daniel Tart. A contractor, he renovated the house and moved in with his wife and children -- one of the few white families in McCrorey Heights.

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<sup>36</sup> Hawkins, Catherine, with Lorena Hawkins and Darnell Ivory, oral history interview by Hanchett.

<sup>37</sup> "Reginald Armistice Hawkins," obituary in the **Charlotte Observer**, September 11, 2007. Online at: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/charlotte/obituary.aspx?pid=94263646>

# Reginald Armistice Hawkins House

1703 Madison Avenue, Charlotte, NC



The 1954 Reginald Armistice Hawkins House faces roughly north and occupies a relatively flat, approximately .4-acre corner lot at the intersection of Madison Avenue and Clifton Street in the McCrory Heights neighborhood. The modernist-style, side-gabled house is set back from Madison Avenue approximately 65 feet. The majority of the façade is veneered with rough-cut, irregularly-coursed sandstone. The western portion of the façade is pierced by a short tripart window set high in the wall, and a short shingle-sash window also set high in the wall. The house's entrance is set in a recessed, two-bay-wide section of the facade. The stone on the façade wraps the blank side walls of the recessed bay. The recessed bay is composed of a low, partial-height sandstone wall, topped by T1-11 siding. The wall is pierced by a



replacement slab door and a large, two-sash sliding window. A sandstone planter, and a concrete and sandstone stoop extend across the recessed bay. The stone sections of the façade are topped with a wide wooden band. The façade features a deep overhang with a soffit composed of T1-11. A significant portion of the roof is cut away over the engaged stone planter in the recessed bay. Two stone steps lead to the stoop.



The low-pitched roof is topped with a short stone chimney, and features integrated gutters. The sandstone found on the façade extends uninterrupted to the west as a partial-height wall.



The masonry veneer transitions to brick, laid in a running bond, on the three-bay-wide west elevation. The elevation is asymmetrical and is pierced by three original window openings set high in the wall. The window closest to the façade is a single sash, the middle window is a triple sliding window, and the rearmost original window is a two-sash slider. The windows sit on angled brick sills. The short gable is sheathed with T1-1,1 and features a wide louvered vent. The overhang is very shallow. A shallow gabled addition was added to the rear of the house in 1961. The addition is flush with the west elevation. A single-sash, short window pierces the west elevation of the addition.





A carport and flat-roofed wing were added in 1958 to the east elevation of the house. The carport extends past the façade. The carport's roof is supported on the west by three metal columns that rest on a partial-height sandstone wall that projects from the east edge of the façade. On the east, the carport is supported by three metal columns that rest on a freestanding stone wall. The east wall of the principal section of the house is sheltered by the carport and is veneered with brick. The brick wall is pierced by a single-sash window set high in the wall and a door opening, now infilled with a tall, single-light sash window. The east side of the carport is open and features a single metal post supporting a shallow I-beam. The rear wall of the carport is sheathed with T1-11, and is pierced by a single slab door.



The carport is engaged with the flat-roofed wing, which extends past the rear elevation of the principal section of the house. The east elevation of the wing is composed of a blank, partial-height brick wall topped with a full-width, eight-sash ribbon window.



The only exposed portion of the rear elevation of the principal section of the house is a single bay that contain a large two-vertical-light window. To the east of the exposed bay is a flat-roofed porch with jalousie windows. The porch features a tall brick foundation and a concrete floor embedded with roughly broken pieces of quarry tile. The porch shelters a replacement one-light door and a window opening now in-filled with shelving.





The flat-roofed rear wing aligns with the rear elevation of the porch, but the roof of the wing extends to the rear to form a shallow porch supported by two posts. The rear elevation of the wing is composed of a tripart glazed sliding door and four tall single-light sash at grade, all separated by minimal framing. The sliding door is topped with a large transom, and the sash are each topped a single-light square sash. The partial-height brick wall of the wing's east elevation extends past the shallow porch, and helps to define a patio paved with cut blue stones. A brick fireplace/grill is built against the projecting wall.



The asymmetrical rear elevation of the gabled addition is pierced by a tripart sliding windows set high in the wall and resting on an angled brick sill. The wall is topped with a wide simple band. The low-pitched roof features a deep overhang. The gable is sheathed with T1-11 and features a center louvered vent.



The interior of the Reginald Armistice Hawkins House has retained a good degree of integrity. The room layouts, minimalist trim, and original floors (including the oak flooring in the principal section of the house and the bluestone in the 1958 addition) have survived. Of especially note is the central sandstone fireplace that matches the masonry on the façade. The modernist-style firebox is open on two sides and features a steel corner-support post. The firebox opens onto a rear den, but the sandstone masonry extends into the front living room.