

# African American nursing schools in North Carolina

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15 African American Schools of Nursing in North Carolina By NCNA Member Phoebe Pollitt, PhD, RN; Nursing History Council

When Raleigh's Rex Hospital opened the first nursing school in North Carolina in 1894, only white students were admitted. In 1896, the first nursing school for African Americans opened at Raleigh's St. Agnes Hospital. This pattern of racially segregated nursing education continued until the 1964 Civil Rights Act became law. While over 100 nursing schools for white students existed in NC between 1894 and 1965, only 13 were open to African Americans. Below, in chronological order, are brief descriptions of each of these schools.

1. St. Agnes Hospital School of Nursing (HSON) (1896- 1960) in Raleigh was sponsored by the Episcopal Church. It was fully approved by the Board of Nursing (BON).
2. Lincoln HSON operated a highly regarded and fully accredited program in Durham from 1901-1972. Its early Directors of Nursing were St. Agnes graduates Julia Latta, RN, (1903-1911) and Patty Carter, RN (1911-1948).
3. Good Samaritan HSON in Charlotte opened in 1903. It was approved by the BON. The school closed in 1959 when nursing students went on strike protesting racist policies of the white administrators of the hospital.
4. Jubilee HSON in Henderson (1911-1930s) was supported by the Presbyterian Church. It closed in the 1930s because it was unable to meet the criteria of the BON
5. Community HSON in Wilmington (1920-1967), gained approval from the BON under the leadership of Salome Taylor, RN, Director in 1927. The school and hospital both closed in 1967.
6. Negro Division of the State Sanitarium in McCain operated a nursing school from 1925-1940s. The two-year program focused on caring for tubercular patients, and was thus unable to be approved by the NCBON. Graduates were able to practice as private duty nurses and in tubercular sanitarium.
7. Blue Ridge HSON in Asheville operated the only nursing school for African American students in Appalachia from 1925-1930. The hospital closed due to the financial crisis caused by the Great Depression.
8. L. Richardson HSON operated in Greensboro from 1927- 1966. It was a rigorous program and only five out of the first class of 20 students graduated.
9. McCauley Private Hospital in Raleigh ran a nursing school from 1927-1939. In 1939, the BON required nursing schools only be operated in hospitals with an average daily census of 50 patients. This was a small private hospital that had a lower average daily patient census than required so the school had to close.
10. Kate B. Reynolds HSON operated from 1938-1954. It closed when Winston-Salem State University opened its BSN program in 1954.
11. January 4, 1942. Dr. Mathew Perry opened a school for Licensed Practical Nurses in Fayetteville. It operated at least through 1950 and many graduates were hired by the federal hospital on nearby Fort Bragg.
12. In 1947 the NC legislature recognized the practice of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) and 8 schools for LPNs opened across the state that year. Durham City Schools, using Duke Hospital as its clinical site opened an LPN program admitting African American students. It closed in 1965.

**University BSN Programs** In 1938, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its *Gains v. Canada* ruling mandated that states practicing segregation in graduate education must offer equal opportunities for students of each race. The all-white UNC-Chapel Hill opened a BSN program in 1950. To provide parity, the state legislature funded BSN programs at Winston-Salem State University (13) and NC A&T University in Greensboro (14). Both opened in 1953. NC Central University began a BSN program in 1961 (15). Within a few years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, all nursing schools in NC integrated their student bodies and faculties.

## 1964 (the year the Civil Rights Act was enacted)

There were 5 (non-accredited) African American nursing schools in NC (Carnegie, May, 1964, JNMA p.230)

Agricultural and Technical College, Greensboro, established 1953 . BSN

Winston-Salem College, established 1953 - BSN

Lincoln Hospital, Durham - Diploma

Community Hospital, Wilmington – Diploma

Kate Bitting Reynolds Hospital - Winston-Salem, Diploma