

*"Did You Know?"*

Dr. Walter Gilbert Alexander,

A Leader Among the Medical, Political, and African American Communities

By

Russell K. Dutcher, III, MA

(Treasury Administration)

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Buried within the annals of New Jersey history, we often find references to persons who have left an indelible mark on our State through their selfless dedication to its citizens. A shining example of an individual who dedicated their life to the well-being of society is Dr. Walter Gilbert Alexander.

The son of former slaves Royal and Amelia Henrica (Terry) Alexander, he was born in Lynchburg Virginia on December 3, 1880. As a young man he attended public school and entered in 1895, Lincoln University, located in Chester Pennsylvania, founded in 1854 as the Ashmun Institute, designated as a historically black college/university.

After graduating in 1899, he pursued his dream of becoming a physician and enrolled at the Boston College of Physician and Surgeons, which is now Tufts University School of Medicine, receiving his Medical degree in 1903. He then set up an initial practice in West Virginia, eventually relocated to Orange New Jersey.

He became well known among his peers and was a member of the New Jersey National Medical Association, North Jersey Medical Society, and the National Medical Association. He was also an active member of the NAACP. In 1944 he was the recipient of the National Medical Association's Distinguished Service Award.

Aligning himself with the Republican Party, he was a General Assembly candidate on the 1912 Progressive ticket along former President Theodore Roosevelt, which defined him the first African American in New Jersey to hold a regular party endorsement for a legislative seat. Though defeated, he would continue to run as a regular Republican, winning election to the New Jersey Assembly in 1920.

In 1921, Walter Alexander reached another milestone in his career, when he was named as the acting Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly during the absence of Speaker George S. Hobart. In keeping with the state's progressive tone, this would be the first time that a man of color was chosen to serve in this capacity.

During his career, Dr. Walter Gilbert Alexander served as an alternate-at-large to the 1924 Republican Convention and in 1928, was chosen as a delegate. He also served as a member of the New Jersey State Public Health Council, the Committee for Health and Welfare, and as a member of the National Youth Administration.

A lifelong resident of Orange, Dr. Alexander dedicated his life to the medical and African American Community. He passed away at home at the age of 72 on February 5, 1953.