PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE
SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA
WILEY IMMANUEL LASH
BUSINESSMAN • POLITICAL ACTIVITY • HUMANITARIAN
FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAYOR OF SALISBURY

Wiley Immanuel Lash (1908-1995), the son of the Rev. Wiley H. and Maryonetta “Mary” Grady Lash, received his education at a local black parochial school and Livingstone College. He rose to political prominence in the Negro Civic League where he spearheaded a drive to register voters and worked for better facilities, jobs, and schools for black citizens. Widely respected in the community, Lash advocated peaceful integration in the 1960s. After serving 15 years on the Board of Education, he was elected to the City Council in 1973 and was appointed mayor pro tem. Lash became mayor in 1981 and upon finishing his term in 1985, he was named Salisbury’s first honorary mayor. For years Lash owned and operated a self-service grocery at 129 East Council Street. The store was an informal hub for political activism and a place where the deserving poor were never turned away.

Let us start anew, and so live that all our acts will bind us to the life that is noble for ourselves and for humanity. — Wiley Lash

JOSEPH BALLARD
BARTENDER: POLITICAL: SALTATORIAL
1854-1917

Joe Ballard was the on-drawn wagon was a familiar sight in downtown Salisbury. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, he was active in politics and served on the local executive council of the Republican Party. For many years, as a member of the Ballard Band and Memorial Day parade committee, he marched in the parade and sang God Bless America. He died in 1917 and was buried in Graceland Union Church Cemetery with full military honors.

THE TRAVELERS’ CLUB

In 1857, twenty ladies, led by Mrs. James Preston Moore, formed the Club to establish a library for the purpose of becoming better informed on foreign countries and other subjects. “Miss Ballard,” as she was affectionately known, was intelligent, outspoken, and championed the cause of education. She was one of the first officers of the Club. The ladies of the Club were supported by the men of the community. Mrs. Henderson Boyd was the first chairman. She offered the use of her home as a library. In 1911, on the occasion of the opening of the new public library building, she said, “Today the Traveler’s Club still supports the library.”

INTEGRATION
FOR THE PRECIOUS FREEDOM...THE PRIDE OF SALISBURY

Charles Sparks chose Salisbury as the winter home for his SPARKS WORLD-FAMOUS SHOWS (1910-1916 & 1918-1919) because of its north-south and east-west railways and the nearby Spencer Shops that could refurbish the circus train. Each year, before loading over 50 red and yellow railroad cars to begin the annual tour, Sparks treated the town to two performances. Circus Day was declared a holiday for schools and businesses. Thousands lined the streets to watch the parade of glided wagons, steam calliopes, exotic animals. Local citizens welcomed the performers and their families, and Salisbury was known as the town that loved the circus.

February 27, 1902. Sixteen Livingstone College students were seated near the white section in the drug store. They were seated as they sang a protest song to the store. When asked, they sang, prayed, and presented all night. Over the students’ heads, two prominent individuals of the town purchased two movie theaters, Livingstone College, and Wiley Lash, later mayor of Salisbury, sat in the white section of the movie house every day for a week. Dr. Dunham states, “I firmly believe that if a solution can be found for the problem of the moment anywhere in the South, Salisbury is the place!” Other black adults and students were allowed to occupy seats in the white section of downtown stores until, at the end of six weeks, the theater managers agreed to ensure their moral restrictions and to integrate the theaters.