

Sebastian, Simon Powell ^[1]

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10 June 1876 – 24 June 1937

See also: [Martha Josephine Oxford Sebastian](#) ^[2]

Dr. S. P. Sebastian was a renowned physician, surgeon, and the co-founder of two historic African-American hospitals in Greensboro, North Carolina. For 20 years he served as the college physician at [North Carolina A&T State University](#) ^[3], in Greensboro.



Portrait of S. P. Sebastian, Martha J. O. Sebastian Collection, Bluford Library and Archives and Special Collections, NC A&T State University. Used with permission.

Simon Powell Sebastian was born in Antigua, British West Indies in 1876 (some sources say 1879) the son of John and Sarah Elizabeth (Roberts) Sebastian. He began his education at Mico Training School in St. John, Antigua, West Indies, and afterwards became a teacher. In 1902 Sebastian was teaching in his classroom during the famous Mount Pelée volcano eruption on the nearby island of Martinique. He immigrated to the United States that same year settling in Philadelphia. For nearly a year he worked as an organist and stenographer in that city.

In 1903 Sebastian began working for the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race (now [North Carolina A&T State University](#) ^[3]) in Greensboro, North Carolina as an assistant to [President James B. Dudley](#) ^[4] and as a professor of English, foreign languages, mathematics, and geography. After obtaining his medical doctoral degree from [Leonard Medical School](#) ^[5] at [Shaw University](#) ^[6] in 1912, he returned to Greensboro to practice medicine. Dr. Sebastian was employed again by A&T in 1919 to serve as college physician, filling in the role left by Dr. Samuel Benjamin Jones after the [first World War](#) ^[7].

With two other doctors, Sebastian opened the Trinity Hospital for Negroes in 1918 on East Market Street in Greensboro. Over a course of 4 years, Sebastian co-founded the historic L. Richardson Memorial Hospital in Greensboro. The historic building opened its doors for patients on May 28th 1927. Sebastian served as its first medical director and served on the executive committee. Dr. Sebastian was well known for his efforts to better hospital accommodations for treating African Americans with tuberculosis. And he was the recipient of several medical awards for his work on various medical conditions.

His wife, [Martha Josephine Oxford Sebastian](#) ^[2] (1896 – 1948), was the first African American public librarian in Greensboro, appointed to the newly opened Carnegie Negro Library in 1924. Their famous house at 1402 Washington

street, located across the street from the Richardson hospital was the site for many social gatherings in the African-American community, including a dinner given in honor of famous singer Marian Anderson in 1931. The Sebastians were married from 1915 until his death from injuries sustained in a car accident in 1937. The accident occurred across the street from the Richardson hospital as Dr. Sebastian was travelling to aid another person injured in an accident. His funeral service was held at his home with Dr. George Simkins and Dr. B. W. Barnes among the active pallbearers and A&T president Dr. F. D. Bluford, and Bennett College ^[8] president Dr. David Dallas Jones among the honorary pallbearers.

The couple had two sons, Dr. John Walter Sebastian (1916 - 1956) a pathologist and professor at Howard University, and Army Chief Warrant Officer Edward Powell Sebastian (1920 – 1975). Mr. and Mrs. Sebastian and their sons are all buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The Sebastian Health Center on the campus of NC A&T ^[3] was named in his honor and served generations of A&T students from 1953 until the early 2010s. In 2007, Sebastian's Greensboro home was opened to become the Sebastian Medical Museum for a few years. The Sebastian Village Apartment community in Greensboro was built around his historic house which currently operates as the leasing office.

References:

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Additional Resources:

Simon Powell (S. P.) and Martha Sebastian Collection^[12], Archives and Special Collections, F. D. Bluford Library. North Carolina A&T State University.

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