

Alexander receives historic recognition

The Orange Transcript

An Orange man who was the first black person to be elected to the state Legislature was one of two men who were honored with the unveiling of Statehouse plaques in their honor.

Assemblyman Walter Gilbert Alexander, the son of former slaves, and state Sen. Hutchins Inge of Newark were recognized Dec. 10 for their historical status as the plaques were unveiling.

Alexander became the first black person elected to the General Assembly in 1919 and served two terms. He served on committees for public health and sponsored legislation to advance health care and civil rights.

Inge was the first black person to serve in the state Senate in 1966. He served until 1968 and was chairman of the Senate Federal and Interstate Relations Committee, supporting education aid, transportation and housing measures.

“ They will also serve as reminders to young and old that, decades before we had an African American president in the White House, we had leaders of color who aspired to the highest levels of public service because they wanted to make our state a better place to live,” said Sheila Oliver of East Orange, who is expected to become the first black person to lead the Assembly as its speaker during the 2010-11 legislative session.