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Speech for C.S. Brown Founders' Day, given at the C.S. Brown Cultural Arts Center and Museum,
Winton, NC, March 28, 2021

By Marvin Tupper Jones

Good afternoon, I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to talk to you today, and in doing so I want to acknowledge Carol Joice, one of the wonderful women who married a C.S. Brown student and made him happy.

I first remember being inside Brown Hall for my oldest brother's graduation. It was one evening in 1957, and the auditorium was filled with young people proudly wearing their gowns and looking forward.

My next memory here was the following year when I stepped off Bus 43 on my first day of school. I think it was my first and oldest friend, Michael Davis, who led me to my classroom. Michael left us this summer.

Of course, it fills me with great warmth to stand in Brown Hall today and carry those comforting memories along with others.

C.S. Brown School was built and maintained with strong relationships. It fostered good relationships. I have here the autograph book my father, Tupper Jones, had when he graduated in 1936, and I'll read one page:

"I'd rather be on the dark side of a mountain when the sun doesn't even shine than for you to be loving someone else and be no darling of mine."

That page is the earliest evidence my family has of an important relationship, perhaps begun on C.S. Brown's campus, and resulted in a 49 year-long marriage and four children.

Another romance on this campus was that of Lee Vernon Stiff and Renee Flood Stiff, ninth graders who met here in 1963. Lee was from Murfreesboro and Renee was from Cofield. They fell in love and remained lovers until Renee's death. Lee, who passed two weeks ago, built upon the Algebra that he learned from Mrs. Murray and built a career in math education. I hold one of my daughter's high school math books. This one and at least another one was co-authored by Dr. Lee Stiff.

Relationships.

Let's look at the relationships that led to the founding of C.S. Brown School. The mission of my organization, the Chowan Discovery Group, is to research document, preserve and present our local history, so I get to present some findings to you.

A couple of years ago at the North Carolina State Archives, I discovered that leaders of the Pleasant Plains community received county school funding in 1859. That and a reference in church history suggest the Plains Pleasant school was in existence two years before the Civil War's beginning and six years before the ultimate defeat of slavery.

We all know that Winton was burned in 1862 when enslaving forces fired upon United States gunboats on the Chowan River. I learned that the rebels forced Martha Keen, a married mother of three and a free woman of color, to trick the gunboats in the ambush. Yet, three remarkable events happened for Mrs. Keen. One: she escaped death that day and lived another 55 years. Two: her brother-in-law became a United States Color Troop soldier and served in the fight against slavery. And lastly, her daughter became a student at Hampton Normal, now Hampton University, a place like C.S. Brown School that could not have existed were it not for the United States' victory over enslavement.

The war and slavery ended in 1865. In 1866, the Pleasant Plains community built a schoolhouse on Highway US 13. The schoolhouse we see today is the second

Pleasant Plains schoolhouse and it is a Rosenwald building as is Brown Hall. The schoolhouse's first teacher was a man named William David Newsom. He later oversaw the community schools in Harrellsville, Cofield, Ahoskie and at Walden School outside of Cofield.

By 1868, we had young men and women attending Hampton with the goal of becoming teachers. The Willis and Sally Weaver family sent at least four of their children to Hampton. The oldest Weaver son knew Martha Keen's daughter Florence, and the younger ones knew their schoolmate Booker T. Washington. Florence returned to Winton to teach at a school led by Ben Morris. In 1862, Morris escaped enslavement in Harrellsville and served in the Navy. His school was the elementary forerunner of our C.S. Brown School.

Another young man who followed the Weavers to Hampton was Joseph Catus. He also knew Booker T. Washington. Catus, like the Weavers, was probably a Pleasant Plains student. After Hampton, Joseph Catus returned to Hertford County to teach in Como, and one of his students was the legendary conjure doctor Jim Jordan.

Reverend Lemuel Washington Boone, who founded many churches north of the Potecasi Creek, was president of the state Black Baptist association. He was a Shaw University trustee, and his son Isaac attended Shaw in the 1870's. Isaac became the postmaster of Harrellsville.

Before 1886, the founding year of Chowan Academy, now C.S. Brown, about 50 students from our area attended Shaw University in order to acquire the equivalent of high school diplomas, teaching certificates and college degrees. In the early 1880s, our local leaders felt it was time to have our own high school so that our young women and men would not have to leave home.

Thus, our Baptist leaders such as Joseph Catus, William David Newsome and Isaac Boone, and our Baptist churches founded the Chowan Educational Association. The

Association existed as early as 1885 and its purpose was to support our community schools and to establish our own high school.

Our communities had landowners who could donate land and timber, a sawmill owner or two who could make lumber, and a few brickmakers who made and laid bricks. Thomas Collins was one of our brickmakers and masons. He was wounded outside of Richmond in the Civil War and later became Pleasant Plains Church's first pastor of color.

Our community had plenty of people with carpentry skills, farmers to clear land, and store owners such as Newsom who could purchase building and school supplies at wholesale. Finally, we had Winton area natives who were already connected to Shaw, were teaching high school and ready to return to Winton.

Our teachers and Baptist leaders knew Shaw well, and Shaw's founder, Henry Martin Tupper, recommended that Calvin Scott Brown lead the new school as principal.

Brown, soon to be Dr. Brown, knew our Shaw alumni. He was a friend of a Weaver family relative, Manassas T. Pope, a Shaw medical student. Pope introduced the community to Dr. Brown. Before Chowan Academy opened in March 1886, 50 students from the Hertford County area had attended or were attending Shaw before 1886; the number of Shaw students from the Hertford County area dropped afterward because of Chowan Academy.

Chowan Academy became Waters Training School and it was an economic engine for Winton, which was still recovering from the 1862 burning. Tuition money and school fundraising provided jobs for teachers, school employees, local sellers of food and firewood, and rent income for those who let their rooms out. Dr. Brown became an international missionary, leading the Lott Carey Foreign Baptist Mission for 39 years, and established missions in Haiti – which I visited – and Africa.

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Our School went on to enrich the local and greater community, and still does. I want to name some of the C.S. Brown alumni who has stood out in doing so:

Reverend George Rouson, Geneva Jones Bowe, Dr. Joseph D. Weaver, Robert Lee Vann, Dr. Dudley Flood, Katie Marie Askew Hart, Hobson R. Reynolds, Dr. Roy Flood and Dr. Lee Stiff.

It is at this point I get to thank all of those who remained and supported our school and community in the roles of teachers, shipyard employees, nurses, law officers, government employees, shop owners, loggers, law enforcement, ministers, and more. Thank you.

TOUR with UNC-Chapel Hill students:

MAIN STREET

- Dr. Brown's house,
- 2 story houses, Rochelle Vann bungalow;
- Joseph Catus house and grave
- WJ Boone and Store (Eff Jones and Annie Walden Jones)
- W.E. and Sue Jones Hall house. Site of J. Eley Reid house and his business buildings;

- Dr. Brown's House,
- 2-story houses and bungalows,

-River Park, Martha Keen and Civil War Trails Marker

-South Winton Church; Stores across the street

-US 13: Lemuel Boone marker

- At BLUEFOOT: Jones brothers' land; Jesse, Monk, Jones stores;

-Billy Boy Keene store and station

-Pleasant Plains Church, cemetery and School

-WD Newsom: 3 houses on corners and airfield, WD Newsom's store and grave.

SALUDA HALL ROAD:

-Land all along to the end and beyond owned by WinTri

-Ab Hall house and land

-Robbins Farm: PARK at our house; Jack Robbins; all buildings constructed by WinTri; 1960 contractors, play house; crops, purpose of barns;

-Martin Van Buren Reynolds Grave

-Otis and Martha Reid House

-Site of Walden School – Blue Foot road; maybe Lemuel Boon grave

COFIELD:

-Post Office;
-show TW Jones store, site of Tal Reid and other stores; mention RAIL STATION
Philippi school

-Escape at Tunis Feb. 1864

TO HARRELLSVILLE:

-Philippi, Parker Robbins Postmaster, Choanoac

BACK TO WINTON

-Elks Shrine

-South Winton and C.S. Brown Campus.;

It is near the size of small college; Dr. Brown's funeral, missionary work;
dormitories, Dr. Brown's grave; Brown Hall