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Peter Wedderick Moore
(1859-1934)
Papers, 1905-1934

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Biographical Note :

Peter Wedderick (or Weddick) Moore was born on June 24, 1859 near Faison in Duplin County, the son of Weddick and Alecy Thompson Moore, both slaves. His father allegedly was killed by the Ku Klux Klan during Reconstruction, and the task of rearing the five children fell to his mother.



It is believed that he attended a neighborhood school established by the Freedmen's Bureau. He furthered his studies at the Philosophian Academy, in nearby Sampson County, under the leadership of Burke Marable, who would become an important mentor.

At age twenty he was certified to teach in a one-room school in the Holly Grove district, near Clinton. He supplemented his earnings by raising cotton as a tenant, and with the money he saved he enrolled in Shaw University in Raleigh in the fall of 1880. President H. M. Tupper recognized Moore's ability as well as his need for support, and in 1882 appointed him a student instructor. Moore also worked in a brickyard on campus and in a nearby foundry.

A classmate noted that Moore was "well informed on all current events" and that science and mathematics were his favorite subjects. He received an A.B. degree in 1887; later Shaw awarded him both M.A. and L.L.D. degrees in recognition of his contributions to education in the state.

After leaving Shaw, Peter Moore taught for a year in Bertie County and then was named assistant principal of the State Normal School in Plymouth [NC], where he remained for four years. In 1889 Moore married Symera T. Raynor of Windsor, and they later became the parents of two daughters: Ruth Lawrence and Bessie. In 1891, on the recommendation of Major S. M. Finger, state superintendent of public instruction, Moore was made principal of the new State Normal School for the Colored Race (now Elizabeth City State University). He remained at Elizabeth City State Normal School for the rest of his life.

The General Assembly had appropriated nine hundred dollars for the school but made no provisions for either a building or a site. With the aid of the citizens of Elizabeth City and the board of trustees (whose members were all white), Moore and his assistant, J. H. Turner, soon obtained the Rooks Turner Building on Body Road Street and the school opened on January 4th, 1892 with twenty three pupils. With enrollment increasing each year, the school moved to a larger facility in 1894 and then to its present site in 1912.



Principal Moore was concerned not only with the academic training of his students but also with their spiritual and moral well-being. In addition to intensive and thorough training in subject matter, he stressed "the excellence and dignity of right living." He insisted on upright conduct and always conducted himself in such a manner that his students might learn from his example.

As soon as funds were available he added an industrial program, believing that “trained cooks and educated farmers are needed as well as professionally trained teachers.” Work with the hands, as well as academic exercises, became a required part of the daily routine. He wrote:



“Industrial education not only increases learning capacity, but promotes fidelity, accuracy, honesty, persistency and intelligence. The capacity to make a living becomes enlarged into the capacity to make a life.”

He made every effort to provide training that would “help to avoid that which is superficial and furnish in its stead those fundamental qualities that make character.” In addition to his administrative duties, the principal did much of the teaching, supervised the practice school, and handled all disciplinary problems. Around 1921 his health began to fail, and the position of assistant principal was created. Professor John H. Bias was hired for the 1922-1923 school year to relieve him of more minor duties. After a few years, however, Dr. Moore’s health declined further, and it became evident that he could not carry out the responsibilities of his office much longer. At the commencement exercises of May 25th, 1928 he was named president emeritus. He continued to teach courses in classroom management.

Dr. Moore served as president of the North Carolina Negro Teachers’ Association, of which he was a charter member. Twice the governor of North Carolina appointed him to represent the state at the National Educational Congress. In 1922 he was also requested to attend an interracial conference in Atlanta.

One observer noted that Peter W. Moore’s greatest work was “the cementing of the ties between the white and colored races” Moore himself noted that he had made it a rule of his life never to permit himself to do anything offensive to any person. After his death, the mayor of Elizabeth City attributed to him the absence of racial strife in the city. Another observer wrote that Moore “rose from slavery to a position as educator and statesman, and dedicated his life to the service of both races.”

Peter W. Moore died on April 15, 1934.

Sources:

The Dictionary of North Carolina Biography.

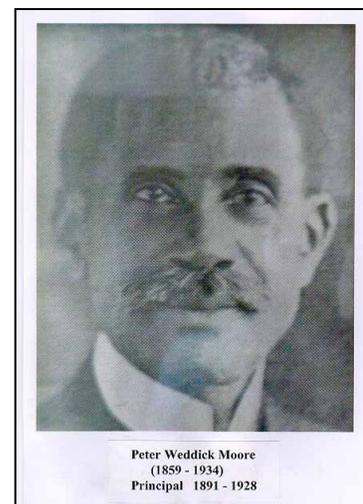
Johnson, Evelyn. *History of Elizabeth City State University.* 1980

Brown, Victor Hugo. *A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina.* 1960

Newbold, N.C. *Five Negro Educators.* 1939

Scope and Content Note:

The Moore Papers consist of a small number of files which contain



information about Moore's family and career. Only one file of public papers exists, reflecting budget proposals and financial statements for several years of his principalship (much more information about these years can be gleaned from the State Normal Board of Trustees Minutes).

Timeline:

- 1859 Born June 24th in Faison, Duplin County, North Carolina
- [1875] Studied at the nearby Philosphian Academy under Professor Burke Marable
- 1880 Entered Shaw University
- 1887 Received A.B. degree from Shaw
- 1888 Taught in Bertie County, North Carolina
- 1889 Married Symera T. Raynor of Windsor, NC, with whom he will have two children.
- 1889 Accepted the post of assistant principal at State Normal School in Plymouth, NC.
- 1891 Selected to lead the new State Colored Normal School at Elizabeth City, NC
- 1892 Opened the new school in rented quarters on January 4th with one additional faculty member, John Henry Manning Butler, and 23 students
- 1892 First Commencement held in May 1892
- 1896 First graduating class of six students completed studies
- 1905 North Carolina State Normal Schools consolidated, leaving three schools: Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State, and Winston Salem State Normal Schools
- 1905 Presides at North Carolina Teachers Association 24th annual session in Greensboro
- 1912 School moved to present Weeksville campus site where a new classroom building (later named Lane Hall) had been erected.
- 1912 Girls' dormitory erected and occupied (later named Symera Hall)
- 1916 Twenty-fifth anniversary of Elizabeth City State Normal School
- 1921 Two-year Normal curriculum implemented in addition to four-year high school program

- 1922 John Henry Bias became Moore's assistant principal
- 1928 Appointed President Emeritus on April 23rd by the Board of Trustees. Tendered resignation as principal on May 18
- 1934 Died on April 20th

Collection Inventory:

Series	Folder Title	Box One
Biographical	P.W. Moore Death Certificate	
Biographical	Clipping; sketch	
Biographical	Charles M. Ingram material	
Family	Garland Watts material	
Biographical	Duplin County (NC) Hall of Fame 2001	
Family	Bessie Moore Wesley 1897-1991	
Public Papers	State Normal School correspondence, budgets, reports	