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Evelyn Adelaide Johnson
(1909-1995)
Papers, 1933-1995

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Biographical Note:

Dr. Evelyn Adelaide Johnson was born on August 4, 1909 in Petersburg, Virginia to Edward and Mary Byrd Johnson. Dr. Johnson grew up with three loving sisters and a brother, all preceding her in death and with parents who instilled in her a desire for excellence. Her faith in God, her desire to achieve excellence and her desire to help others be all that they could be that were the driving forces in her life.



At an early age she joined and became active in the Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia. She graduated from Peabody High School in Petersburg, Virginia as valedictorian of her class. In 1928 she earned a B.A. Degree from Fisk University, where she became a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Her graduate work included a Professional Diploma in Piano and Music Theory from Fisk University and a M.A. Degree in Music Performance and Music Education from Columbia University. Further study was accomplished at Syracuse University, American University and Bucknell University.

She began her career as a music teacher in 1929 in Mullen, West Virginia. After a one-year stay, she was employed as an instructor of Music/Literature at Christianburg Institute in Cambria, Virginia. In 1933, Dr. Johnson came to Elizabeth City State Normal School where she became a music instructor. She advanced from the position of Music Instructor (1933-36) to Director of Music (1936-40) and Chairman of Fine Arts Department (1958-61). In 1961 she accepted the position of Chairman of the Music Department and served until 1965. She continued her work as director of Choral Activities, begun in 1933, until her retirement in 1975.

In 1980 she completed her work on a full length book, "History of Elizabeth City State University: A Story of Survival"; Dr. Johnson created the activities which are now traditional on the ECSU campus — choir tours, choir banquets honoring graduating seniors and choir Christmas caroling. She organized the Lyceum Series, purchased the first Concert Grand Piano, and integrated the Music Educators National Conference along with Dr. Warner Lawson, Howard University, Mr. Fredrick Hall, Alabama State College, and Mr. John J. Ballou, Hampton University in St. Louis, Missouri in 1944. She advised the "Be Natural Club", which was started by Dr. Jessie Welch (this club raised money to place the first marker on a lamp post on the front campus that read, "State Normal School"), and in 1972, she raised \$20,000 for the European choir tour and raised \$12,000 in 1975 to take the choir to the Grand Bahamas upon an invitation from the United States Embassy in Nassau, Grand Bahamas.

Upon her retirement from Elizabeth City State University in 1975, she was named the first professor Emeritus by the ECSLJ Board of Trustees. Dr. Johnson organized the Bicentennial Community Chorus for the dedication of the New Physical Education Facility, now the Robert L. Vaughan Physical Education Center. The group renamed themselves, "The Evelyn A. Johnson Community Singers". For several decades she was a faithful member of Corner Stone Missionary Baptist church, serving the Church and its officials in many different capacities. She was the only President and the driving force of the Historical Society of Corner Stone.

Other honors include: The Evelyn A. Johnson Alumni Chapter, The Evelyn A. Johnson African-American Festival; The Evelyn A. Johnson Hall on ECSU's campus; Director Emeritus of Pasquotank County Arts Council; an honorary Doctorate Degree in Music by the Board of Trustees of ECSU; and Corner Stone Missionary Baptist Church: Woman of the Year — 1993. She is listed in the following publications: "Outstanding Educators of America", 1973; "Personalities of the South", 1973; and "Who's Who Among American Women, 1974. Organizations in which she held membership included Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. — Charter Member of Zeta Kappa Omega Chapter, American Choral Directors' Association, Charter Member of Intercollegiate Music Association, Member of the Music Club in Elizabeth City, Member of the National Association of University Women, Charter Member ECSU Association of Retired Persons, Honorary Life Member of ECSU General Alumni Association and Life Member of North Carolina Association of Music Educators.

Dr. Evelyn A. Johnson died on July 10, 1995.