

## THE CONETOE QUARTET OF CONETOE HIGH SCHOOL

- The Conetoe Quartet was a popular group at Conetoe High School. It was under the direction on Mr. Walter Plemmer in the 50's and 60's.
- In 1954, this group sung on the Tarboro Radio Station WCPS every Saturday, various school, churches and many other events. It was the only African American group singing on the radio at that time. The members were Robert Earl Exum, William E. Knight, William E. Staton and Clayton Jones. (Winston Knight interview)
- In 1955 this group sung at various churches, schools and other events. The members were Curtis W. Knight, John Avon Staton (Big Apple), James E. Staton and (Dan) Milton Farmer. (Winston Knight interview)
- The Conetoe Quartet entered a contest that WITN-TV was sponsoring. They song on the television and won by popular mail in votes. In the Summer, 1957 Ted Mack wrote Mr. Plemmer. Mr. Walter and Mrs. Martha Plemmer, Jimmy Stanley, Robert Slade, Jake Vines and Warren Jones travelled to New York for the first time in a 1957 Buick.
  - ❖ Ted Mack – Vinson Lapze one hour
  - ❖ Radio City Music Hall
  - ❖ Gave a set of moracs
  - ❖ Henry Huston Hotel
  - ❖ Jimmy Dawson Band – Uptown New York, Staten Hotel, Cofe Rouge
  - ❖ Boat Town Cruise 1-1/2 hours
  - ❖ June Taylor Dancers

- The Quartet next group was Jerry McDowell (Lead Singer), Voneree DeLoatch, (Tenor), Joseph Staton (Baritone) and Benjamin Jones (Bass).
- The Quartet traveled throughout North Carolina, appearing on local TV, radio and Night Clubs. In 1964, they travelled to A&T College, Greensboro, NC to participate in a National Talent Contest. Quartets and other singing groups from all over the state and elsewhere participated. **The Conetoe Quartet won first place!** Needless to say, after that, their fame sky rocketed. They were invited to sing at churches, neighboring schools and various organizations. Their signature song was “**Smoke Gets in Your Eyes**”. (Voneree DeLoatch’s interview)
- The Quartet final group was Paul Jones (Lead), Burrell Staton (Bass), Levorn Staton (Tenor) and Melvin Chance (Baritone). In 1963-1964 year, the group won the “**Outstanding Quartet**” Trophy.

*(This is Oral History from Voneree DeLoatch, Mrs. Sandra Jones, Jimmy Stanley, Robert Slade and Dolores J. Faison). If you have more history, please let Hilda Higgs Morris know.*