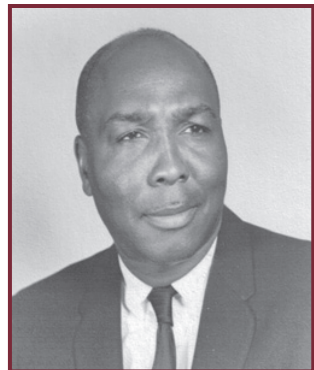


# *Path To Becoming A Mighty Eagle*

## Celebrate 2020 CHSAA Reunion By Social Distancing

Written by HILDA MORRIS

Conetoe High School was located in Conetoe, North Carolina on Thigpen Road. In order to become an Eagle, we had to begin our education at Lawrence, White's Chapel, Coakley, Acorn Hill, (which were four of the 26 Rosenwald Schools), Chiquapin, Mayo, First Roberson Elementary and/or Second Roberson Elementary Schools. We knew that it would take about six years for us to get on the soil of Conetoe High School (CHS). When the opportunity came, we were eager to make that transition to high school. It was our opportunity to become a "Mighty Eagle". The name "Conetoe" is an Indian word (Indian tribe called Coonegi), which means "high up or near heaven". An examination of our Alma Mater's history will prove this statement valid and meaningful. The Eagle was chosen as the school's mascot, because of its strength, keenness of vision and power of flight. Hence, the school's motto was "Nothing Succeeds Like Success". Maroon (garnet) and gray (an object color for reflecting) were chosen as the school's official colors. Later the Eagle was associated with gold, black and white until closing.



**Mr. James Batts (Principal: 1948-1959)**, was chosen as CHS's first principal. Inherent to this huge assignment was the task of providing leadership, planning the school's future and an ongoing lobbying effort with Edgecombe County School Board officials for much needed supplies and equipment. Progress toward the formation of a high school came appropriately through the involvement of parents, teacher,

students and the entire community. Mr. Batts promoted the concept

by actively being involved in the community and civic organizations. The manner in which he gave of himself exemplified his leadership and the high caliber person he was. In most cases, he went beyond the normal expectations of a high school principal. Perhaps Mr. Batts' dreams for CHS had been fulfilled or maybe he felt because of the period of time in which we lived, he had accomplished all he could for the school and its people. By the fall of 1959, CHS would no longer thrive under the superior leadership and guidance of Mr. Batts.



**Mr. Neil A. McLean (Principal: 1959-1971)** served as our second principal succeeding Mr. Batts through the remaining years, proved to be equally dedicated to developing the school academically. Mr. McLean provided expert leadership and instituted several new programs during his tenure. Having the philosophy that "education cannot be achieved in a vacuum," he sought to include parents, teachers and students in

the total educational process. He implemented the Adult Education Program to help educate parents and adults who had been denied this right because of different circumstances in their lives.

In CHS's history, as is in the case of the entire world's recorded existence, is a "perpetual residue of the paradoxical erosion of the traditions of our life and times". Having previously been an all-white institution, CHS, as we knew it, was turned over to Blacks during the fall of 1948. Geographically, the school was located in the township of Conetoe, North Carolina and was adjacent to the town's major thoroughfare, Interstate Highway 64. Most of its students



were the sons and daughters of farmers and sharecroppers. Because of the lifestyle associated with farming, many students had to stay out of school and work. The high school was not able to have all the extracurricular activities as most of its sister institutions. In fact, basketball was the school's only official sport.

Although there were hard years of depression, and many other obstacles to overcome, CHS, as an education institution, graduated its first class in May 1949. This class, consisting of nine (9) females and one (1) male, marked the true beginning of a tradition that was to last for more than two decades. Throughout this era of the school's growth, much was done to form a standard of high ideas, a sound academic program and spiritual values. These standards are evidenced in each of us today in the form of personal improvements and changes, which have come to us through unheralded personal efforts, sacrifices and tragedies.

CHS Chorus under the direction of Mr. Walter Plemmer, recorded an album before it closed. By the end of 1971, having reached the peak years, CHS would no longer exist as we knew it. Conetoe High School graduated its last class of 60 eager minds in June 1971. This left the underclassmen to finish their high school education at North Edgecombe, South Edgecombe or Tarboro High Schools. The consequence of time, terrain, troubles and drams was an inevitable mixture of legend and lives surrounding a community. This mixture is recorded as history.

Although our school no longer exists physically as an educational institution, the perpetuation of its legacy and life rests squarely on the shoulders of each of us. We must endeavor to continue our educational quests and maintain the high standards and ideals, which we were taught. The great contribution our institution made to us, our parents and community -- its impact and influence -- must remain entrenched in our hearts and minds. For those of us who were blessed to have been affiliated with Conetoe High School in any capacity truly have experienced the feeling of "being high up or close to heaven"!

### 2018 CHSAA Planning Committee



**Save the 2021 Reunion Dates: May 29 - 30, 2021**  
*(50th Anniversary of the school closing in 1971)*

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