

**Gov. Charles B. Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site**  
**Updated Content Narrative**  
**December 2023**

**Executive Summary**

The following document serves as an updated content narrative for the Governor Charles B. Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site, in Fremont, North Carolina. Beginning with Governor Aycock's family and childhood and continuing into his time at UNC, his role in the White Supremacy Campaign of 1898, and his support of the Suffrage Amendment, this narrative aims to bring together two disparate threads of Aycock's legacy: his commitment to education, and his commitment to White supremacy. In the process, this narrative places Aycock within a broader social and political Southern context and provides a brief overview of the ways in which Aycock has been remembered and memorialized since his death. This narrative was completed through a Priority Updates to State History (P.U.S.H.) Fellowship from February to December 2023, funded jointly by the North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources and Carolina Public Humanities at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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## **Introduction**

On November 1, 1959, a crowd gathered in Wayne County to witness the dedication of the Governor Charles B. Aycock Birthplace. An eyewitness account in the *News & Observer* describes an air of excitement and celebration at what was essentially a large Eastern North Carolina family reunion (Daniels 1959). However, the same account cautions the reader against overly romanticizing Charles Aycock himself. “We need to know the qualities, the humanity, the struggles and the defects as well as the talents of the man who grew from this house to become a word for the best aspirations of a State,” wrote Jonathan W. Daniels, then-editor of the paper and son of Josephus Daniels (a colleague of Aycock’s and one of the leading perpetrators of the Wilmington Insurrection of 1898) (“Jonathan Worth Daniels” n.d.). “Aycock was a man. He was one of us...If he is to have meaning long, we need understanding of him too, as a man like ourselves facing problems like our own” (Daniels 1959). Daniels’s words resonate today. Contextualizing Governor Aycock with rigorous, archival information about his family, his community, and his policies, as well as within the broader socio-political landscapes in which he moved and worked and the socio-political landscapes in which his memory has been kept alive, can only enrich our understanding and memorialization of the man himself.

Charles B. Aycock (1859-1912) remains both a central and divisive figure in North Carolina today. In the century since his death, historians and laypeople alike have perpetuated a narrative that prioritizes Aycock’s educational policies, nicknaming him the “Education Governor” and highlighting that his administration oversaw the building of 1,100 schools across

North Carolina, raised teaching salaries, and extended the length of public school terms at a time when North Carolina had some of the highest illiteracy numbers in the country (Boyette 1985; *Public Laws and Resolutions* 1901; Walker and Seaton 1883). Today, the Aycock Birthplace is owned by the state and serves as an important aspect of local Fremont and Pikeville communities, with 17 regular volunteers from the surrounding area (including a 9-person support group as of fall 2023), summer reading programs with local libraries, and popular public programming, including Farm Heritage Days in late spring and genealogy workshops throughout the year (“Fifty-Eighth Biennial Report of the North Carolina Office of Archives and History” 2020).

On the other hand, Aycock’s legacy as a governor concerned solely with expanding public education in North Carolina has been problematized more and more over the past several years. Supported and encouraged by the Uprisings for Black Lives in 2020, and substantiated by numerous researchers, Aycock’s explicit White<sup>1</sup> supremacy and the connections he drew between education, White supremacy, and disenfranchising non-White voters are becoming clearer. In 2020, the UNC Commission on Race, History, and a Way Forward prepared a report that highlighted Aycock’s role in the Wilmington Insurrection of 1898. As a result, Aycock’s name was removed from two university buildings (Hudson 2020). His name has also been

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, I follow current scholarship that recommends capitalizing both “Black” and “White” when discussing race to recognize the social and historical roots of both categories. Capitalizing “Black” recognizes the shared history and vital contributions of Black Americans. At the same time, a pervasive tendency to capitalize “Black” without capitalizing “White” often results in identifying Whiteness as a neutral, natural category, when in reality it, too, is a historically-created social grouping (Appiah 2020).

removed from streets in Raleigh, Greensboro, and Charlotte, where local leadership pointed to his White supremacist views and voter suppression policies as a reason to change the signs (Anthony 2019; H. Lee 2021; Gutierrez 2021). A statue of Aycock that previously stood in the U.S. Capitol Building's crypt was removed in 2020 (Friedman 2020).

How, then, to understand and memorialize a man whose political legacy includes both progressive public education and institutionalized White supremacy? In the following content narrative, I aim to knit together the disparate threads of Aycock's social and political legacy that have created a memorial figure of such complexity. I first present information about Aycock's family, early life, and education, then turn to his oratory with the Southern Democratic Party and his pivotal involvement in the White Supremacy Campaign of 1898. I further interrogate the connections Aycock made throughout his life between public education and White supremacy, placing his work in the political context of North Carolina and the broader South in the late 1800s in order to more fully understand his goals. I close with an institutional history of the Charles B. Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site from its beginnings as a memorial commission in 1949, to its present iteration as a postbellum farm museum with great potential for interpreting Reconstruction and Jim Crow in North Carolina. In doing so, I demonstrate how the story of Charles Aycock is the story of both the development of a public school system, *and* the emergence and entrenchment of Jim Crow in North Carolina<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Other aspects of Aycock's life, including his law practice, his gubernatorial work on behalf of railroad expansion and temperance in North Carolina, and his marriages and children, are less present in this document due to length constraints.

An additional note: the site today does an admirable job of showcasing multiple aspects of Charles B. Aycock's life and politics. Along with Aycock's early life and political goals, site staff have added additional materials in the past few decades regarding the impact of segregation and desegregation on North Carolina educational systems over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ongoing archival research by the assistant site manager, Tyler Mink, continues to shed further light upon Aycock's family, early life, and politics. These findings add nuance to the story of Aycock as a simple farm boy who became a governor dedicated to universal education. Mink's new interpretive plan (2021) is a significant asset to the site and should be employed further in guided tours and printed materials, as well as incorporated into volunteer guides, websites, and any language for new employees and school groups. The following content narrative augments and underlines Mink's new interpretive plan and should be utilized alongside Mink's document.

### **Not a Simple Farm Boy: Charles B. Aycock's Family & Childhood**

When Charles Aycock arrived at the University of North Carolina in 1877, he was met – along with the other first-years – by a crowd of sophomores. One of these sophomores, Francis D. Winston, recalled that: “Aycock was yet a boy in appearance and bore about him the simplicity and naturalness of one who has just left the plow handles on his father's farm” (Connor and Poe 1912, p. 21). Aycock later said that: “I must have been a sight. I wore a

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homemade suit of homespun cloth” (Orr 1961, p. 26) This image of a simple farm boy arriving on the collegiate – and, later, political – scene is one that Aycock himself, as well as his friends, continued to perpetuate throughout his life and after his death. Aycock’s first biographers<sup>3</sup> describe the community in which he grew up as “sturdy, law-abiding, industrious, [and] rural” (Connor and Poe 1912, p. 5) They represent Aycock’s upbringing as hardscrabble and difficult on a poor, isolated farm in rural North Carolina. Benjamin Aycock, Charles’s father, is described in the same volume as “a man of great reserve and dignity” who loved simplicity and was uncomfortably thrust into politics only when his neighbors demanded it of him. Charles’s mother, Serena Hooks Aycock, is described as intelligent, though uneducated, and as a kind, dutiful mother. The family’s Primitive Baptist faith<sup>4</sup> is cited as a central reason for a lifestyle largely devoid of material comforts and pleasures (Connor and Poe 1912).

However, archival research reveals a different picture: one in which young Charles Aycock grew up on a thriving, prosperous farm, raised by a socially-connected mother and a

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<sup>3</sup> Clarence Poe and R.D.W. Connor published the first biographical account of Charles B. Aycock in 1912, less than a year after his death. The book includes transcripts of many of Aycock’s speeches, as well as biographical sketches drawn from letters and interviews with Aycock’s friends. R.D.W. Connor was a longtime friend of Aycock himself, and Clarence Poe was Aycock’s son-in-law.

<sup>4</sup> By 1830, Primitive Baptists had established themselves in North Carolina as a distinct sect from Missionary Baptists, and were a prominent presence in Eastern North Carolina by the time of Charles’s birth. Jesse Aycock, Charles’s grandfather, left land to Fremont’s Memorial Primitive Baptist Church in his will in 1822, indicating a longstanding connection between the Aycock family and the Primitive Baptist faith. Benjamin and Serena Aycock attended Memorial PB Church with their children, where sermons would have stressed honesty, integrity, decorum, and an avoidance of worldly luxuries. Charles Aycock was never baptized in the Primitive Baptist church, however, since the church only engaged in adult baptism. While at UNC, Aycock attended a Missionary Baptist revival and formally joined a Missionary Baptist congregation in 1879 (Wegner 2005; Boyette 1985).

politically-minded father. The Wilmington-Weldon railroad line began operation in 1840 less than half of a mile west of the Aycock farm, effectively connecting the Aycock farm to the world beyond (Boyette 1985). Furthermore, the Aycocks themselves were much wealthier than many of their neighbors. In 1860, Charles's father Benjamin had a combined value of real estate and personal estate of \$20,000, and enslaved at least 12 people prior to the Civil War according to the 1850 and 1860 census slave schedules. By 1870, despite the upheaval of the Civil War and the emancipation of the farm's enslaved workforce, Benjamin was the fifth wealthiest man in Nahunta township (Boyette 1985). He served as the Wayne County Clerk throughout the 1850s, earning a steady salary of \$100 per year ("Wayne County Clerk of Superior Court Minutes" 1845). In addition to his clerk earnings, the Aycock family farm steadily increased in value and productivity over the decades. Census records show that the value of the farm increased from \$1,000 in 1850, to \$10,000 in 1860. Even after the Civil War, the farm was valued in the 1870 census at \$8,000, and the "acres improved" on the Aycock farm in 1870 (1,030) were nearly 5 times bigger than the number of acres improved on the average North Carolina farm of the time (212) (Boyette 1985).

Archival evidence also suggests that, if Benjamin was a reluctant politician and leader, he nonetheless dedicated decades of his life to political leadership. In addition to his role as Wayne County Clerk, Benjamin was a Wayne County state senator in 1864 and 1865, and led his local Primitive Baptist Church as a deacon at the time of his death (Connor and Poe 1912; Boyette 1985). Benjamin's political career foreshadowed his son's in term of working for White supremacy. While in the Senate, Benjamin supported the Conscription Act, aligning himself with the Confederate government and against then-Governor Zebulon Vance, who considered the act

unconstitutional (Boyette 1985; Connor and Poe 1912). At the end of the war, Benjamin found himself in the majority of the Senate as they adopted a “Black Code,” which restricted Black citizenship. He also helped block the construction of a college to train Black teachers and ministers (Orr 1961). Throughout his political life, Benjamin was an advocate for White supremacy in a way that clearly impacted his son.

Charles Aycock’s mother, Serena Aycock (née Hooks), was part of a large network of land-owning Hooks families in Wayne County, many of whom were also quite wealthy by the standards of the area. Her grandfather, Robert Hooks, is described as “a man of considerable wealth, as wealth was then counted in that community...indicated by the fact that he was the master of fourteen slaves. In all Wayne County only twenty-seven persons owned a larger number” (Connor and Poe 1912, p. 4). Serena’s mother, Mary Bishop, came from a Quaker family, but was excommunicated from the Quaker congregation for marrying outside of the faith (Orr 1961). Serena’s Quaker blood, however, is consistently cited in Aycock biographies as having a lasting impact on her son (Connor and Poe 1912)<sup>5</sup>. In this way, Charles Aycock is portrayed as inheriting both a sturdy industriousness from his family’s Primitive Baptist faith, as well as a grave gentleness from his grandmother’s Quaker upbringing, despite the fact that his

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<sup>5</sup> A story attributed to Aycock himself is that Serena was illiterate, and that a young Charles, upon seeing his mother make her mark with an “X” on a legal document, was struck with the need for universal public education in North Carolina (Connor and Poe 1912). Modern historians have no way to prove or disprove such a story, and it is clear that this was a key way in which Aycock connected his later policies for public education with his own family and upbringing. However, one does wonder why a woman – who would not have been considered a legal entity in the mid-1800s – would have been signing a legal document at all.

own mother was not Quaker and that he himself was never baptized in the Primitive Baptist church. Of course, upbringing can affect values passed to descendants as much as formal membership can. It is, however, interesting to note which religious groups appear in narratives about Charles Aycock, and how they are used to frame his character.

Benjamin and Serena Aycock had 10 children, of which Charles was the youngest (Boyette 1985). However, Aycock family members were not the only people living at the Birthplace prior to the Civil War. Two young Black men are listed in the Aycock census data from 1850 as “farmhands.” Gilbert and Elbert Artice, ages 17 and 15 respectively, were indentured apprentices of Benjamin Aycock. While on paper, young people were indentured as apprentices in order to learn a trade and support poor families, in reality the practice in North Carolina was disproportionately applied to free Black and mixed-race families, as well as families headed by unmarried women, creating a form of social control that effectively targeted Black people outside of slavery and made it nearly impossible for women of any race to live independently from a white male head of household (Zipf 2005). As the county clerk, Benjamin Aycock would have been one of the people in the county responsible for identifying children who were eligible for apprenticeships: that is, children whose fathers were absent or whose parents were judged by the state to not be educating them properly. The indentured apprenticeship system was extremely popular in Wayne County among White landowning men. William Hooks, Serena’s brother, also indentured two apprentices from the Artice family. Their

bonds of service, along with the bonds of Gilbert and Elbert Artice, can still be found in the North Carolina State Archives.<sup>6</sup>

We know that Benjamin Aycock also enslaved people, although the names of many of these people have, unfortunately, not been found in existing research<sup>7</sup>. Without names, even the exact number of people enslaved on the Aycock farm is difficult to determine. In the 1850 census slave schedule, 4 people are listed under Benjamin Aycock's name. Based on the information in the slave schedule, we know their age, their gender, and their "colour" (that is, whether the census taker listed them as Black with a "B," or as a "mulatto," with an "M"). In 1850, people with the following characteristics were enslaved by the Aycocks: a 48-year-old Black woman; a 42-year-old Black man; a 32-year-old Black man; and a 5-year-old Black girl. By 1860, the number of enslaved people listed on the census slave schedule had increased to 9. In 1860, people with the following characteristics were enslaved by the Aycocks: a 35-year-old Black man; a 29-year-old Black man; a 25-year-old Black man; a 23-year-old Black woman; a 15-year-old Black girl; a 13-year-old Black boy; a 10-year-old Black girl; a 6-year-old Black girl; and a 10-month-old Black baby boy. 2 houses for enslaved people had also been added to the farm's outbuildings by 1860, demonstrating the Aycocks' increased investment in the structures of slavery.

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<sup>6</sup> While one of the central tenets of apprenticeship was to teach the apprentices to read and write, this part of the contract was crossed out when the child was not White.

<sup>7</sup> More on the lives of enslaved people in Eastern North Carolina can be found in the collection of interviews conducted by the Federal Writers' Project from 1936-1938, digitized at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

Some of the names of these enslaved people have been found by researchers using methods other than the census. It was common practice during the Civil War for slaveholders to rent their enslaved people to the Confederate Army to fill labor needs. In January of 1863, Benjamin Aycock rented two enslaved men named Prismus and Stephen to the Confederate Army for 16 days, at the rate of \$15/month (“Defenses of Neuse River” 1863). This particular payroll is labeled as being for building fortifications along the Neuse River. Based on the location of the Aycock farm and contemporaneous maps of Confederate defenses, Prismus and Stephen were likely working in the vicinity of Kinston (“Field Map of Lieut. Koerner’s Military Survey between Neuse and Tar Rivers North Carolina” 1863). We can speculate that Prismus and Stephen were two of the 35-, 29-, or 25-year-old Black men listed on the Aycock census from 1860, although it is also possible that Benjamin Aycock had purchased them more recently than 1860. Later in life, Charles Aycock recalled playing with an enslaved boy named Ike on his parents’ farm (Orr 1961), who is likely to have been the 10-month-old listed on the 1860 census. Research must continue, however, into the lives and identities of the people enslaved on the Aycock farm.

After the Civil War, Benjamin Aycock dropped out of the political arena<sup>8</sup>, but others in the Aycock family were active in anti-Reconstruction efforts and the Aycock house continued to be a place of political conversation within the community (Connor and Poe 1912; Orr 1961). At

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<sup>8</sup> Benjamin renewed his activities at the Primitive Baptist church and remained active in leadership there until his death in 1875 (Connor and Poe 1912).

least one of Charles's older brothers was involved with a local violent White supremacist group called the Blue Season Rangers that repeatedly fought Union soldiers in the months after the Confederacy's fall (Connor and Poe 1912). It is clear from Charles's later speeches that his memories of his childhood during Reconstruction were colored by an overarching narrative of a poverty-stricken White South plagued by newly-freed Black people. "There was neither food nor raiment," he said in one campaign speech, speaking of what Confederate soldiers found when returning home after the Civil War. "Those who had in the past labored for them were free, and were enjoying their new freedom with license which imperiled life and property, and their fields were gone to waste" (Connor and Poe 1912, p. 14). Growing up during Reconstruction, Aycock absorbed a racially-charged worldview that set White and Black people against each other and that shaped his policies throughout his life.

Charles Aycock's earliest memories would have been of Reconstruction, and he grew up amid the propaganda and poverty that ran rampant throughout White Southern communities in the years after the Civil War. Aycock later used his childhood memories strategically in political speeches to both position himself as a true (read: rural and White) North Carolinian and to press for White political power. Far from being isolated and poor, however, Governor Aycock's childhood was likely quite materially comfortable, and deeply influenced by the broader political contexts of Reconstruction. Today, with additional research, we can understand him better by learning more about the people who raised him and the broader socio-political contexts that shaped his political career.

## The Education of the “Education Governor”

Aycock’s own education laid a further foundation for his later policies, both through formal training in oratory, and through the network of friends and peers he accumulated throughout his schooling. This network would hold him throughout his life and deeply inform his role in the White Supremacy Campaign of 1898.

Charles Aycock began his formal education when he was eight years old. In 1867, he enrolled with six of his siblings in the local private school for White children, Nahunta Academy, which he attended until it closed due to lack of funding. In 1872, Charles and one of his brothers began attending the all-White Wilson Collegiate Institute in nearby Wilson, where he met Josephus Daniels (later the editor of the *Raleigh News & Observer*), formed a debate society, and connected with the local lawyer Henry Groves Connor through shared interests in law and politics (Boyette 1985; Orr 1961). Aycock left Wilson in 1875, accepting a teaching position at the reopened Nahunta Academy, but enrolled in the Kinston Collegiate Institute in 1876 (Boyette 1985). Aycock clearly thrived at the Institute, as he returned to deliver the commencement address there in 1879 (Taylor 2006).

Aycock was the only one of his siblings to attend college (Orr 1961). He entered UNC Chapel Hill as part of the second incoming class after the university re-opened<sup>9</sup> and was immediately enfolded into a tight-knit community of only 160 students, many of whom all lived

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<sup>9</sup> University trustees had voted to close the college rather than allow the Republican government to run the university in the war’s immediate aftermath (Downs 2009).

together in South Building alongside George Winston, a new professor who would have an intense and lasting effect on Aycock (Boyette 1985; Downs 2009). During his first year at UNC, Aycock joined the Philanthropic Literary Society, one of two large debate teams on campus (Orr 1961; Boyette 1985). He was elected president of the society later that same year, and formed a smaller extempore debating society alongside Frank Daniels (Josephus's brother) (Orr 1961). He edited a small newspaper called *The Weekly Ledger* during his last year at UNC, in which he wrote editorials on state politics and education (Orr 1961). Clearly, Aycock was already developing himself as an orator and a public figure during his time at UNC.

At UNC, Aycock joined what would become a group of public intellectuals who drew on progressive teachings – specifically, Darwin's theory of evolution – to re-imagine a White supremacist state founded in social evolution (Downs 2009). Aycock and many of his university peers diverged from their professors' insistence on laissez-faire (i.e. only the strong will survive) to craft a politics of social services and safety nets that were quite progressive for their time, including child labor laws, prohibition, and – of course – public education. However, these social services prioritized White people, with the idea that without such services, the “dominant race” was in danger of “degeneration” (Downs 2009).

Interestingly, the fear of White degeneration was not a new one for Southern White politicians, specifically in the realm of public education. Public figures associated with education, including the first president of UNC and the first superintendent of public schools, had been campaigning for public education systems since before the Civil War partly through emphasizing a particular danger of poor White people drifting closer to the status of enslaved Black people without education. Other White politicians pointed out that if the races were truly

as separate as the slave system maintained, White progress through education was unnecessary and additional taxation for public schooling was not needed (Watson 2012). Such debates, casting the racial and class divides of antebellum and postbellum Southern society into sharp relief, would have been familiar to Aycock and his peers at UNC.

At UNC, Aycock became adept at wielding progressive ideas in the service of the race-based discrimination and White supremacy that had shaped his childhood and social context. Aycock graduated from UNC after only three years, in 1880 (Boyette 1985). The years between his graduation and his entry into Southern politics were largely filled with his private law practice in Goldsboro and his growing family (Downs 2009). However, Aycock's education – particularly his time at UNC – would serve him well in the years to come, as contention continued to grow between social and political factions in the South.

### **Politics and Education in North Carolina and the U.S. South between 1865-1898**

Charles Aycock's attention to education reform was not separate from the White supremacist policies and goals that he and many of his contemporaries in the Southern Democratic party held. Rather, Aycock's support of public education throughout his oratorical and political career was intimately bound up with a dedication to White supremacy that is visible throughout his life.

#### *Farmers & Fusionists: Shifts in the Southern Political Landscape*

Charles Aycock grew up and came to political power during an extremely turbulent time in Southern politics. The entire postbellum South was dramatically changed by the rise of the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist Party (Vann Woodward 1951). The Farmers' Alliance began

appearing in North Carolina in 1887, organizing farmers along racial lines but cooperating with Black farmers through the Colored Farmers' Alliance. The group was purportedly apolitical, claiming to support the unique interests and needs of farmers regardless of their political affiliation. Indeed, early leadership included Democrats, Republicans, and independents (Redding 2003). As ongoing economic struggles continued to plague the state, however, "farmer" more and more became a political identity and Democratic leaders began to fear the power of a broad coalition with the potential to bring White farmers under the same political umbrella as the Republicans and their majority-Black constituency (Redding 2003). As Farmers Alliance members began to defect from the mainstream Democratic party to create the Populist Party of North Carolina, Fusion tickets began appearing in elections with Populist and Republican candidates running for office alongside each other (Prather 1977; Boyette 1985). These tickets were bi-racial, continuing and expanding a trend of Black officeholding that began with Reconstruction. By 1898, over 1,000 Black men held office in North Carolina – including George White, who represented North Carolina's Second Congressional District in Washington from 1896-1900 (Zucchino 2020; Redding 2003; Vann Woodward 1951; Anderson 1981; Boyette 1985; Foner 1996).

In response to this burgeoning bi-racial movement, the Democratic party focused on voting rights: specifically, removing voting rights from non-White people in an effort to consolidate power and re-establish White Democrats as the main political players in the state. North Carolina Democrats were not alone in this. In 1890, Democrats in Mississippi implemented poll taxes and literacy tests to limit voter registration. Such strategies were not explicitly race-based; however, going hand-in-hand with violent intimidation tactics against

Black and White Fusion voters and politicians, the ultimate goal of the strategies were clearly anti-Black (Redding 2003; Anderson 1981; Vann Woodward 1951; Prather 1977). Democrats justified the literacy test and poll tax by referring to rampant voter fraud and compromised elections. A White Republican in Virginia noted: “The remedy suggested here is to punish the man who has been injured. The Negroes were to be disfranchised to prevent the Democratic election officials from stealing their votes” (Vann Woodward 1951, p. 327) The Supreme Court upheld both the literacy tests and the poll tax in *Williams v Mississippi* in 1898, setting a legal precedent for voter suppression and opening the floodgates for other Southern states to follow suit (Vann Woodward 1951).

### *Education in North Carolina*

The shifting political landscape in the South was echoed by shifts in the landscape of public education. Before the Civil War, North Carolina had been the first Southern state to offer state-funded education to all White children, although questions of whether or not to fund primary education for White children had provoked widespread debate across the state and region prior to the Civil War, as noted above (Watson 2012). The first Superintendent of Common Schools, Calvin Wiley, took office in 1853 and served until the end of the war in 1865 (Watson 2012). During Reconstruction, the Republican-led government instituted a racially-equitable (though still segregated) four-month public education for all children in the state between the ages of 5-21, and the Freedman’s Bureau established 431 schools for Black students across the state, with 20,000 pupils over three years (Boyette 1985). In 1896, with a Fusionist victory and Republican leaders once more in control, the school tax was raised, teacher exams were mandated, and local schools gained popularity (Boyette 1985). Still, there was a dramatic

gap between the education and uneducated population in North Carolina. In statistics from the 1880 census, North Carolina had one of the highest rates of “native White illiteracy” – that is, illiteracy among White people who were born in the U.S. – of any state in the country (Walker and Seaton 1883). This gap fueled Aycock, along with many of his peers at UNC, in a lifelong dedication to public education<sup>10</sup>.

### *The White Supremacy Campaign of 1898*

Following in Mississippi’s footsteps, voting restrictions began to sweep through Southern states. In South Carolina, alongside poll taxes and confusing ballot systems, a vigilante White supremacist group called the Red Shirts violently intimidated Black voters and their allies at the polls (Vann Woodward 1951; Redding 2003). Red Shirts appeared in North Carolina throughout the 1890s as well, and were folded into the campaign plan created by the North Carolina Democratic Party’s leader, Furnifold Simmons. Simmons aimed to mobilize White North Carolinians around a platform of race-based fear-mongering (Downs 2009; Boyette 1985), and devised a strategy incorporating “men who could write, men who could speak, and men who could ride” to get campaign messages across the state (Tyson 2006). While “men who could write” wrote editorials and newspaper articles and “men who could ride” violently intimidated Black voters and Fusion politicians, “men who could speak” were orators who travelled across the state connecting with crowds of largely-illiterate White poor and working class people.

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<sup>10</sup> Further information on education in North Carolina can be found in Joan Malczewski’s book, *Building a New Educational State: Foundations, Schools, and the American South*.

Here, Charles Aycock's oratory – which he had nurtured throughout his education and continued to develop in his private law practice – found its place in the White supremacist campaign. In fact, Aycock himself was part of a rally in 1898 that formally introduced White supremacy as a key party priority for the upcoming elections (Boyette 1985). Ever skillful at cultural translation, Aycock consistently played up the threat of “Negro rule” and the perceived danger that Black men – particularly Black men in political office – posed to White women, effectively translating the Democratic party line of White supremacy to those who could not read the articles in the *Raleigh News & Observer* (which was headed, at this point, by Josephus Daniels, Aycock's old friend from school) (Vann Woodward 1951; Redding 2003; Downs 2009; Tyson 2006).

Most of Aycock's speeches focused on perceived threats from Black people toward White people, without outwardly inciting violence on the part of White people or encouraging bloodshed. However, Red Shirts often escorted Aycock to his speeches, providing a visual representation of the violent arm of the White supremacy campaign, and Aycock spoke at Goldsboro a few days before the Wilmington Insurrection of 1898 (Boyette 1985). The Wilmington Insurrection of 1898 was a successful effort to violently overthrow a Fusionist, majority-Black, and thriving city structure (Zucchino 2020; Tyson 2006). However, Aycock and his peers recognized that depending on violence would not be sustainable in the long run. They proposed an amendment to the North Carolina constitution – the Suffrage Amendment – that would legally entrench Democratic power – and institutionalize White supremacy – by disenfranchising Black voters in staggering numbers. Aycock's gubernatorial campaign was deeply connected with the campaign for the Suffrage Amendment, leading to one campaign

slogan that read “For Amendment and Aycock.” Once elected, Aycock signed the amendment into law in 1901<sup>11</sup>.

The amendment required new voters to take a literacy test and pay a poll tax, as in other Southern states. Any man who could vote prior to 1867 and his lineal descendants, however, were protected under the “grandfather clause,” creating an exception for poor and illiterate White voters while specifically – although not explicitly – targeting Black voters (since free Black people were banned from voting in North Carolina in 1835) (Roy and Ford 2019). The clause was set to expire on December 1, 1908. Thus, the overall literacy rate of White voters had to be improved by that date (Boyette 1985; Redding 2003). Aycock had been a proponent of public education for years, often supporting it in collegiate debates and corresponding with peers about North Carolina’s need for a better education system, but this was a key moment in which he connected public education and White supremacy. In order to assuage the fears of illiterate White voters who would be disfranchised under the amendment once the grandfather clause expired, Aycock promised, in his gubernatorial platform, to fund and build schools (Boyette 1985; Redding 2003).

He made good on that promise. As governor, Charles Aycock built over 1,000 public schools across North Carolina, raised wages for teachers, increased the length of the school term, and brought libraries into public schools (Boyette 1985; *Public Laws and Resolutions* 1901).

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<sup>11</sup> For the full text of the amendment, as printed in the *Wilson Daily Times* in April 1899, see <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2022/04/10/white-supremacy-made-permanent/>

These schools, though segregated, served both Black and White students; in fact, one of Aycock's more progressive stances, by today's standards, was that school taxes should not be divvied up in terms of race, but in terms of school population (Boyette 1985). However, the presence of Black schools did not ensure equality of education, and there was undeniably an unequal burden placed on African American taxpayers for the level of public education made available to them (Roy and Ford 2019). Of the 1,100 public schools built during Aycock's administration, only 200 of them were for non-White students (Boyette 1985).

Even where Black schools were present, they were consistently underfunded. James Y. Joyner, the Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed by Governor Aycock in 1902, wrote: "The negro schools can be run for much less expense and should be. In most places it does not take more than one fourth as much to run the negro schools as it does to run the white schools for about the same number of children. The salaries paid teachers are very properly much smaller...if quietly managed, the negroes will give no trouble about it" (Fountain 2022). In this way, Aycock and his cabinet stood for universal public education that was nonetheless consistently and intentionally unequal.

Despite unequal education conditions, Black people in North Carolina continued to deepen a longstanding commitment to education throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Teachers and students across the state utilized the scant materials they were given to teach and learn, fostering intellectual curiosity and self-confidence that would continue to benefit a generation of North Carolinians (Roy and Ford 2019). The Palmer Memorial Institute, although not a public school, was founded in 1902 by educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Beginning squarely in the middle of Aycock's term as governor, the Institute became a national name in Black education,

incorporating academic, industrial, and agricultural training. Over 90% of the more than 2,000 graduating students attended college, and 64% pursued postgraduate degrees (Wadelington 2006). Such successes set the stage for the Rosenwald Fund’s campaign in North Carolina, which began in 1917 and built over 800 schools for Black students throughout the state, as well as providing funding, teacher training, and curriculum materials (Roy and Ford 2019). Despite structural inequality within the North Carolina public school system, Black North Carolinians actively built a network of schools and resources that educated a generation of students – the same generation that would go on to actively undermine and fight against White supremacy in the decades to come<sup>12</sup>.

Charles Aycock, however, continued to preach White supremacy and segregation throughout his life. “Let the negro learn once and for all that there is unending separation of the races,” he said in a 1903 speech to the North Carolina Society in Baltimore. “That the two peoples may develop side by side to the fullest but that they cannot intermingle...and the race problem will be at an end. These things are not said in enmity to the negro,” he continued. “But in regard for him...as Governor I have frequently protected him. But there flows in my veins the blood of the dominant race...When the negro recognizes this fact we shall have peace and good

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<sup>12</sup> Additional primary sources available at: “African American Education,” North Carolina Digital Collections, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/spotlights/african-american-education-in-north-carolina>

will between the races” (Poe, p. 162-3). Aycock was proud of his White supremacist views and he based much of his political life upon this foundation<sup>13</sup>.

The outcomes of the White Supremacy Campaign of 1898, as well as the Suffrage Amendment, were numerous, long-lasting, and devastating for democracy and for Black political life in North Carolina. 750,000 Black men lost the right to vote when Aycock signed the amendment into law. The election of 1900 ushered in a 75-year Democratic government in North Carolina and set the stage for the Jim Crow system of segregation (Tyson 2006). Charles Aycock was a key figure in creating and implementing a structure of racial segregation and voter suppression that would impact the next century and counting. His educational policies were not separate from this legacy, but a central and foundational piece of that same legacy.

### **Constructing Aycock’s Memory: Memorialization and Birthplace Site Trajectory from 1912-2023**

The trajectory of the Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site reflects the shifting narrative of Southern Democrats, and of Aycock himself, over the course of the twentieth century. Charles B. Aycock died suddenly while still quite young, during a speech at the 31<sup>st</sup> annual convention of the Alabama Education Association on April 4, 1912 (Boyette 1985; Connor and Poe 1912). He

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<sup>13</sup> Today, the Birthplace museum holds two exceptional artifacts that attest to Aycock’s White supremacy: the button from his 1900 gubernatorial run, and his cane. The cane is an ornately-carved wooden piece that museum materials state was gifted to Aycock by a supporter. The words “White Supremacy” are carved into the handle at the very place where Aycock’s hand would have gripped. The button, in contrast, is extraordinarily simple. It foregoes any of the more recognizable aspects of a campaign button today, such as election year, elected position, and even the candidate’s name. The small button only has two words written on it: “White Supremacy.”

was 53 years old, and mid-speech. Poe and Connor wrote that his last word was “education” (Connor and Poe 1912).

Memorialization of Charles B. Aycock began almost as soon as he died and can be traced alongside contemporaneous political movements. In April 1912, well-attended memorial exercises were held for him in Alabama and in North Carolina. Transcriptions of the several speeches given at the memorial were bound with a stenographer’s report of his final speech in a slim volume (“Memorial Exercises” 1912) . The biography by Connor & Poe was published later than same year and set the tone for the next several decades of Aycock memorialization by emphasizing Aycock’s rural upbringing and his educational policies, although without downplaying Aycock’s White supremacy. In fact, contemporaneous pamphlets advertising the biography explicitly highlights “the arousing campaign of 1898 and 1900, including...the work of maintaining White supremacy” and “the supreme effort of the White race in holding its own” (“The Life and Speeches of Charles B. Aycock,” n.d.). Testimonials printed in the same pamphlet maintain that “a copy of ‘The Life and Speeches of Charles Aycock’ should be in every home and every school in North Carolina.”

Memorialization continued throughout the twentieth century. A monument to Aycock was erected in Capitol Square, Raleigh, in 1924, just twelve years after his death and during the governorship of Cameron Morrison (a fellow perpetrator of the Wilmington Insurrection of 1898). The monument’s inscription, printed in the unveiling program, positions Aycock as dedicated to equality before the law (“Unveiling of Monument” 1924). Although the 1924 pamphlet does not mention White supremacy as explicitly as the memorial literature from 1912, many of the speakers (including Governor Morrison and Josephus Daniels) were directly

connected to White supremacist violence. In 1933, Aycock was honored at the UNC Founder's Day with a special memorial oration ("140th University Day" 1933). In 1941, a memorial tablet jointly commemorating Governors Charles Aycock and Zebulon Vance was placed at UNC (Winston 1941). In 1951, a joint session of the North Carolina General Assembly met to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Aycock's inauguration as governor and commissioned a portrait of him to hang in the Hall of the House of Representatives, which was unveiled later that same year (Hoey and Graham 1951). Throughout the century, as memorialization continued under predominantly Democratic administrations, Aycock's White supremacy occupied less and less of the memorial language. It was drowned out, more and more, by his educational policies.

In keeping with this trend, the Charles B. Aycock Birthplace began as a shrine to Aycock's educational achievements. In 1949, the General Assembly appointed a special commission "for the purpose of studying the possibilities of the perpetual preservation of the birth place and homestead of Governor Charles B. Aycock" (*Resolution 12* 1949). The resolution notes that since Governor Aycock is "recognized as one of North Carolina's greatest statesmen and the father of education in this state," the preservation of his birthplace and the establishment of a "suitable memorial" is "one of statewide concern and responsibility." The commission would consist of two members of the State Senate and three members of the House of Representatives, and would examine the logistical feasibility of acquiring the house in which Aycock was born and "establishing it as a State shrine in...recognition of the outstanding services by our recognized leader of education and as an incentive for others to assume leadership in solving the educational problems of this day and time." The resolution lays out quite clearly the original intention of Aycock Birthplace as a site: to memorialize and enshrine a very specific

narrative of Charles B. Aycock's life, with an emphasis on his educational policy placed against the backdrop of his early childhood in rural Wayne County<sup>14</sup>.

It would be another 10 years before the Birthplace opened as a state historic site in 1959, but the emphasis on Aycock's educational policies and his agricultural upbringing remained key features of the site's interpretation, at the expense of his White supremacy. A Goldsboro news article from 1957 describes a play about Governor Aycock's life with an emphasis on his early childhood and educational policies, encouraging any readers or audience members to come to the Birthplace when it opened (*Goldsboro News-Argus* 1957). The site's dedication program, on November 1, 1959, featured main speakers such as: Dr. David J. Rose (chairman of the Aycock Memorial Commission and a State Senator known for his educational work); the president of the Atlantic Christian College; and the state superintendent of public instruction ("Program for the Opening of the Charles B. Aycock Birthplace" 1959). With such a line-up, the emphasis on education is clear. In addition, one of the first pamphlets for the site, published in 1959, highlights the governor's "plain beginnings" and his parents' hardworking character, along with his gubernatorial dedication to public education ("Charles B. Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site" 1959). Overall, the dedication program and early site interpretive materials, as well as

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<sup>14</sup> Coming one year after President Harry Truman mandated the desegregation of the U.S. military in 1948 ("Executive Order 9981, Desegregating the Military" 2023), 1949 saw increasing formalization and solidification of White Southern resistance to integration (McRae 2018; Brückman 2021). It is interesting to note the attention paid to a governor who advocated *segregated* education at this time.

contemporaneous newspaper articles, highlight a particular interest in Aycock's rural upbringing and his educational policies.

The 1959 pamphlet does note that the 1900 Suffrage Amendment, alongside which Aycock campaigned for governorship, was a key piece of his educational policy. The amendment, which required new voters to take a literacy test, "made schools and learning necessary in order to produce voting citizens. This gave Aycock the opportunity to develop his educational policy" ("Charles B. Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site" 1959). The pamphlet neglects to mention the uneven distribution of resources between the segregated White and Black schools built at this time.

Over the next few years, however, the Aycock Birthplace made a name for itself as both a memorial for Charles Aycock and a working farm museum. Recreations of Aycock's Goldsboro law office and his Raleigh parlor were installed in the Birthplace museum, and the 1870 Oak Plain schoolhouse was moved to the site, demonstrating a continued prioritization of Aycock's educational work in site interpretation. Stables and several other dependencies were also moved to, or reconstructed at, the site, although the two slave houses that stood on the site in the 1850s were never rebuilt, despite their inclusion in initial site plans ("Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report" 1960). Children who visited the site could take part in hands-on activities like churning butter and making candles at least as early as 1975 ("Thirty-Sixth Biennial Report" 1976), which mirrors a rise in living history and hands-on activities at historic sites in the 1970s (Rymsza-Pawlowska 2017). In 1984, the site added a barnyard with live animals, including seven sheep ("Forty-First Biennial Report" 1986).

The site has incorporated more diverse narratives over time. In 2001, the site held a symposium on education and race relations in Aycock's time in collaboration with Wayne Community College (W. Lee 2002). In 2005, the Birthplace joined several other state historic sites in celebrating the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War by presenting the postwar occupation of Goldsboro by a brigade of Black Union troops ("Fifty-First Biennial Report" 2006). In 2009, according to Assistant Manager Tyler Mink, staff added language about the Red Shirts and White supremacy to the main exhibit panels, and in 2011 an interactive exhibit on school segregation and integration was added to the lobby area ("Fifty-Fourth Biennial Report" 2012). In 2019, the site held its first Black History Month program, with traditional African dance and musical instruments ("Fifty-Eighth Biennial Report" 2020). In 2022, Tyler Mink created a voting exhibit inside the schoolhouse that expertly connects education, White supremacy, and voting rights.

Throughout its history, the site has been intimately impacted by contemporaneous politics in North Carolina and the South more broadly. Photos in the site's archives record several visits from segregated school groups. The photos of the Black students depict mainly hands-on farm chores (for the boys) and domestic chores (for the girls), while the White students are shown seated in the schoolhouse, answering questions and looking at a globe. The visitor center was built with segregated bathrooms, which are used as supply closets today.

Just as the life of Charles Aycock represents the construction and entrenchment of Jim Crow in North Carolina, the trajectory of Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site is a microcosm of racial interactions in Wayne County, the continuation of the Jim Crow system in the twentieth

century, and ongoing efforts to more deeply contextualize Aycock's legacy of White supremacy in the present day.

## CONCLUSION

In the 2023 budget passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, the statue of Governor Charles Aycock that had previously stood in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. was slated for removal to the Charles B. Aycock State Historic Site (*House Bill 259 2023*). In order for this to become a reality, site staff say, significant structural updates will need to happen in the Birthplace museum, including reinforced flooring and a higher ceiling to accommodate the huge, heavy statue.

It is entirely fitting that a statue of the man whose legacy continues to shift more than a century after his death is itself in a state of flux. Material questions of where and how to display and contextualize the statue resonate alongside ongoing questions of where and how to remember Aycock himself, along with his many long-lasting impacts on North Carolina. One thing is clear: Aycock's legacy as a White supremacist and his legacy as the "Education Governor" are not separate. Not only are they deeply intertwined, but their connections shed light on the ways in which race, political power, and education have been constructed and experienced in North Carolina after the Civil War, with 1898 as a flashpoint. By focusing on Aycock's childhood during Reconstruction and providing further information on North Carolina between Reconstruction and 1898, the Birthplace is uniquely positioned to interpret such connections and to continue upholding Aycock's memory. The struggles for public education and racial justice are ongoing. As the Birthplace looks to the future, continued attention to the

political landscapes of Reconstruction – and their impacts on Charles Aycock’s childhood and politics – is not only desirable, but deeply necessary.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The following list includes additional resources and avenues for further research that, while beyond the scope of this project’s timeline, are important for the continued interpretation of Governor Aycock’s life, childhood, and legacy. Several of these avenues incorporate stories that, while they do not relate directly to the life of Charles B. Aycock, do reflect the lived experiences of people in Wayne County and North Carolina who were directly impacted by Aycock’s policies during his governorship and by structures of White supremacy more broadly. These include enslaved and free Black people in antebellum Wayne County, Black people in Wayne County during Reconstruction and the early twentieth century, and Native people in Wayne County and eastern North Carolina, particularly in relation to school segregation. By fleshing out such narratives and including them in interpretation, the Birthplace can continue to serve as a place of inquiry and learning for all of its visitors.

### *Black Life in Wayne County*

- **Wooden Birthplace Graveyard Markers:** The graveyard area that is today part of the Governor Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site includes roughly 16 unmarked wooden blocks, which site staff replace as needed when one begins to rot. They are set outside the fence that delineates the Aycock family graveyard, and are of uncertain origin and purpose. Drawing on knowledge of antebellum burial customs, it seems very likely that

these wooden blocks mark the burial sites of enslaved people; however, state archaeology surveys have been unable to confirm this as of 2023.

- **WPA Slave Narratives:** The published narratives from the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration include numerous firsthand accounts of enslaved life from formerly-enslaved people in North Carolina, including several from southeastern North Carolina. The full narratives can be accessed via the Library of Congress's website<sup>15</sup>.
- **The Freedmen's Bureau:** There was a Freedmen's Bureau field office in Goldsboro, North Carolina, from 1865-1868. Materials from this office regarding free Black life in Wayne County can be accessed via the National Archives website (for finding aids) and FamilySearch.org (for digital access)<sup>16</sup>. Tyler Mink has already done substantial research into the records of the Goldsboro field office.
- **Black Wide-Awake:** This blog<sup>17</sup>, curated by Lisa. Y. Henderson, is an incredible resource for information on Black life in Wilson County both pre- and post-Civil War. Wilson County borders Wayne County to the north, and Henderson's research includes

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<sup>15</sup> Full link to the collection: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/>

<sup>16</sup> Full link to the collection: <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau>

<sup>17</sup> Full link to blog: <https://afamwilsonnc.com/>

numerous connections with the extended Aycock family<sup>18</sup> and the extended Artis/Artice family<sup>19</sup>.

- **Black Newspapers:** There were several newspapers run by Black people in Wayne County during and after Reconstruction<sup>20</sup>, including the *Goldsboro Star*, which ran from 1881-1882<sup>21</sup>.
- **Black Figures:** There is great potential for highlighting Black politicians, educators, and activists who were actively in conversation with Charles Aycock and his gubernatorial policies. Some examples include:
  - **Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown** (1883-1961), a Henderson-born educator raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts who returned to North Carolina to teach rural Black students in 1901 at the age of 18 and founded the Palmer Memorial Institute in 1902. Her life and work for Black education serves as an important counterpoint to Aycock’s work, and could be an excellent tie-in between the Birthplace museum and the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Museum in Gibsonville.

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<sup>18</sup> “The Estates of Jesse and Patience Aycock,” with information on the people they enslaved <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2022/12/27/the-estates-of-jesse-and-patience-aycock/>

<sup>19</sup> “The Roots of Many Wilson County Artises, Part 1” <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2023/02/04/the-roots-of-many-wilson-county-artises-part-1/> & “The Roots of Many Wilson County Artises, Part 2” <https://afamwilsonnc.com/2023/02/06/the-roots-of-many-wilson-county-artises-part-2-artis-town/>

<sup>20</sup> Records of Black newspapers in North Carolina on DigitalNC: <https://www.digitalnc.org/exhibits/african-american-newspapers-in-nc/>

<sup>21</sup> Records of the *Goldsboro Star* on DigitalNC: [https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/the-goldsboro-star-goldsboro-n-c/?news\\_year=1882#](https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/the-goldsboro-star-goldsboro-n-c/?news_year=1882#)

- **James H. Young** (1858-1921), a Wake County state legislator (1894-1898) and graduate of Shaw University in Raleigh (1877) who edited the Raleigh Gazette for five years (1893-1898) and was one of the principal influences behind the successful Fusionist strategy of the 1890s. His writing serves as a window into Black Republican stances and strategies in the face of the White Supremacy Campaign of 1898.
- **George H. White** (1852-1918), the US senator for the Second Congressional District (known as the “Black Second”) from 1897-1901. The Second District included Wayne County, meaning that for first part of Aycock’s governorship, Aycock himself was represented in Congress by a Black man. White was also connected with education, graduating from Howard University with his teaching degree in 1877 and serving as principal of the Black public schools in New Bern, NC in the late 1870s. White was the last Black politician elected to Congress from North Carolina until 1992.
- **Napoleon Hagans** (1840-1896), a free Black man who farmed near Nahunta/Fremont after the Civil War and provided testimony in 1880 to a US Senate committee investigating Black migration out of the South in the 1870s about the source of his wealth and the political climate for Black people in the state. Hagans testified that, while more Black men were more often convicted for similar crimes than White men were, overall the political climate was positive for

Black farmers<sup>22</sup>. His testimony provides insight into the life of Black farmers very near where Charles Aycock grew up.

- **Charles Norfleet Hunter** (1852-1931), a Black educator and reformer who taught at numerous different schools around North Carolina during the late 1800s and early 1900s. His life sheds light on the ways in which Black people fought for education.
- **Local History:** The local history department at the **Wayne County Public Library** in Goldsboro, is an incredible resource for additional resources and holds many archival documents<sup>23</sup>. Researchers should get in touch with the local history department at the library (instead of the Wayne County History Museum) for archival document assistance. The **Wayne County History Museum** hosts rotating exhibits on diverse topics related to Wayne County and is a good resource for guided tours and material culture of the area. The museum's monthly Black History guided tour focuses on Black life in Goldsboro during the early 1900s, with emphasis on the historically-Black neighborhood of Little Washington. Still standing structures, as of September 2023, include the former office building of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (a Black-owned insurance company that started in Durham in 1898), which also included the first Black

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<sup>22</sup> Full text of Hagans's testimony can be found here: <https://scuffalong.com/2013/09/08/i-worked-for-it/>. Recording from Wayne County Public Library talk Hagans's life can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9s3CkJyUIc>

<sup>23</sup> Wayne County Public Library Local History & Genealogy: <https://wcpl.org/local-history/>

dentist in Goldsboro and the first Black public library; and the Black-owned BBQ restaurant where local legend has it that White and Black Goldsboro citizens ate in the same dining room, despite segregated restaurant laws, because the BBQ was so good. Former sites of the James Street Theater, the Ideal Café (which was included in the Green Book), and a Black-owned pharmacy are identified, now empty lots.

### *Indigenous Life in Wayne County*

Numerous Indigenous nations have included the land that is currently known as Wayne County in their homelands over time. Three of these – the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, the Tuscarora Nation of North Carolina, and the Catawba Indian Nation – are still in the area despite centuries of genocide, colonial violence, and occupation. Indigenous life in Wayne County and southeastern North Carolina more broadly during the antebellum period, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century should continue to be explored with an eye to incorporating relevant topics into Birthplace interpretation. Topics of particular interest to the Birthplace’s interpretive goals could include Indigenous education (including Federal boarding schools, 4 of which were located in North Carolina<sup>24</sup>) and how Indigenous children were figured into the dichotomy of Black/White segregated schooling; and how voting rights were denied to Indigenous people through mechanisms that were both explicitly anti-Indigenous and overlapped

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<sup>24</sup> Article on NC presence in DOI’s Federal Indian Boarding School Report, 2022: <https://www.ednc.org/four-n-c-schools-identified-in-interior-departments-federal-indian-boarding-school-report/>

with anti-Black voting restrictions throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>25</sup>. “Black” and “Indigenous” are not mutually exclusive identities, either, emphasizing how White supremacy functions along intersections of difference and marginalization that continue to impact communities and individuals today.

### *Interpretive Suggestions*

The following include a few ideas for further incorporating diverse stories and additional aspects of Charles Aycock’s life into interpretation and exhibits at the Birthplace. These suggestions should be taken in conjunction with the 2022 report by Lord Cultural Group.

- Ensure that all guided tours, not just specialized tours, include interpretations and narratives of enslaved people and the indentured Artis brothers. Share the names of enslaved people that we have been able to find, and explain the difficulties of learning about individuals who were not recorded as individuals in the mainstream historical record.
- Ensure that all guided tours, not just specialized tours, include information about the Aycock family’s material wealth (in context of their surroundings and historical period) and Governor Aycock’s intertwined views of education and White supremacy through the Suffrage Amendment and the Grandfather Clause. Emphasize that this might be a

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<sup>25</sup> “Voting Rights for Native Americans,” Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/right-to-vote/voting-rights-for-native-americans/#:~:text=The%20Snyder%20Act%20of%201924,rights%20granted%20by%20this%20amendment>

chance from how visitors have heard about him in the past, and that historical figures, like people today, are complex and multi-faceted.

- Make the temporary voting rights exhibit in the schoolhouse into a permanent exhibit based in the schoolhouse, to further emphasize and flesh out connections between education and suffrage.

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