

October 5, 1928

Day before yesterday the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering held its Founders Day program, 39 years old, I believe it is, and today at Greensboro and at Greenville two colleges are commemorating the day that they opened. It was by mere accident that this college opened on the same date that North Carolina College for Women opened. The Board of Trustees found it impossible to open the college here in September as they had planned to do and the day was fixed without anyone knowing that it was the same as Founders Day at North Carolina College for Women on October 5th.

The name of this institution at the time it first opened its doors to students was East Carolina Teachers Training School and now its name is East Carolina Teachers College. The change was made in 1921. The people of North Carolina are very conservative; it is nothing new for people to say that my daughter graduated at the State Normal and it is nothing unusual for people in Greenville to speak of Eastern Carolina Teachers Training College. They are evidently fond of hash as they have certainly made hash out of our name.

The spade you see in front of us and this picture are historical. This picture represents the breaking of ground for the first building for East Carolina Teachers College on July 2, 1908, and this building that ground was broken for is now Jarvis Hall and you understand now why we called it Jarvis Hall. Here is the picture of Governor Jarvis who was then Governor. The first shovel full of ground that was thrown for erecting buildings on this site was

thrown by Governor Jarvis. The building was East Dormitory, the building to the east of the auditorium.

There was assembled in this chapel nineteen years ago today 150 odd students (during the year the enrollment was 174), high school boys and girls because we had boys for a few years and the East Dormitory as it was called then soon became known as Boys Dormitory. The President and his family lived in what is now called the Practice House. This group of students the faculty of fifteen teachers met in this hall without any electric lights or any electric light plant, without any cement walks or without any graded grounds. They had arrived the day before and they were all homesick-- teachers, officers, students and everybody--but we started. We started that day nineteen years ago today. I cannot describe for you just the conditions under which we lived when we started. We did not have seats in this auditorium. We borrowed them from a church, long pews and they were not beautiful pews. We had about the roughest looking campus you ever saw. But the institution opened its doors for the one purpose of training the students for teachers in the schools of North Carolina.

That was the purpose of East Carolina Teachers Training School, the name of the institution that day. We had some splendid theories; we had some wonderful schemes that we soon found we had to abandon. They did not work. This first faculty soon found that they had to come down from where they thought they would start until they got in touch with the boys and girls that were here nineteen years ago and

they kept on coming until they found what the high schools were doing. From the very beginning of this institution it has been the purpose of the teaching staff to take the products the high schools send them and begin where the high schools left off and not leave a gap between what the student was taught in the high school and what we taught at college.

But back in 1909 we had boys and girls attending college here who had completed only two years of a high school course. Then North Carolina did not have a real high school course. The law that established this institution, the same act was known as the high school act. It was a movement on the part of the Legislature to make a beginning of an effort to make adequate provision for the boys and girls in high school. So we taught students that had completed the second year of high school work and gave them two years of high school work and then gave them two years of normal work. We taught students who had completed one year of high school work and later we offered a special course for those who were seventeen years of age and were going to teach school next year and in making out the schedule the letter F was given to that group and some people still speak of the F group. And why were they seventeen, because the state law required a person to be eighteen years old before teaching. The only requirement for this course was that they were seventeen and going to teach the next year.

I am telling you all of this that you may get an idea where we started nineteen years ago with just a few buildings, kerosene lamps for the girls to study by, boarded seats for chapel. Soon board walks were put down for the girl's high heels (they were beginning to

wear them then). We worked over the campus and worked under more trying circumstances than we did this summer when we were trying to run summer school and at the same time get ready for you. Everybody was homesick, everybody--students, teachers and officers. Just a small student body then but an institution with a purpose.

This was the beginning of a new institution for the education of teachers for North Carolina with a determination that this one thing we will do, we will give to the children of this state better trained teachers and that goal that was set nineteen years ago today with a small group of students is still the goal of this institution. It has grown from a very small school to one today just as large as the state appropriations will allow it to be. During this period of nineteen years we had had enrolled counted by years something over fifteen thousand teachers.

There are six members of that first faculty who have served continuously and are still serving. They have enjoyed this work. They have given their lives year after year to the student body that the student body might in return go out and give their lives to the children of our state.

We have grown from that small enrollment until we have an enrollment this year of 890 students. 174 against 890. Today we have one of the most beautiful campuses except for the extreme eastern part that has not yet been beautified, that can be found in this country. The Board of Trustees had the wisdom to engage an expert landscape architect to lay off the place and where the buildings were to be. They adopted a style of architecture and subsequent boards have had the wisdom to hold to the style of architecture so North Carolina

is building an institution with a very definite plan. It is going to be a beautiful place. The Board of Trustees have unanimously agreed to ask the General Assembly for over \$1,000,000.00 that this institution might be able to accomodate 1500 students.

With all of these changes in material ways the spirit of the college has gone ahead. We have raised our entrance requirement; we have raised them to the same as the entrance requirements of our state University. In the priviso there was a clause to the effect that the requirements of admission should never exceed the entrance requirements of the state University and this millstone was put on us. Governor Jarvis said that it was put there to get the support of the President of the University. Today this college in the Southern Association of Colleges has the same rating as the state University. Today your college has the highest rating that can be given by the American Association of Teachers Colleges. We have reached that goal in mineteen years. Over 15,00 people counting by years have taken training here and gone out into the state and they are the people who have given to the state of North Carolina the good name which your college has.

I want to say a good word of appreciation for everyone of the teachers who have taught the boys and girls and who are now teaching the girls and one boy. I say I want to say just a word of appreciation to these teachers. I have not made this college, young friends. Someone spoke to me some time ago and said "your college" and I said, "No, you are wrong, it is not my college." I have not done it. The work that has made this a great institution has been done by those faithful teachers who day in and day out have worked and worked that those who have been

taught by them may go out and serve the children of our state, by those faithful ones who have been here from the very beginning, who have given the very best of their life, and the few who are not with us today because they have fallen by the wayside. It is the spirit of that group that has given the spirit to this institution that has permeated the student body and it is this spirit that has done the great work.

It is a wonderful privilege that you young people have to sit in the class with those people who have labored in season and out of season from the very beginning of this institution.

We have increased our requirements for scholarship for members on our staff and we have gathered together for you this fall what I believe is the best teachers college faculty to be found in any undergraduate college in this country. In meeting with the faculty last night I realized as I have never done before the oneness of purpose to give to you the present student body the greatest possible opportunity for improvement and preparation for the great task that lies before you.

There is ever in my mind the vision of the children of our state something over eight million of those school children, little boys and little girls, the little tots as they leave home for the first time to go into the school room and in their ignorance and darkness, as it were, the vision comes to me of them with their hands lifted up to the state of North Carolina and especially to East Carolina Teachers College begging for someone to lead them out of darkness and ignorance. That is our mission, it is the little child calling and it is the heart of the teaching staff of East Carolina Teachers College

going out to those little children as they go out from day to day helping you to master the subjects you are studying, helping you to acquire the knowledge you need and instilling the spirit that should go with this knowledge to go out as home missionaries to those little ones, to lead them to be good citizens in the old state that we love so well.

That, young friends, is the hope of your college, the hope of every teacher and officer connected with it. I am sure it is your objective to get yourself so trained that you will render an efficient service to the childhood of your state.

Robert H. Wright, President  
East Carolina Teachers College