

# Contributions of Chowan's First Graduate Reviewed

Mrs. Edwin C. Brown of Murfreesboro, whose husband is a member of Chowan College's Board of Advisors, delivered the annual Founder's Day Address to the student body, faculty and administration recently. It was based on the life and contributions of Miss Eunice McDowell, daughter of the first president of Chowan College, whose "whole life from infancy to maturity must have been interwoven with the very early life of Chowan College".

"Her father was a man of great ability—a man of vision. It was because of his foresight that a landscape architect was secured and the campus was laid off in drives and walks. He realized that beauty, of whatever kind, is cultural. This campus layout was completed in 1859, the year Miss Eunice was born. In later years it gave Miss Eunice great pleasure to tell us that the landscape plan was in the form of a man's swallow-tail coat; perhaps you will understand better if I say tails, or cutaway, but she would say with a twinkle in her eye: "I guess the girls just had to have aman around." If by chance, you look closely at an original print of the campus, you will see the shoulders and form of the Chowan male. The walks were the seams of the waistcoat, and the summer houses were buttons on the back of the swallow-tail coat."

## Miss McDowell

Mrs. Brown told of Miss McDowell, who was born in the Columns Building, and went through days of hardship and danger with her family during the Civil War and Reconstruction, serving as "lady principal" and also as professor of Bible and Latin and as Chowan's librarian. Of the McDowell family, Mrs. Brown said, "This family, and this institution stood fast to its purpose to discharge its duties to young women and to the community." As librarian, Miss Eunice McDowell successfully campaigned to shelve enough volumes to gain accreditation for Chowan as a four year college.

"In 1923, THE CHOWANOKA was dedicated to Miss Eunice," Mrs. Brown went on to explain. "The dedication reads:

"She can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so  
impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so  
feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither  
evil tongues,  
Rash judgements, nor the sneers  
of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness  
is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or  
disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which  
we behold  
Is full of blessings."

"The fact that she was the 'confidante of many girls in their love affairs' may have been the reason that the first football game was held at Chowan College between Roanoke Rapids and Franklin, Va., high schools on November 14, 1924. It would appear that Miss McDowell understood that girls needed male companionship for a fuller understanding for the preparation for life,



MISS EUNICE McDOWELL  
... Chowan's First Graduate

and was in favor of bring boys back to campus, if only for a day."

"During a difficult period in the life of the college, when the doors were about to close, Miss McDowell was convinced that Chowan would not die. She said, 'Let us have faith, and show it by our work. God is not going to let Chowan die.' She was a woman of conviction, of strong faith and belief."

"It was not until 1930 that I became personally acquainted with Miss Eunice McDowell. I found myself in the presence of a distinguished woman, now 71 years of age, whose figure was rather portly. Her hair was almost white and she was wearing a full length plain black silk dress with long sleeves and small touches of white lace at collars and cuffs, with a brooch for ornament. She wore neat, black soft leather shoes and black hosiery. Her eyes were blue and twinkled with life and perception, yet there was a remarkable sternness as well as warmth and tenderness that only knowledge, experience and action can give to one's countenance. It is strange that a long black silk dress with touches of lace at the collar and cuffs was such a striking part of Miss McDowell. How odd I would have felt in the same outfit, but perhaps in my youth it would have been rather fetching. So it is today that while clothes are more universal in style, I can imagine how odd and ridiculous I would appear in some of the clothes of young women today, but how fetching many young women can look. It is really a sense of living in your own day and generation—choosing the best it may offer in

apparel and knowledge and then moving step by step to maturity."

## Similar Experience

"Her first consideration for me was that I might not be lonesome, because we shared a similar experience. She told me that she attended school at Bryn Mawr and that she was the only southern girl in the school, admitting that she must have experienced some loneliness and misgivings. As I was the only Yankee in a southern school, she was quick to make me feel wanted in her college."

"Busy each day, working in her beloved library, helping in the gigantic task of being the first person to catalogue its volumes, with many of these valuable books being from her own private collection, she introduced the Dewey Decimal System into our library. The basis of scholarship for a college rests upon the library and its resources. It was Miss Eunice's constant and tireless efforts to secure funds and valuable volumes from private collections that kept the rating of our library and college very high, even in 1936.

"Her contribution to the Alumni Association from 1920 to 1932 in bringing the records of former students up to date was a challenging and often frustrating job, because, after all, girls do change their names when they marry."

"Miss McDowell would have moments of reminiscing, when she would tell about the time when the school might be given to Wake Forest, and how she sewed the deed to Chowan College property in her petticoat and walked to her sister's home until the crisis was over. No deed, no property."

"Of course, when we recall that she was a careful guardian over the department of "her girls," we remember that she was concerned about how they were dressed when they walked downtown in the late afternoon. As she sat on a bench in the hall about 3:00 p. m., under careful scrutiny were petticoats hanging below dresses, hose and whether or not you could see through your dress as you marched through the big doors. Oh, yes, many times you had to adjust a hemline, go back and add another petticoat, promise not to talk to boys. My goodness, what would she say about the Mod look or the mini-skirt, and instead of swinging on a gate, talking to your date, hanging on to him and holding hands, yet, she surely helped my love affair and I married while she was here in 1932.

"Spiritual qualities were always evident as she talked in her quiet, sincere manner in chapel, relating stories and shaping ideals of life that were compatible to the forming of Christian family life. The life of Chowan College might well be expressed in a question she asked of herself: 'Suppose, apart from the teachings of father and mother, the influences of my college courses were eliminated from my life, would that life be much unlike what



MRS. EDWIN P. BROWN  
... Founder's Day Speaker

it is now? Then, there passed before me the faces of teachers and some schoolmates, whose lives and teachings I had always remembered as potent factors for me in right thinking and living."

"Her life expressed the continued searched for knowledge. She did not need a "pill" or L. S. D. to send her into a state of outer-world fantasy. She brought into her mind "creative imagination" by work and study. I think we must admit that only by diligence, patience and hard work can we achieve success in life. This was Miss Eunice's goal."

## Patience - Confidence

"There could never have been a "lost generation" in the mind and heart of Miss McDowell. She demonstrated patience and confidence in accepting opportunities available, in her day and generation. She believed that in the development of the mind there must also be a development of the spiritual life. In pursuit of knowledge, combining mind and spirit, one could overcome indifference, restlessness, and lack of aim and purpose of any person living in any era. As she faced moments of great adversity in the life of this college, she showed great moments of courage. She never faltered as she continued to move forward in teaching and the development of the character of her gifts."

"She would not be too overwhelmed by the chances in our world today, either aboard or on the Chowan College campus, with its 1200 students, many automobiles, great dormitories, plus the fact that it is co-educational (1931). I hardly think that she would be overly concerned at the new buildings and the changing of the man's waistcoat on the campus landscape plan. But, I know that she would be eternally grateful that it has remained a denominational college under the care of the Baptist people, for her strong concern was for Christian education. She would be pleased at the fine faculty and the

(Continued on Page Twelve)