



Bands Beauty College, owned and operated by Carson Beckwith, is celebrating its 45th anniversary. Over the years, this institution has provided hundreds with

the skills needed to have a successful career in cosmetology.

## Bands Beauty School Is 45 Years

By Loretta Manago  
Past Managing Editor  
The idea of owning a beauty parlor was one that Carson Beckwith toyed with for years before he finally made the step in that direction.

He remembers as far back as 1933 when he and a colleague who were both teachers in Eastern North Carolina would go pick up their dates in a neighboring town only to have to take the young ladies to the beauty shop to "get their hair fixed."

"We always talked about opening a beauty shop, not to operate, but to run. Back then you didn't hear tell of men styling women's hair."

Nothing much came of the talk that Carson Beckwith and his buddy uttered. Eventually, Beckwith's friend left. And Beckwith, who was fast growing tired of teaching, went back to school. This time Beckwith registered at Moler Beauty College in New York.

Still, with a new found trade, Beckwith took another three years before fulfilling his dream of opening a beauty shop. His first shop was located on Boundary Street. A short time later, he opened a shop with Daisy Spears, located at the corner of Booker St. and Beatties Ford Rd. "She was the only person I knew when I moved here to join my wife. She was already operating a beauty shop in her home. Later, after we had opened the shop, we began to talk about opening a beauty school."

According to Beckwith, the first beauty college opened in September of 1941 on Martin Street. And the next year it was approved by the

North Carolina State Board of Cosmetic Art.

"The board was formed in 1933. But before that beauticians didn't have to be licensed. Once the board was established, beauticians had to have 1,000 of class hours before they could go into cosmetology," Beckwith revealed. Since 1933 the hours for registration have increased from 1,000 hours to 1,500 hours.

"We never really had much problem with finding students. A lot of people were interested in doing hair," Beckwith noted that when he first came to Charlotte there were only six black beauty shops in the area and, of course, the beauty school that he began only took women.

Today, Bands Beauty College holds an enrollment of anywhere from 20 to 35 students. Both men and women are eligible to enroll at Bands and registration occurs in September, June, and January.

"We'll accept a student if there is a vacancy during anytime of the year."

At Bands Beauty College, which now resides at 2506 Beatties Ford Rd., students learn all phases of cosmetology-facials, manicures, massages, hairdressing, and the theory of all applications. There are also courses in chemistry, life therapy, and cosmetic analysis.

In the earlier days of Bands' 45 years, Beckwith reminisced that the only things blacks were taught was thermal pressing. "I've seen a lot of changes occur in cosmetology. I've seen the permanent waves that were made on a machine with thermal heaters change to chemicals that were formulated to give off heat to the cold wave perm."

Many students have walked out of Bands Beauty College to begin successful businesses of their own. The College has also enjoyed the reputation of being the top black college of cosmetology in the Carolinas.

None of this would be possible had not a dreamer, Carson Beckwith took a step in an untraditional career.



Beckwith

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