

## Ballard, Steve

---

**From:** Will Corbitt <corbitt.will@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 15, 2014 5:35 PM  
**To:** Ballard, Steve; rbrinkley@wscr.com; steve.jones@vsb.com; edwinlclark@gmail.com; mark.copeland@ey.com; Vern Davenport; ddavis4@mcvh-vcu.edu; mjoyner@towneinsurance.com; cmabex2@gmail.com; rplybon@plybon.com; drscas2@charter.net; terry@dpr.com; SGAPRESIDENT  
**Cc:** Andrew Morehead; Tucker, John  
**Subject:** Aycock Dormitory

Dear Chancellor Ballard and Board of Trustees,

In advance, I apologize for the timing of my email, as this reconsideration process for Charles B. Aycock dormitory has moved much faster than I anticipated. I appreciate your time reading this, I know everyone's very busy. This exercise took longer than I anticipated, but the results far exceeded my expectation in both clarity and content. I have done exhaustive research and the text in this email is verbatim, (except where noted) from the impeccable sources cited at the end. Many of the facts and quotes were copied from various internet sites, in addition to being transcribed from books. I have checked most of the internet wording and it matches the books word for word.

I am writing to say that my wife, Suzanne Corbitt (ECU, Bachelor of Fine Arts, 1988) and I (William Corbitt, Masters of Business Administration, 1981) are opposed to any consideration of renaming the Charles Brantley Aycock dormitory for the many reasons I have included in this email. My wife is a descendant of Governor Aycock.

I have been a resident of Greenville since 1954 and have lived in a close radius of ECU since then, except when I was away to further my education, and have seen it grow from a college of approximately 5,000 students to the grand university it is today. I have the utmost confidence it is the best of hands possible now.

There are two sides to every story and I wanted to make sure everyone is well aware of the facet of Governor Aycock's beliefs that he stood for his entire adult life, 'universal public education', but unfortunately, this has not received as much attention lately.

Two of the criteria to be satisfied, the only ones that are not noted as "not applicable", follow with reasons they, too, should be "not applicable" in this case.

1. A benefactor's or honoree's reputation changes substantially so that the continued use of that name may compromise the public trust, dishonor the University's standards, or otherwise be contrary to the best interest of the University. Care must be taken when, with the passage of time, the standards and achievements deemed to justify a naming action may change and observers of a later age may deem those who have conferred a naming honor at an earlier age to have erred. Names should not be altered simply because later observers would have made different judgments." *(not applicable; Governor Aycock made his first public address at age twenty, some 135 years ago in 1879, delivered in Durham County appropriately on the value of public education; his life has been in the public arena since his joining the Philanthropic Society, a debate and literary society that conducted public debates, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, graduating in 1880 with first honors in both oratory and essay writing. He entered law practice in Goldsboro and supplemented his income by teaching school. From 1893 to 1897 he was U.S. attorney for the eastern district of the state. His success in*

*both fields led to his appointment as superintendent of schools for Wayne County and to service on the school board in Goldsboro, then into public speaking on behalf of 'equal education' in statewide politics. Governor Aycock does not fit any of the three criteria above. In addition, President John F. Kennedy's indiscretions with women and Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.'s plagiarism have both been well substantiated and documented, among others of great accomplishment. There is no organized effort to have their names removed from anything.)*

*“Student, faculty, and staff concerns should be given particular emphasis”. (not applicable, as this provision is in complete conflict and/or contradiction with the previous requirement to consider changing the name because “a benefactor's or honoree's reputation changes substantially.” It's impossible for someone's reputation to change 112 years after their death, having been in the public scrutiny their entire adult life, or “names should not be altered simply because later observers would have made different judgments,” which is clearly what this situation is all about.)*

I realize that some of this is repetitive from the research you all have conducted or been given, please excuse that.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the ground was prepared and the seeds were sown by Thomas Jordan Jarvis, Founder of East Carolina Teachers Training School, and his generation of educators for the remarkable harvest that Charles B. Aycock and his dedicated band of reformers would harvest at the turn of the century. They were responsible for the initial allocation of funds for East Carolina Teachers Training School.

The former Governor was instrumental in the creation, funding and location of the new college, now ECU; the culmination of Aycock's and Jarvis' effort was realized on March 8, 1907, as the NC General Assembly passed an act entitled: "AN ACT TO STIMULATE HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE STATE AND TEACHER TRAINING". In this act it said "That there shall be established and maintained at some suitable point in eastern North Carolina a teachers' training school for the training of young white men and women under the corporate name of the East Carolina Teachers' Training School." \$15,000 was appropriated to the fund to build the school and \$5,000 annually to fund the school. This act stimulated high school instruction in the public schools of the state and teacher training. The inaugural Board of Trustees was selected on March 15, 1907 and Jarvis was chosen as the first Chairman.

The next challenge for Aycock and Jarvis was to have the new school located in Greenville, which was being challenged by Edenton, Elizabeth City, Kinston, New Bern, Rocky Mount, Tarboro and Washington. They compiled a pamphlet and made sure it was widely circulated in Pitt County and the surrounding area. In part, it included the following text:

“REASONS WHY THE CITIZENS OF PITT SHOULD VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE SCHOOL BONDS”

“It locates the school in the County. It gives us the first place in the East. It furnishes opportunities we must have. It costs no more than a trifle.”

“This school is certainly going to be located in some Eastern County. It is to get it now or never. It is the only chance in a lifetime.”

As we all know, Greenville succeeded in 'winning' the school and the rest is history.

In the groundbreaking ceremony for the first buildings of the new East Carolina Teachers' Training School, on July 2, 1908, Colonel J. Bryan Grimes, Secretary of State, was introduced as the representative of Governor

Kitchin, who could not be present on account of sickness. Then followed the inaugural address by President Robert H. Wright. His address was a scholarly one, and had to do with ideas that he had for the school. ECTTS opened its doors on October 5, 1909.

The first closing-day exercise was held on May 20, 1910, for members of the first year class. Appropriately, the speaker for the occasion was Governor Aycock, who made one of his most effective deliveries of his perennially popular address on "Universal Education".

As a precursor to ECU's current role of leadership training within colleges and universities nationwide, Aycock said, "It is the business of the schools to find for us these splendid children and develop them into these great leaders. If I believed in universal education for no other reason, this would be to me a sufficient one"

A little background is needed for Aycock's role in the establishment of East Carolina University. Charles Brantley Aycock was born in eastern North Carolina on the farmstead of his parents, Benjamin and Serena Hooks Aycock in Wayne County. His homeplace has been designated as 1 of 27 historical sites in our state by The Division of State Historic Sites and Properties, which "preserves, operates and interprets significant historic sites, enabling visitors to explore North Carolina's rich and diverse heritage in an engaging, relevant manner." An 1893 one-room schoolhouse, moved to the site of his birthplace, underscores Aycock's commitment to education. His term as North Carolina's governor began 1901; he is known internationally as North Carolina's "Education Governor" because of his commitment to improving the state's public education system. He is still remembered today and honored in the state as the "Father of public education"; there are few counties in the state where one cannot find a public school named after him. As a sponsor of education, he perhaps has no peer among state governors in American history. As Aycock sought to build a political reputation, he worked tirelessly on behalf of the public schools. His experience with the local school board in Wayne County convinced him that education was the key to wise and purposeful social change.

No North Carolina governor, with the exception of Zebulon Vance has been as venerated and memorialized as Aycock. Gov. Terry Sanford hung Aycock's portrait in the governor's office in 1961. Gov. Jim Hunt quoted Aycock on education during the last State of the State address of the 20th century in 1999. The National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol is composed of statues donated by individual states to honor persons notable in their history, which is reflected in North Carolina's choice to have a statue of Governor Aycock as one of the two submitted by our state. Portraits of Aycock are located in the North Carolina State Capitol, the Governor's Mansion and the Wake County Courthouse in Raleigh, as well as a statue on Capitol Square in Raleigh. He received honorary degrees from the University of Maine in 1905 and UNC in 1907.

In 1886 the state Supreme Court ruled that separate taxes for the races were unconstitutional. Aycock joined a campaign to raise an emergency fund to keep the Goldsboro schools operating until the adoption of a new tax, uniform and nondiscriminatory, to support schools for both races for nine-month terms. The act authorizing the referendum on the tax also named to the board of trustees for the entire city system. Aycock was one of the members, and as long as he lived in Goldsboro he served on the board often as chairman. Also in 1887, Aycock was selected as a member both of the committee of a Wayne County Negro school district and of the board of directors of the State Normal School for Negroes in Goldsboro.

The Fusion-dominated legislatures of 1895 and 1897 and Republican Governor Daniel Russell encouraged an enlarged political role for Negroes, who voted in great numbers and held a variety of public offices. In 1897, Aycock aligned with Fusion leaders in a state-wide effort to persuade voters in local school districts to adopt school taxes.

In his campaign for governor, he touted the "Dawn of a New Day," a slogan used by North Carolina Democrats on the eve of the twentieth century in their effort to seize the mantle of reform and innovation from Republicans

and Populists. According to Aycock this "New Day" centered on the promise of 'universal education' and improved schools for all citizens.

In the campaign, he pledged to devote his four-year term as governor to improving the public school system. He stressed the importance of the suffrage amendment as a device for eliminating the race problem in politics, compelling educational advancement and preparing the way for Negroes to participate fully in politics when they were literate. In the elections in August 1900, the amendment was approved by a large majority and Aycock was elected by an even greater majority. He promised that universal suffrage would return as a consequence of universal education and that the rights of Negroes would be protected.

In his first year as Governor, Aycock staged a one-man crusade for education, speaking at local rallies held in behalf of school taxes and bonds, addressing audiences at private schools and at colleges, and whenever possible turning additional public appearances into pleas for educational progress. After his first year in office, he broadened the crusade, utilizing funds provided by the Southern Education Board. An Association for the Promotion of Public Education in North Carolina was organized, and speakers were sent to rallies throughout the state. Aycock himself attended as many as time and energy permitted. He remained loyal to his pledge to work for universal education. When two bills to enable white people to tax themselves to improve schools for white children without improving schools for Negro children were introduced in the legislature in 1901, Aycock stated that he would resign if they were adopted. Both bills died in committee.

As a sponsor of education, he perhaps has had no peer among state governors in American history. His ability to inspire people to support education stimulated the construction of approximately eleven hundred schools in North Carolina - one for every day he was in office, including 91 for blacks (I have researched this and I cannot find any other governor in the US, before or during his time, that built as many). He felt that no lasting social reform could be accomplished without education. He supported increased salaries for teachers, longer school terms, and new school buildings. By the end of his term, enrollment had increased, school districts consolidated, and teacher training improved. He continued to press for educational progress. He opposed attempts within the legislature to fund white schools from the white tax base and black schools from the black base. He believed that universal education would lead to higher literacy rates and in time to universal suffrage. Much of his tenure as governor was spent in promoting education across the state. Funding for black education increased under his leadership, and rates of school attendance and length of school year in both communities increased.

Aycock was opposed but was unable to stop lynchings during his term; he was not alone, as many other governors have had the same results. Eleven lynchings occurred during his administration. He offered rewards for the apprehension of lynchers and urged, without success, the adoption of an anti-lynch law by the legislature.

Under Aycock's leadership, the appropriations for the public schools and the state's colleges were increased, teaching standards were raised, state adoption of textbooks replaced the more expensive system of local adoption, 877 libraries were established in rural schools and hundreds of schoolhouses were built. The enrollment of white children rose 11 percent, and the average length of the school term increased from seventy-three days to eighty-five days, the enrollment of Negro children rose 10 percent and the average length of the school term increased from sixty-three days to eighty days. Teachers organized into associations for the promotion of their profession, teacher pay went up, and compensation for county superintendents doubled.

Thus, the campaign to eradicate illiteracy was dependent on convincing the voters to finance public schools through local taxation. The brunt of this educational program to improve the public schools was carried by a small group of men appointed by Governor Aycock and supported by the newly created Southern Education Board. The Central Campaign Committee for the Promotion of Public Education in North Carolina, composed of Governor Aycock, Charles Duncan McIver (a crusader for the cause of women's education), President of the State Normal and Industrial College, and James Yadkin Joyner, state superintendent of public instruction,

directed the crusade and organized public rallies. Local school taxes were being collected in 229 districts in 1904, compared to 30 in 1900. In the same period, 37 new municipal graded schools were established. On the basis of the amount of money spent for public education as a percentage of wealth, North Carolina moved in rank among the states from thirty-second in 1900 to twenty-first in 1904. He advocated reforms of child labor and temperance laws but met mixed success with the legislature. Aycock supported increased corporate taxes and devised a compromise for more equitable tax assessment on railroad property.

In 1935 the General Assembly authorized the establishment of the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program, Governor Aycock's historical marker was dedicated in 1936.

Both in his pre-election campaign and through his whole term as Governor and afterward he became the foremost North Carolina champion of "universal education". This cause which won him national fame as the State's "Educational Governor", still had the foremost place in his interests when he died suddenly from a heart attack while addressing the Alabama Educational Association in Birmingham April 4, 1912. Most fittingly, there is carved upon his monument on the Capitol grounds and etched on the outside of the state Education Building in Raleigh, the words he had written for an address in which he had planned to announce a few days later his candidacy for the United States Senate:

*"Equal! That is the word! On that word I plant myself and my party — the equal right of every child born on earth to have the opportunity to burgeon out all there is within him."*

At the dedication of Charles B. Aycock Hall by the Board of Trustees and Faculty of East Carolina College, December 9, 1962, the Invocation was given by the President, Dr. Leo W. Jenkins, and the keynote address was given by United States Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr.

Governor Aycock is still remembered and honored in the state today as the father of public education, "Perhaps the greatest tribute to Charles Brantley Aycock is not that he was Governor from 1901 to 1905. The fact that he is almost universally acclaimed to have been "the best loved North Carolinian of his generation" is a tribute he would much more highly have prized."

In conclusion, it's most appropriate to use words Robert H. Wright, spoke at his inaugural address and installation as East Carolina's first President on November 12, 1909, "We are not to destroy the old and accept only the new, but to build upon the past ..."

Again, thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Su-Su Corbitt, '88

Will Corbitt, '81

References:

American National Biography, John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes

Aycock, Charles Brantley, by Oliver H. Orr, Jr.

“Charles Brantley Aycock,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Edwin A. Alderman and Josephus Daniels

Charles Brantley Aycock Collection, North Carolina State Archives

Biographical Dictionary of the Governors of the United States, Robert Sobel and John Raimo

Biographical History of North Carolina, Samuel A. Ashe, ed.,

Commemorative Landscapes of North Carolina

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, William S. Powell

The Division of State Historic Sites and Properties

East, The Magazine of East Carolina University

East Carolina University, Mary Jo Jackson Bratton

ECU Centennial Digital Exhibit

“Jump Up”, Beck, John, Section VI: “Politics in the South”

The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock, R. D. W Connor and Clarence Poe

National Magazine, April 1905, “Education, the South's First Need”, address before the Southern Educational Association

The News and Observer

North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program

Office of Archives and History, Research Branch

Program of the Dedication of Charles B. Aycock Hall by the Board of Trustees and Faculty of East Carolina College, December 9, 1962.

Public Laws of North Carolina, 1907



North Carolina governor, with the exception of Zebulon Vance has been as venerated and memorialized as Aycock. Gov. Terry Sanford hung Aycock's portrait in the governor's office in 1961. Gov. Jim Hunt quoted Aycock on education during the last State of the State address of the 20th century in 1999. The National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol is composed of statues donated by individual states to



honor persons notable in their history, which is reflected in North Carolina's choice to have a statue of Governor Aycock as one of the two submitted by our state. Portraits of Aycock are located in the North Carolina State Capitol, the Governor's Mansion and the Wake County Courthouse in Raleigh, as well as a statue on Ca Capitol Square in Raleigh. venerated and memorialized as Charles Brantley Aycock. He received honorary degrees from the University of Maine in 1905 and UNC

