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## A Tribute to William E. Reed

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University

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## A Tribute

to

## William E. Reed

William Edward Reed was born on July 15, 1914 ~~on a homestead~~ in Columbia, Louisiana. The home and land are still owned by family members. His father, a well respected building contractor, named William Reed, successfully practiced his trade in Monroe, Alexandria and other neighboring towns in Louisiana. His mother, Virginia Reed, was a descendant of slaves who lived in Columbia.

He received his elementary and high school training at the Progressive Rosenwald School, which later became the Union Central Training School at Columbia. While a student in the sixth grade through high school, he was actively involved in the vocational agriculture program and conducted poultry, livestock and crop projects under the supervision of his teachers of agriculture.

He was an active member of the NFA (New Farms of America). In 1931 and 1932, he took the Louisiana State NFA Test and both years made the highest score of all students in the state taking the test. He taught for part of the school year, 1933-1934, at Union Central Training School prior to entering college.

He attended Southern University at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he graduated with honors, with a B.S. Degree in Agriculture in 1939. During his senior year at Southern, he worked with the Soil Conservation Service in a Training Program sponsored by Southern University and the LSU Agricultural Extension Service. Upon graduation he went into an apprenticeship program as an assistant Negro County Agent of Ouachita Parish. Once this was completed, he became County Agent of East Feliciana Parish where he served from 1937 to January 1941. He started his graduate studies the summer of 1939 and enrolled as a full time graduate student at Iowa State College in 1941, where he obtained his Masters of Science Degree in Soil Fertility and Chemistry in December, 1941.

In January 1942, he started his teaching career at Southern University. It was later that year, on September 27, 1942, that he married Mattye Marie Scott.

With World War II going on and William E. Reed subject to being drafted into military service, President Felton G. Clark of Southern University wrote letters requesting the continued presence of his services at the University. In his words: "it is our honest conviction that because of his unusual ability in agriculture, our country can profit more by his teaching ability than it could by having him a member of the Armed Forces."

July 1944, he was granted a two year leave of absence from Southern University to attend the Graduate School at Cornell University as a candidate for the Ph.D Degree. The degree was supported through a Graduate Education Board Fellowship of the Rockefeller Foundation. The Ph.D. was conferred in February, 1946 with a major in Soil Chemistry and minor in Plant Physiology and Crop Production.

May 9, 1946, Dr. F. D. Bluford, President of the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina offered William E. Reed a job as head of the Department of Agronomy. Because of his loyalty and commitment to Southern University, it was declined at that time.

In February 1947, Dr. Reed was granted a year leave of absence from Southern University to serve as a Soil Specialist on the U.S. State Department's Economic Mission to the Republic of Liberia. It took two years to complete the project and he returned to the United States in May of 1949. The material gathered would become a published research document.

While in Liberia, he received another offer from President Bluford to come to A & T College as Dean of the School of Agriculture. He learned in 1948 that the college was to receive 7.5 million dollars for substantial improvement. This helped to influence his decision. He wrote at the time, "It appears to me that the atmosphere in North Carolina is now conducive to the development of an excellent program of instruction in agriculture." On June 1, 1949 William E. Reed became Dean of Agriculture at the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina (now North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University).

Many changes were to occur in the School of Agriculture. Before this time the School of Agriculture gave B.S. and Masters degrees only in Agricultural Education. Also Home Economics was a B.S. degree program in the School of Agriculture. The Chemistry and Biology departments, which were parts of the School of Agriculture, did not offer degrees. They were sources of required courses for majors in other departments.

In 1949, Dean Reed appointed a committee to reorganize the School of Agriculture. The following divisions or departments were developed:

1. Agricultural Education
2. Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology
3. Plant Science (i.e. crops, soils, horticulture, etc.)
4. Animal Science (i.e. poultry, beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, sheep, etc.)
5. Home Economics (i.e. foods & nutrition, child development, clothing, textiles, etc.)
6. Biology
7. Chemistry

Within each of these divisions a Department Chairman was appointed and within each department or division degrees were offered. Many professors with Ph.D.'s were brought into the School of Agriculture.

He was instrumental in the planning and construction of several buildings for the School of Agriculture which are on campus today, including Carver and Ward Halls. Hines and Benbow Halls were also built during his Deanship. The College Farm was further developed and improved. Additional land had been purchased prior to his appointment as Dean. On the land the following structures were built while he served as Dean: Poultry Plant, Dairy Plant, Sheep Barn, Calf Barn, Silo for Grain and three houses for workers on the farm. Ponds were created and stocked with fish. The farm became an Instructional Laboratory for the School of Agriculture.

He served as chairman of the campus committee for taking care of the grounds and the planting of trees. Many of the large trees around buildings today, were planted during that time. In 1951, he organized the Rural Progress Committee to promote rural development and served as chairman for all but two years between 1951 and 1961. The goal was to improve rural development through education, better



nutrition and opportunity. In 66 counties in North Carolina county agents, agricultural teachers, ministers and other community leaders worked to achieve these aims. The 1953 Orange County report was included in the February 1954 Congressional Records, Washington , D.C.

November 1957, Dr. Reed was granted a two year leave of absence from the Deanship at A & T to serve as Chief of Party, International Cooperation Administration- International Development Services Contact Team to Ghana. Other international assignment and experiences included: Representative to the Republic of Togo, International Cooperative Administration, Department of State, June 1, 1961 to August 20, 1961; Assistant Director for Western Nigeria, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State, August 20, 1961 to August 28, 1968; Deputy Mission Director to Ethiopia, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), August 28, 1968 to September 1972; Officer in Residence (USAID) to North Carolina A & T State University, September 1972 through June 30, 1974; Special Assistant for International Programs to the Chancellor, North Carolina A & T State University, assigned by USAID on an Inter-Governmental Personnel Arrangement, July 1, 1974 to June 30, 1984.

Dr. Reed received numerous awards, honors and recognition. He served as a member of a twelve person delegation that toured Russia in 1955. He was a member of the United States Delegation to the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the benefit of the less developed areas, Geneva, Switzerland, 1963. Dr. Reed's biographic record is in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in Government.

William Edward Reed established and left a rich legacy for the School. His reputation as Dean of the School of Agriculture had far reaching significance and brought further respect to the School of Agriculture and A & T State University. He was held in high esteem by his co-workers and state officials. Dr. Reed brought national and international recognition to the School of Agriculture. As a selected person from among the 1890 Land Grant Institutions for international assignments, he shared his experiences through various news media; speeches with local, state and national audiences; and A & T State University. The plight of Black farm people in North Carolina improved as a result of improved agricultural programs during Dean Reed's era.