



AYCOCK AUDITORIUM

1927

Aycock Auditorium was built when the student body became so large that double shifts were required for chapel, and major events were relocated in Greensboro churches.

The building is ornamented by eight stately modified Corinthian columns; in the foyer are portraits of men who played important roles in the College's formative years: J. L. M. Curry, general agent of the Peabody Fund; first president Charles McIver; and Charles B. Aycock, the "education governor." The initials of North Carolina are worked into the balustrades. Scenery can be "flown" above the stage, and a U-shaped corridor surrounds the 2525-seat auditorium.

Aycock was a celebrated orator; consequently it was felt that an auditorium honoring him for his friendship toward the institution was singularly appropriate.

When Aycock was a child he was able to mimic every gesture, slang expression and facial contortion of rustic orators. Neighbors lifted him atop a box to hear him declaim.

Later in life, when Aycock shared a platform with Theodore Roosevelt, the Rough Rider commented, "By George, that fellow's speech pops like a new saddle."

Aycock was particularly aroused about illiteracy after he saw his mother make her "mark" on a legal document. She heard her children's lessons by judging the confidence of their facial expressions.

Aycock believed that every human has the same right to be educated

that he has to be free. When he became governor (at which time he muttered, "Now I can never go barefoot again") he started an action program to deal with the problems he had discovered while campaigning. He, along with several former Chapel Hill classmate-educators, had persuaded a tax-hating people to tax themselves for public education. They had discovered that only one-third of North Carolina's children had attended school, and that ninety-five per cent had never been to a dentist. At one point in Aycock's administration, schools were being built at the rate of one a day.

Aycock's last speech dealt with education. He had just said, "I canvassed the state for four years on behalf of education . . . sometimes on Sundays they would ask me down to the churches to talk, and I always talked to them about education." Here he fell dead.

At Aycock's statue in Raleigh's Capitol Square are inscribed his ideals of public service. They include these words:

"I would have (the people of North Carolina) to become dissatisfied with small things; to be anxious for higher and better things; to yearn after real greatness; to seek after knowledge; to do the right thing in order that they may be what they ought.

"I would have the strong bear the burdens of the weak, and to lift up the weak and make them strong, teaching men everywhere that real strength consists not in serving ourselves but in doing for others."