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Newbold, Nathan Carter [1]

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Nathan Carter Newbold, educator, public servant, and longtime director of the Division of Negro Education in North Carolina, was born in Pasquotank County [2], near Elizabeth City, and lived his entire life—except for periods of educational residence—in the state. His parents, both members of old-line North Carolina families, were William and Sarah Trueblood Newbold. His paternal grandfather, William Newbold, was for many years sheriff of Pasquotank County [2]. Young Newbold attended elementary school in Pasquotank and Perquimans [3] counties and received his high school education at Bethel Hill Institute in Person County [4]. He was graduated from Trinity College [5] (now Duke University [6]) in 1895.

At Trinity, Newbold determined to become an educator. After graduation he served as principal of Leasburg Academy, near Semora, and then as coprincipal of La Grange High School, near Kinston. He next became, in succession, superintendent of schools in Asheboro, Roxboro, and Washington, N.C. At intervals during this period Newbold pursued graduate work at a variety of institutions, beginning with The University of North Carolina [7]. Subsequently, he studied at the University of Tennessee, Columbia, and Harvard.

But it was as an administrator, and not as a scholar, that Newbold made his greatest contribution. In 1913 he moved from Washington to Raleigh to become North Carolina's first state agent for Black schools, a position created by funds from the General Education Board [8]. In this capacity, Newbold undertook the delicate task of enlarging educational opportunities for Black North Carolinians at a time when such opportunities were almost nonexistent. In 1920, following a state educational survey, he outlined to the State Board of Education [9] a plan to create an entire Division of Negro Education. The plan was approved, funds—$15,000—were appropriated by the General Assembl [10]y, and Newbold was named division director, serving for thirty-seven years. Under his leadership, Black education in North Carolina experienced remarkable growth in the 1920s, and the idea of publicly supported Black schools became more widely accepted. Newbold also worked closely with philanthropic organizations to expand educational opportunities for Black citizens; as a result of his efforts, funds from the General Education Board, as well as from the Slator, Rosenwald, and Jeanes funds, were utilized efficiently and effectively.

Working quietly and avoiding controversy insofar as possible, Newbold acquired a reputation as an effective advocate of Black education. As time went on, especially in the years after World War II [11], he received considerable criticism from various groups and individuals who were dissatisfied with the racial climate in North Carolina. Yet he never permitted criticism from any source to deter him from his goal: the expansion of Black educational opportunities within the structure of a separate but equal state racial philosophy. Newbold continued to serve as director of the Division of Negro Education until his retirement in 1950 at age seventy-nine.

He also participated in other path-breaking interracial endeavors. A founding member of the North Carolina Commission for Interracial Cooperation [12], he was long active in the work of that organization. He also served as director of the Division of Cooperation in Education and Race Relations, a project sponsored by the State Department of Public Instruction [13], Duke University [6], and The University of North Carolina [7]. The purpose of this united effort was to disseminate information about African American life and history, stressing the positive achievements of Black southerners. Books were purchased for university libraries, courses in African American life were taught in various colleges and universities, and a number of similar programs were initiated.

Newbold held membership in numerous professional organizations, commissions, and advisory boards. He was an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa fraternities, a life member of the North Carolina Education Association and the National Education Association, a trustee of Payne College, Augusta, Ga., and a member of the State Textbook Commission. A lifelong Democrat [14], he participated in President Harry S Truman's White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. He also served on a number of boards of Negro colleges as adviser.

A devout churchman, Newbold was a member of the Commission on Cooperation and Council for the Methodist Episcopal church and was long active in the affairs of his home church, Edenton Street Methodist Church in Raleigh. On 2 Mar. 1905 he married Eugenia Lou Bradsher of Roxboro. The couple had four sons: William Bradsher, Nathan Carter, Jr., Arch Bradsher, and James Satterfield. Newbold died four days before his eighty-sixth birthday and was buried in Burchwood Cemetery, Roxboro.

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