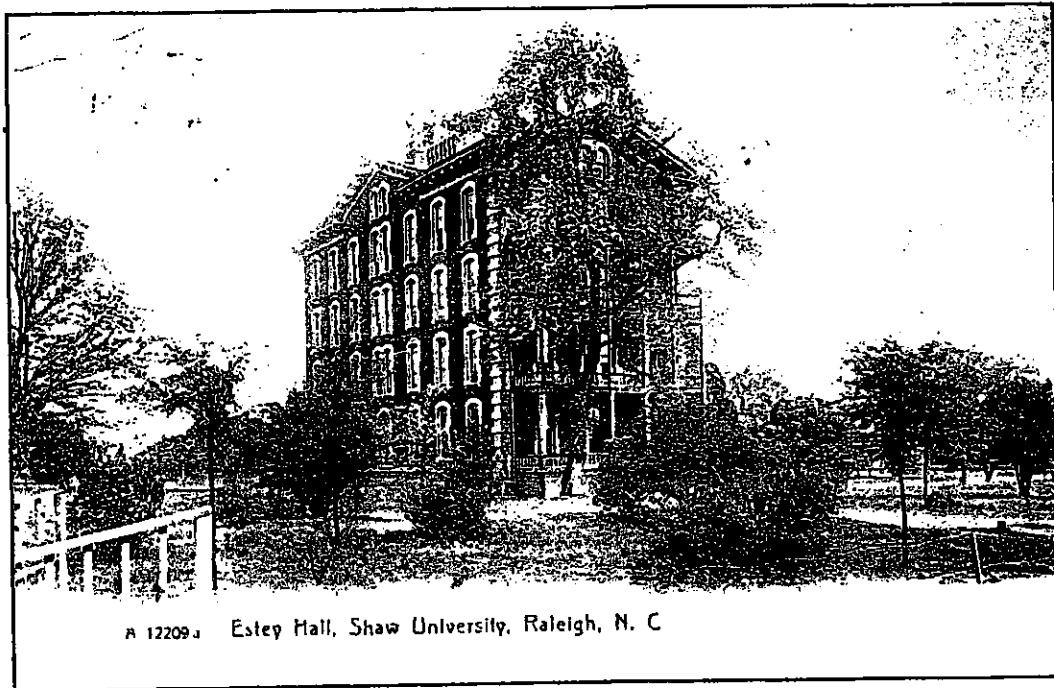




*An Enduring Legacy...*

## ESTEY HALL

by R. Lee Parks  
Rural Hall, North Carolina



A 12209. Estey Hall, Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C.

A mix of freed slaves, a southern capital, New England Baptists, and a reed organ company may seem like an odd lot, but they all come together in a single building named Estey Hall. Just south of downtown Raleigh, North Carolina lies the campus of Shaw University, the oldest African-American institute of higher learning in the South. And in the middle of Shaw's campus sits a four-story Victorian brick building named after its benefactors Jacob and Julius Estey of the Estey Organ Company. Although details of Estey's involvement with Shaw are scant, the history of the university and Estey Hall itself gives insight into the

philanthropic nature of the Estey family and their devotion to church mission.

To begin, one must understand the initial circumstances of Shaw University prior to December, 1865. It was not an easy time, with the Civil War having ended only seven months previous. On April 13, 1865, four days after General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, William Sherman's Union army marched into Raleigh chasing the remnants of General Joseph Johnston's Confederate army. Johnston, who had evacuated Raleigh, would soon surrender just west of the city, effectively ending the war. Fearing the worst, however, Raleigh's

mayor, William H. Harrison rode out with a contingent to the outskirts of town to surrender the city without a shot. Thus, Raleigh was spared the destruction that was meted out to Columbia and Atlanta by Sherman. Nonetheless, the occupation of Raleigh by 100,000 Federal troops was not without incident. One drunken Texas cavalryman took some potshots at Union Major General Hugh Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick was uninjured, but the Texan was captured and summarily hanged. After the incident, Mayor Harrison had to intervene explaining that this was an aberration rather than a general uprising, and again Raleigh was spared.

Four days later, however, Raleigh faced potential destruction again when Union troops learned of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. An angry mob of 2,200 soldiers with torches in hand stormed towards the capitol building. Had it not been for Union Major General John "Black Jack" Logan meeting them head on with threats of cannon volley, the 1833 capitol building would have been burned to the ground. The capitol still stands today preserved in its antebellum appearance, but its archives were not so fortunate. North Carolina, having been a British colony, owned an original copy of the Declaration of Independence. A Union soldier apparently stole the copy and although it was reportedly "for sale" in the 1920s, it has never surfaced. Another insult visited upon the capitol was the bar that was opened within its walls by a Federal colonel during Reconstruction to provide persuasive spirits to the legislators. In yet another quirk of fate, Lincoln's death placed Raleigh-born Andrew Johnson into the Presidency.

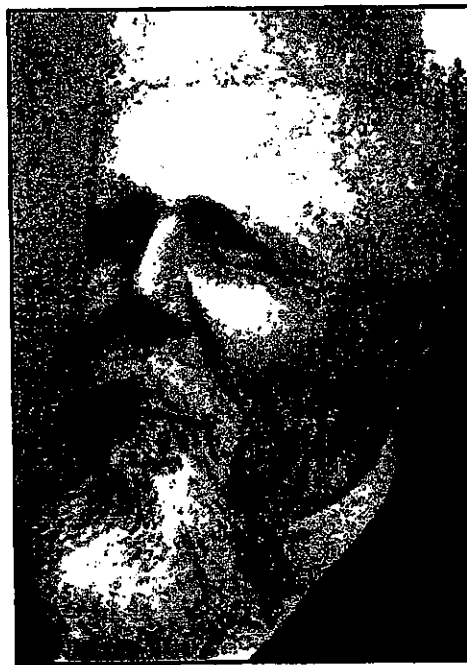
For the 6,500 or so locals, they were overwhelmed by the mass of blue-uniformed troops. "They are just like blue birds" and, "They just cover the face of the earth" were comments heard from all quarters. Already short of resources, the troops made the city's burden that much more. Having seen all the livestock devoured by the troops, one local remarked that the brass weathercock on top of Christ Episcopal Church was "the last chicken in the city." And if that wasn't enough, Sherman held a four-day victory parade for the vanquished. Included in Sherman's parade was a proud unit of the U.S. Colored Troops, but ironically the same black soldiers were later denied the opportunity to march in the "Grand Review" down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. in front of dignitaries who had supported Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Despite incidents and feelings of acrimony, the Federals generally took a liking to Raleigh. In referring to North Carolina and its neighboring states South Carolina and Virginia, they coined the phrase "a valley of humility between two mountains of conceit." One Union officer wrote of Raleigh: "There is a large population of highly educated and refined people here. We see little of that painful

ostentation which is met in Charleston, Columbia and other cities of the South, but a genuine civilization, marked by taste." Perhaps it was the sentiment of that officer and others that prompted one Henry Martin Tupper to move from Massachusetts to Raleigh at the close of the war. Tupper's mission was to teach Christian education and literacy to newly freed African-American slaves.

Another reason Raleigh may have been chosen is that of the four East Coast Confederate capitals, it was the only one not destroyed and was viewed to be relatively friendly. Oberlin College of Ohio, instrumental in the anti-slavery movement, also sought out Raleigh as a place to establish a refuge for freed African-Americans. Although now absorbed by Greater Raleigh, Oberlin Village exists today with some descendants of its original inhabitants. The Episcopal Church also sought to establish St. Augustine's College, another educational institution for freed blacks.

Henry Tupper was born in Monson, Massachusetts in 1831 and graduated from Amherst College in 1859. From there he continued on to Newton Theological Seminary, becoming ordained as a Baptist minister in January 1862. From there he became a sergeant and a chaplain in the 36<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry until the close of the war. Sometime in 1865, Tupper moved to Raleigh where he began teaching a Bible class in the Guion Hotel.



Henry Tupper

The class grew and became known as Tupper's Raleigh Theological Institute. Tupper also became pastor of the Second Colored Baptist Church, now known as Tupper Memorial.

For a while, the Theological Institute and Baptist Church were housed in the same building, but as Tupper's school grew he decided to buy land for the start of a black college. Once his plans were known however, Tupper was not necessarily popular with some locals. Forced to hide out in nearby cotton fields, Tupper and his wife were once hunted down by a crowd of whites who begged to differ with his plans. Nonetheless, Tupper made use of his New England Baptist connections to purchase the land. Two key organizations that assisted Tupper were the "Freedman's Bureau" and the "American Baptist Home Mission Society". It was the latter group that Tupper relied upon for solicitation of Northern donations and apparently the group that established connections with the Estey family. The first major benefactor to assist in establishing the college itself was Elijah Shaw, a wealthy textile manufacturer from Wales, Massachusetts. Having been settled by Baptists in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Wales was a center of Baptist belief and Shaw became one of its most prominent Baptist advocates. By donating \$5,000 of the first \$13,000 to purchase the land for Tupper's new college, Shaw was honored when the school was renamed Shaw Collegiate Institute in 1870.

By 1872, Tupper wished to expand Shaw Institute to include women. To fulfill Tupper's wish, a new building named "Estey Seminary" was erected in 1873. In Tupper's day, a seminary also referred to a "women's school." As such, Estey Hall became what is thought to be the oldest college building for black women in the United States. In establishing Estey Seminary, it seems that Tupper once again put his New England Baptist connections to good use. It is well known that like Shaw, the Esteys were also avid Baptists and contributors to Baptist missionary causes. In June 1872, Jacob Estey and Company of Brattleboro, Vermont pledged \$5,000 towards the seminary, but eventually paid \$8,000 towards the construction of the \$20,000 building. Thus, the building was named in Estey's honor. Whether the Esteys attended the

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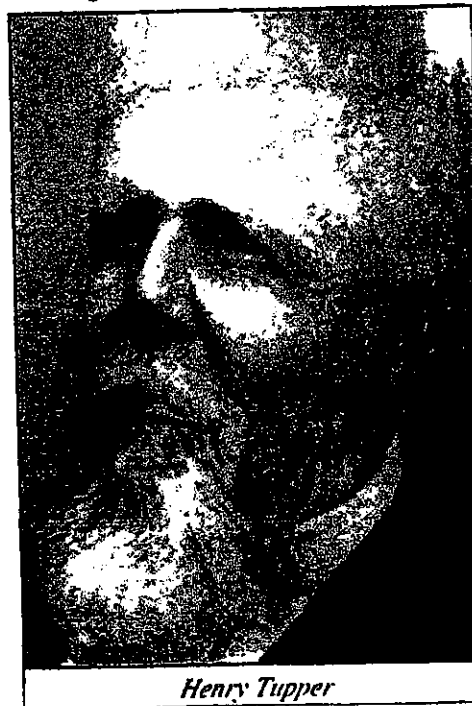
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building's dedication is unknown, but one would like to imagine that they did.

Built near the site where Generals Grant and Sherman had once met to discuss further terms of surrender, Estey Hall soon became the pride of the Shaw campus. An 1874 catalogue describes Estey Hall in these terms:

"This is the finest School Building in the State; and is the pride of colored people of North Carolina, as it affords facilities for the education of their daughters which cannot be surpassed. It will accommodate about one hundred pupils, and the large number of young ladies from the best families in the State, during the first session, has proved the necessity and wisdom of this undertaking. The school is destined to be a Fountain of Light, and is earnestly hoped that some lover of female education will amply endow this department of the school."

Apparently, the Esteys had answered the call for endowment. They were philanthropists of the first order. Jacob Estey's 1892 obituary in the Brattleboro Reformer states, "They have in their prosperity recognized that to whom much is given, from them much is expected. Their benevolence has been distributed in their own way, according to their views of right, but has been on a vast scale. The Shaw University for colored youth in North Carolina has had in them its chief supporters. They have given it two buildings and contributed heavily to its endowment fund." It is not clear what the "second" building was, but the statement may be referring to an annex that was added to Estey Hall in 1886.

Another article on the 1902 death of Julius Estey (Jacob's son) states, "It has ever been a characteristic of the Estey house, keen and shrewd in the acquisition



*Elijah Shaw*

of wealth, to recognize the duty that goes with it and with prosperity, and of all the rich ones of America there have been none who have devoted a larger share of their gains to the good of their fellows. The Shaw University for colored youth in North Carolina, of which they were chief supporters... the multitude of Baptist churches... are only monuments along the way."

For all the positive growth though, Tupper had his share of controversy that apparently did not escape notice of the Estey family. "Trustees" of the Second Baptist Church brought a lawsuit against Tupper in 1874. Lasting nearly five years, the lawsuit was complicated but basically involved a dispute over property rights to the church and theological institute. Tupper was thought to have overstepped his bounds as minister. Of course, it was Reconstruction and with much money being funneled from the North to the South, suspicions were aroused. Levi K. Fuller, son-in-law to Jacob Estey, came to Tupper's defense in a letter addressed to a local paper. Apparently, Fuller felt that the Southern "brethren" should have taken a more active role in Tupper's defense. Fuller states, "There were things that made some of us feel that the brethren in North Carolina had not treated Bro. Tupper, at Shaw University, as he had a right to expect. Many of us felt, and do now, that the lawsuits against him could have been prevented by proper influences. There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence and the brethren at Wake Forest and Raleigh could have done themselves no greater service, and won the confidence of Northern people more, than to interfere and put a stop to the prosecutions against any who may be among them, dispensing good will and aid."

Fuller's remarks in turn were met by some indignation amongst some Raleigh Baptist ministers who felt that Tupper had been treated with the greatest of respect and hospitality. Nevertheless, Tupper was eventually cleared and was later awarded a Doctor of Divinity from Wake Forest University in 1886.

Estey Seminary began in 1874 with 70 young women enrolled in the "female department." From there Shaw continued to grow under Tupper's guidance and in 1875 the North Carolina General



*Jacob Estey*

Assembly chartered the school as a university. The charter stipulated that, "...no pupils should ever be excluded from the benefits arising therefrom... on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude." Afterwards, Henry Tupper continued to promote professional education and Christian education ministry for African-Americans. He continued to serve as president of Shaw until his death in 1893.

Until Tupper's death, life in Estey Seminary was strictly for females, as they followed a separate course of study from the men. A set of strict rules was issued in the seminary including a dress code, no fraternization with men on campus, chaperoned shopping in town, and no mail without first being delivered to the President. Music was also stressed as part of the curriculum, with instruction given in "piano and organ for \$10.00 per session." Can there be any doubt that an Estey organ graced the music department at some point in time?

Little is known of the Estey family's continued support of Shaw since the initial pledge of 1872, but there must have been continued connections, especially through the American Baptist Home Mission Society that continued to support the school. Fifty-nine years later in 1931 at the height of the Great Depression, \$5,000 was bequeathed to Shaw from the estate of Mrs. Abby E. Fuller, wife of Levi and daughter of Jacob Estey. For a diminishing industry in hard times, \$5,000 was a sizeable sum of money.

As for Estey Hall itself, the bricks were made on campus by students. Surplus bricks were sold to raise additional cash for

the school. The building's physical appearance is best described in its National Register nomination of the 1970s:

"Estey Hall is an impressive Victorian institutional building set among large trees on the Shaw University campus. The large brick structure is four stories high beneath a cross-gable roof capped by a framed cupola. A bracketed cornice that returns into each gable accents the wide overhang of the roof. This pattern is repeated in the cross-gable roof of the large rectangular cupola, which has patterned shingled wall surfaces and arched windows. The west and east gable ends are three bays wide with the central bay having double windows and a first-floor entrance. The north and south facades are seven bays wide. The central bay of the north elevation, possibly once the main façade, has had alterations at all five levels. The segmental-arched openings throughout are elaborately framed with heavy, arched, shouldered surrounds of stuccoed brick. Also of stuccoed brick are the quoins that define each corner of the building. Much of the architectural character of the building derives from the bold design of these elements and the strong contrast of the off-white stucco against the red brick walls.

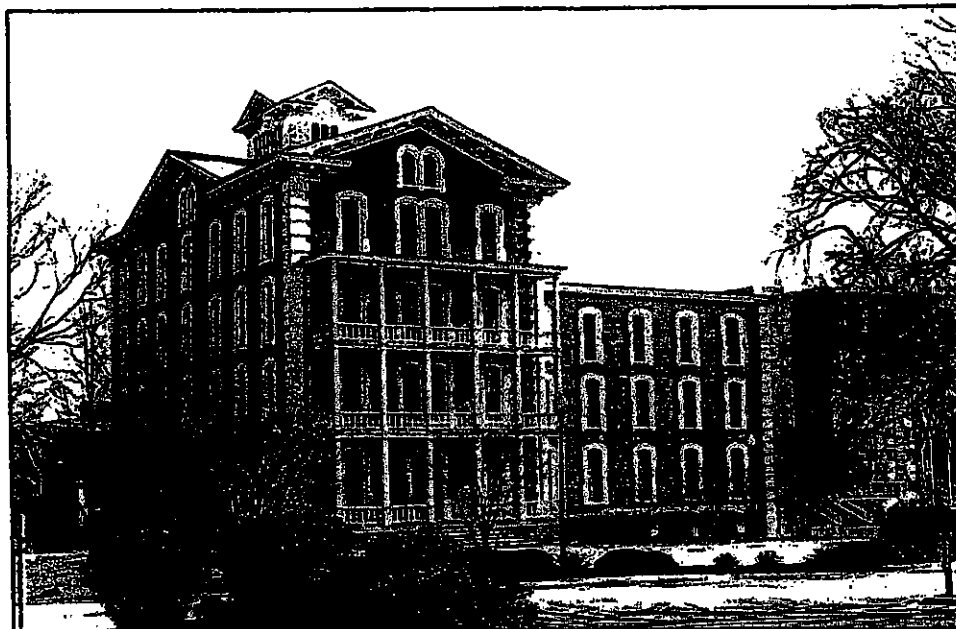
At the west side sheltering the entrance is a three-story full-width porch with a turned balustrade and spindle friezes at each level (1887 addition). Adjoining the south façade of the main building is a three-story brick addition (1886), three

bays wide and six bays long; a later nineteenth-century construction, it repeats the quoins and window treatment of the main block. A modern brick stair tower (1945) is attached to the south end. The interior has been altered over the years and is in deteriorated condition; its complete renovation is planned."

Despite its glowing description, however, Estey Hall nearly suffered the fate of so many of the Estey organs whose sales helped to fund the building. Having survived two world wars, the Great Depression, and inadequate funding through the 1950s and 1960s, Estey Hall deteriorated to the point that it was scheduled for demolition in 1967. Ironically, the end of racial segregation in the South opened up the state universities that began drawing African-American students away from private institutions such as Shaw. The result was a reduction in funding and resources that led to neglect of many facilities such as Estey Hall. Fortunately, some well-meaning preservationist stepped in who understood Estey Hall's significance and led an initiative to save the building. Still, Shaw was forced to close Estey Hall in 1970 as its condition made it unusable. In the following decade though, Estey Hall was finally placed on the National Register of Historic Places. With that designation, funding was established to renovate the building. Over the next few years, an exterior renovation was performed that was completed in 1993. Only half of the interior was renovated due to funding

restrictions, but it is hoped that interior renovations can eventually be completed.

As of 1999, Estey Hall was still awaiting renovation of its upper two floors, including a dramatic attic chamber lit through the cupola windows. Today, Estey Hall is used as Shaw's community center and is a featured landmark on campus. Not only is it Shaw's most notable building, but it is also one of Raleigh's more graceful structures. Having been built with funds created by the love of music, Estey Hall today fittingly gazes on Raleigh's Memorial Auditorium and Performing Arts Center where the North Carolina Symphony and other organizations perform.



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