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(Sesquicentennial) Observations and Overview

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I. INTRODUCTION

Observations and Overview

JUDITH WELCH WEGNER

No people can become a great people by exchanging its individuality, but only by encouraging it and developing it. We must seek out and appreciate our own distinctive traits, our own traditions, our own deep-rooted tendencies, and read our destiny in their interpretation.

— Charles Brantley Aycock, 1880
graduate of the University of
North Carolina School of Law
and Governor of North Carolina.

The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.

— Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the University of North Carolina School of Law. It is a time to remember our beginnings and the milestones along the way; it is a time to reflect on the traits and tendencies that have touched both leaders and learners within this institution; it is a time to rededicate ourselves to the best of our traditions—our commitment to excellence, our devotion to the shared educational enterprise, and our dedication to public service; and it is a time to forge our future—as a community and as a learned profession—drawing upon the best wisdom of our individual hearts.

This history is the product of impulses such as these. It reflects the inspiration of Chancellor and Professor William B. Aycock, a teacher of law and history throughout his life, and a shaper of women and men. It unites four generations of North Carolina lawyers tied by their heartstrings to the University at Chapel Hill—natives born of the state's red soil and immigrants who have come home "by the grace of God." It spans the greater part of the twentieth century, yet derives much of its power from shared hopes for the twenty-first. It reflects passion for justice as past generations have known it, as well as diverse vantages on the challenge of forging a more enlightened justice system in years yet to come. It describes our journey, including our mistakes, yet also finds ample time for celebration. The editors and I hope that it will be interpreted in this light.

This sesquicentennial symposium is organized into three major sections. The first is this introductory segment, which includes short essays contributed by each of the symposium editors, Chancellor and Professor William Brantley Aycock, Martin H. Brinkley, and me. The second provides an overarching discussion of the UNC School of Law in the modern era. This section considers the major eras in the law school's development since its centennial in 1945. The second section is organized in chronological order around the deanships of the seven deans who have served the school during that time. The third section discusses trends that cut across these chronological eras and portend important developments in the future. To that end, section three considers changes in the people of UNC law school, its academic programs, its law library, student organizations, and alumni service to the state and the school. My colleagues join me in thanking the editors of the *North Carolina Law Review* for their interest in and support for this project, as well as for their incisive views.

I hope that readers of these pages will come away renewed in their dedication to find and give their best to the legal profession and in their devotion to the UNC School of Law. I know that my own involvement with this history project and my time as a faculty member at UNC have proved enduring and transformative chapters in my own personal and professional life.