



From the film, "Durham Marches On," a group on the steps of Stanford L. Warren Library on Fayetteville Street circa 1940. **Durham County Library** - North Carolina Collection

DURHAM COUNTY

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# He co-founded NC Mutual and a library in Jim Crow South. Now a biography is in the works

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DURHAM — A biography is in the works of Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore, who was a founder of the second African-American library in North Carolina, among other accomplishments in the early 1900s.

Moore's great-granddaughter, C. Eileen Watts Welch, mentioned the planned biography during a presentation Monday afternoon at the Forest at Duke retirement community. Welch is president and board chairperson of the Durham Colored Library Inc. She said they have hired an author for the book about Moore and have an interested publisher.

Beyond public sources, Welch has her own family's records to use for research. She retired from Duke University three years ago and has renewed her interest in family history and Durham history, particularly around their contribution to what is now the Durham County Library system.

In her presentation, Welch noted that the Durham County Library website lists two timelines – one for the public library and one for the Durham Colored Library system. However, the public library that began to receive city funds in 1898 was public only to white residents, she said. It was on land near Five Points in downtown Durham donated by Julian S. Carr and Thomas Martin.

The Durham Colored Library was started in 1913 with books from Aaron Moore and James E. Shepard in the basement of the old White Rock Baptist Church, then moved to a building at Pettigrew and Fayetteville streets given by John Merrick.

Shepard was the founder of what is now N.C. Central University. Moore was the first African-American physician in Durham. He and Merrick were founders of N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company at the turn of the 20th century. Moore and Merrick also co-founded the Durham Colored Library, the second public African-American library in the state, in 1916. The first librarian was Hattie B. Wooten, who lived above the library. It began to receive some city funds in 1917, Welch said.

As the library expanded, it eventually moved to land at Fayetteville and Umstead streets, with a loan from N.C. Mutual and land funded by Stanford L. Warren. It opened in 1940. The Warren library was a system, not just one location, Welch said, and included a Bragtown branch. The public white and African-American library systems merged in 1966. The Stanford L. Warren Library is now a branch of the Durham County Library system and has been expanded and renovated over the years.

Welch said she plans to share information with the library system that she would like to see changed in the historic timelines, like Shepard's contribution to the original books collection housed in White Rock. She said that while people may know a lot about Durham businessman and leader John Merrick, who is also her great-grandfather, there is not as much public information about Aaron Moore, hence the need for a biography.

The family interest in library history has continued. Welch's mother, Constance Merrick Watts, chaired a committee in 1983 to study the Warren library branch. Watts was living at the Forest at Duke when she died in 2015. Welch's niece Shana Hill-Saya is writing the biography of Aaron Moore. Welch said it will be at least a year before publication.

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Pamela Parker, Ida Daniel Parker, and Eileen Watts Welch (standing), president of Durham Colored Library Inc., speak before Welch's speech about the history of Durham County libraries before and after integration on Monday, June 12, 2017 at the Forest at Duke in Durham, NC. **Grace Turner** - The Herald-Sun

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