

Cherry, David King^[1]

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May 8, 1883-September 17, 1956

By James R. Stewart Jr., 2019
North Carolina A&T State University



Portrait of D. K. Cherry, F. D. Bluford Library Archives and Special Collections. North Carolina A&T State University.

Captain D. K. Cherry was a noted African American college professor at [North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University](#)^[2], a distinguished World War I veteran, and the president of the historic [Kittrell College](#)^[3] in Kittrell, NC from 1929 to 1932.

David King Cherry was born near Powellsville in [Bertie County](#)^[4] as one of the 13 children of Wright and Malinda (Mitchell) Cherry on May 7, 1883. Wright Cherry was a veteran of the 14th US Colored Artillery, and as a boy young David attended a school named after his father. Cherry also attended the Bertie Academy in Windsor, NC and began teaching in the [Bertie County](#)^[4] schools at age 16. David graduated from the [North Carolina State Colored Normal School](#)^[5] in 1904 and continued his studies at Wilberforce University, graduating with his B.A. in 1911.

In the fall of 1911 D. K. Cherry moved to Greensboro to be a mathematics instructor for the Agricultural and Mechanical College for the Colored Race, now [North Carolina A&T State University](#)^[2]. While he was a student at Wilberforce he had been a Cadet Captain and brought this experience with him to NCA&T as a drillmaster. Cherry would continue his educational studies at the University of Chicago in the summers of 1912 and 1914.

Professor Cherry was one of five faculty members at A&T known to have served overseas during [World War I](#)^[6]. Enlisted in the fall of 1917, he served as a Captain in the 367th infantry of the 92nd Division of the Armed Expeditary Forces (AEF). Following the Armistice, Cherry was transferred to the educational corps at a large base camp. After this he was reportedly the only commissioned African-American soldier who was not denied admittance to a French university. Cherry studied at the University of

Bordeaux and following the war he returned to Greensboro./p>

Among D. K. Cherry's achievements at A&T, he was one of the earliest known faculty members to complete a [history of the college](#) ^[7] following a January 1922 request from the U.S. Commissioner of Education. This history was republished in 1926 and 1927 editions of the *A&T College Register* newspaper. After 17 years at A&T, Cherry became a professor and acting dean of education at [Elizabeth City State University](#) ^[8].



Photo of (left to right) D. K. Cherry, George B. Love and B. W. Barnes on A&T College Campus. C. 1920, Published in *A&T ...at seventy-five...A Story of Progress and Service*. The Bulletin of A&T College, Vol. 58, No.5, April 1967.

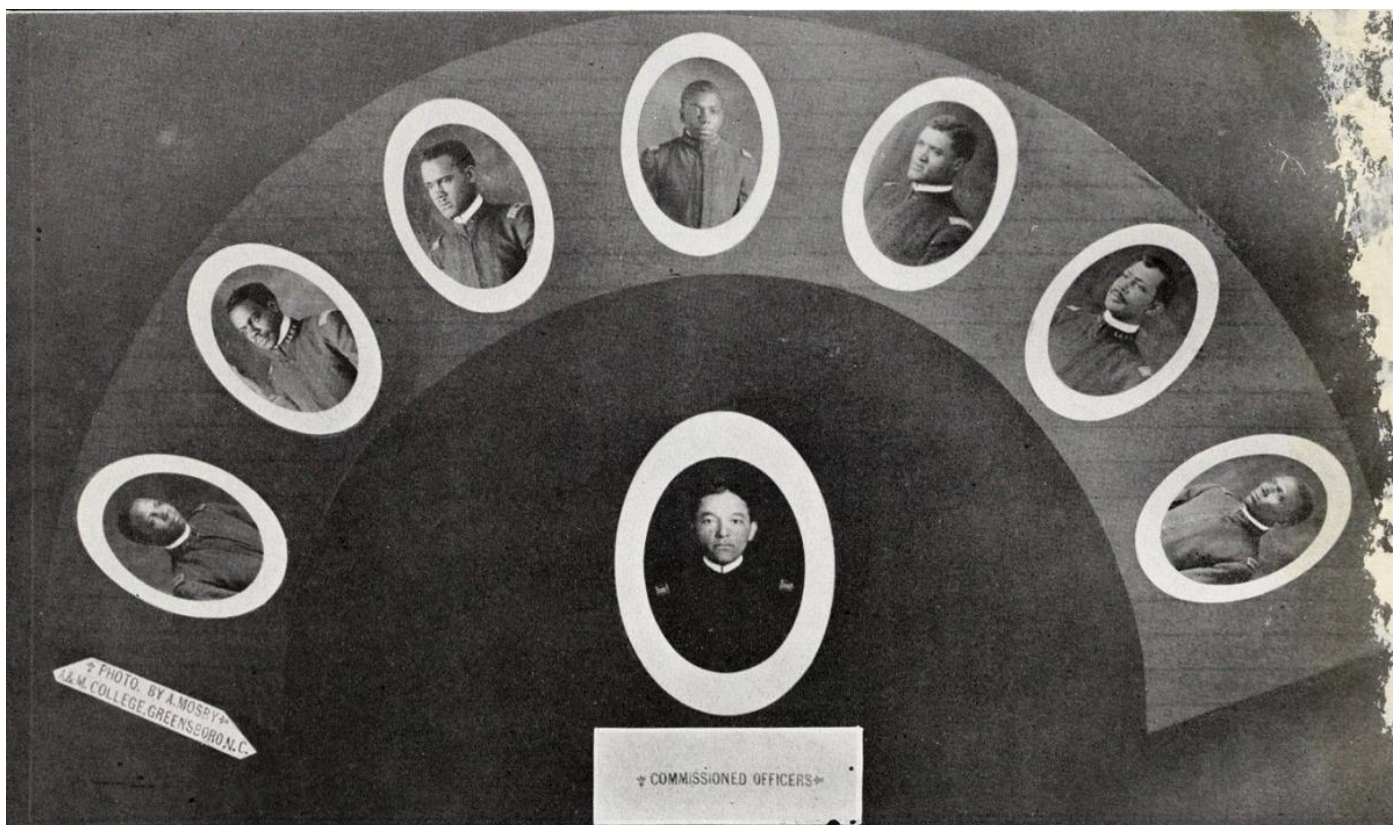
In the fall of 1929 Cherry was elected president of [Kittrell College](#) ^[9], a historical A.M.E Church institution in Kittrell, to succeed Dr. Gaston Alonzo Edwards, an A&T graduate. Under his leadership the college experienced significant financial growth. Several new buildings, notably the auditorium gifted from Duke University, were constructed under his presidency. He resigned from the role in 1932 and was succeeded by the Rev. Charles E. Stewart, also a former professor of North Carolina A&T State University. During the summer semesters at [Kittrell](#) ^[9], Cherry continued his education at the University of Chicago. His 1931 dissertation for his Master of Education was titled "Vocational Activities of Educated Negroes".

Following his presidency at Kittrell College Prof. Cherry moved to Knox County, Tennessee to become a professor of education and psychology at Knoxville College. In 1943 he was appointed dean of the college and later dean of administration in 1954. With his retirement a year later, the college awarded him an honorary doctorate.

Dr. Cherry passed away in 1956 at the age of 73 at the local veteran's administration center in Johnson City, Tenn. from complications of a stroke. Cherry left to cherish his memory the former Irene L. Chestnut his wife of nearly 36 years, a daughter Marie T. Williams, six sisters and two brothers. Captain David King Cherry is buried in the Knoxville National Cemetery, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Honoring his service for the centennial of the Great War, Dr. Cherry was one of several Greensboro, NC citizens featured on an honor wall in the Greensboro History Museum exhibit "[Lest We Forget: WWI through the Eyes of Nine.](#)" ^[9]

Additional Resources:



Photos of Commissioned Officers, by A. Mosby. Bulletin of the A&T College [1915-1916], F. D. Bluford Library Archives, North Carolina A&T State University. (Cherry is the lower center portrait)

Cherry, David King "A Brief History of A. and T. College Up To 1922." (cont'd). *The Agricultural and Technical College Register*. January 1927.

<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ttt/id/26253> ^[10]

Cherry, David King "A Brief History of A. and T. College Up To 1922." (cont'd). *The Agricultural and Technical College Register*. April/May 1927.

<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ttt/id/26281> ^[11]

"Archives and Special Collections Page", World War I – The Great War, LibGuide, F. D. Bluford Library, North Carolina A&T State University.

https://libguides.library.ncat.edu/wwwi/wwwi_archives ^[12]

World War I Collection, F. D. Bluford Library Archives and Special Collections, North Carolina A&T State University.

References:

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Calvin, Floyd C. "Kittrell College in new period of growth." *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 07, 1929, pg 4. 2nd session

"Capt. David King Cherry". Find-A-Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/50452365/david-king-cherry> ^[13]

Cherry, David King "A Brief History of A. and T. College Up To 1922." *The Agricultural and Technical College Register*. July/August 1926.

<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ttt/id/26236> ^[7]

"Dr. David K. Cherry Passes; Funeral Held." *New Journal and Guide* Oct. 13, 1956. Page A4C

"Dr. David K. Cherry, Veteran Educator, Dies." *New Journal And Guide*. September 29, 1956. Pg. C2. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection.

"Educator Dies in Knoxville." *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 06, 1956.

"Former A. and T. Professor is Head of Kittrell College." *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 08, 1928, Saturday.

Gibbs, Warmoth T. *History of the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College: Greensboro, North Carolina* Dubuque, Iowa: W.C. Brown Book, 1966.

Hunton, Addie W, Kathryn M Johnson, and Kathryn Magnolia Johnson. *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* History of Women, No. 7460. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Brooklyn Eagle Press, 1920.

"K.C. opens 69th year." *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 2, 1943. Page 2

Kittrell College, Bulletin for 1930-1931. Duke University Archives. <https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/yearbooks/id/29669> ^[14]

"Kittrell Forges Ahead Under New President." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 Oct 1929, Sat. Page 14.

"Prof. David K. Cherry Appointed Dean Of Knoxville College." *New York Age*, (New York, NY) 07 Aug 1943, page 3.

Mather, Frank Lincoln. 1915. *Who's who of the colored race: a general biographical dictionary of men and women of African descent ; vol. 1.*

<https://books.google.com/books?id=RFZ2AAAAMAAJ&vq=cherry&pg=PA64#v=onepage&q&f=false> ^[15]

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Photo of D. K. Cherry, George B. Love and B. W. Barnes on A&T College Campus. C. 1920, Published in *A&T ...at seventy-five...A Story of Progress and Service* The Bulletin of A&T College, Vol. 58, No.5, April 1967

Photos of Commissioned Officers, by A. Mosby. Bulletin of the A&T College [1915-1916], F. D. Bluford Library Archives, North Carolina A&T State University.

Subjects:

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Universities and colleges ^[22]
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Authors:
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