

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
1989 SESSION  
RATIFIED BILL

RESOLUTION 15  
HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1140

A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING HENRY EVANS.

Whereas, Henry Evans, 1760-1810, a free black shoemaker and licensed Methodist preacher of Virginia, traveled through the little village of Fayetteville in the late eighteenth century and recognized a place where the field was ripe unto harvest; and

Whereas, Henry Evans settled in Fayetteville, built a small church sanctuary long known as "the slab Chapel", the first structure in the town erected specifically for worship, and soon became, to quote a denominational observer, "the best preacher of his time in that quarter"; and

Whereas, Henry Evans was so remarkable a preacher that Bishop Francis Asbury, who visited the slab Chapel several times, was told that "distinguished visitors hardly felt that they might pass a Sunday in Fayetteville without hearing him preach"; and

Whereas, Henry Evans advanced a message of Biblical authority so appealing to his black listeners that slave owners at times drove him into the sandhills, where he continued to deliver clandestine sermons, and forced him to swim the icy Cape Fear River in order to reach his flock; and

Whereas, Henry Evans grew to become a respected and widely acclaimed preacher and townsman with a wide following among free and slave; and

Whereas, upon his death, Henry Evans deeded the lot and church to the Methodist Church, and was buried under the chancel of a later chapel built on the site; and

Whereas, the church which Henry Evans founded was the mother church of Methodism in Cumberland County, and after the Civil War of much of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in North Carolina; and

Whereas, the example of the life of Henry Evans raised a standard of conduct and courage for black people in Fayetteville in the times of slavery and afterwards; and

Whereas, the church which he founded has since become a sanctuary of spiritual growth and a birthplace of community leadership for several generations, enhancing the religious, educational, political, and social life of North Carolina; and

Whereas, that in welcoming the North Carolina General Assembly to Fayetteville, the community offers the life and service of Henry Evans as an example of the best of its sons and daughters through the more than 230 years since its beginning;

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

Section 1. That the spirit and character of Henry Evans, free black preacher and staunch apostle of hope, be commended to the people of North Carolina as a beacon light embodying the true meaning of the freedoms and guarantees contained in the Constitution and Bill of Rights of the United States of America.

Sec. 2. This resolution is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 17th day of April, 1989.

James C. Gardner  
President of the Senate

J. L. Mavretic  
Speaker of the House of Representatives