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JOHN CLARENCE SCARBOROUGH

- ◆ **Learning Outcome:** *Students can describe how John Clarence Scarborough*
◆ *created a successful funeral home and explain the importance of the service*
◆ *this company provided.*



After the Civil War, the town of Kinston, North Carolina, had just one funeral home. When a white person died, the funeral home provided an elegant horse-drawn **hearse** (a special vehicle designed for carrying a dead body in a coffin) to take the body to the church and the cemetery. However, for black people, the body was carried in a wagon. Even after black people in Kinston asked the funeral director to provide them with a carriage, he did not.

So, in 1871, a grocer named Joseph C. Hargett started a funeral home to give black people a more dignified way to mourn their loved ones. Many years later, he encouraged his young clerk, John Clarence Scarborough, to become a **mortician** (a person who runs a funeral home) also. Mr. Hargett sent J. C. Scarborough to a

business school in Kittrell, North Carolina, and then to New York City, where he studied **embalming** (preparing a body for burial). At that time, he was the only black man in his class.

After his education, in 1905, Mr. Scarborough started a funeral home for the black community in Durham, North Carolina. At that time, many of Durham's black residents lived in a neighborhood called Hayti. Its main street, Parrish Street, was sometimes called the Black Wall Street. Like the famous Wall Street in New York, several important **financial services companies** (companies that dealt with borrowing, lending, and investing money) were located on this street. These included the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and the Mechanics and Farmers Bank.

Mr. Scarborough's business grew. Over time, he married Joseph Hargett's daughter, and the funeral home became the Scarborough & Hargett Celebration of Life Center. It still exists today. Mr. Scarborough also founded the Funeral Directors and Morticians Association of North Carolina, a group of black funeral home owners.

Mr. Scarborough's success allowed him to become a **philanthropist** (a person who gives large amounts of money to charities). In 1925, Mr. Scarborough bought an old hospital and turned it into a school for black children. The school provided both an education and healthy meals to its students. The school helped improve health and living conditions among the black residents of Durham and continues to do so today.

VOCABULARY WORDS

- ◆ Hearse
- ◆ Mortician
- ◆ Embalming
- ◆ Financial services company
- ◆ Philanthropist

