



# Chowan Beach: Remembering an African American Resort (Vintage Images)

*Frank Stephenson*

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In 1928, Eli Reid purchased 400 acres of picturesque property on the banks of the Chowan River in Hertford County, North Carolina. Soon after he acquired the land, Reid began turning the area into a Segregation-era resort for African Americans, and Chowan Beach was born.

As the resort began to take shape in the late 1920s, it was clear that something special had been started. Wide sandy beaches were built, and construction was immediately started on guest cottages, bathhouses, a dance hall, photo studio, restaurant, picnic area and magnificent German-made carousel. Chowan Beach was an immediate success, and throngs of African Americans began to stream in from across North Carolina and the East Coast to relax and enjoy the atmosphere and spectacular views--an oasis of fun in a social desert of limited opportunities and unfair treatment. The water was cool and refreshing, the crowds were friendly, and the music was hot, as the beach was a popular stop for musicians touring on the "Chitlin Circuit," including B.B. King, James Brown, Sam Cooke and The Drifters.

In this nostalgic new book, author Frank Stephenson brings back the glory days of Chowan Beach with an array of vintage photographs and a brief history of the area. Come along as Stephenson revisits the past of this beloved beach and offers a reminder of what it meant to generations of African American visitors.

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