



DTH FILE PHOTO

Anti-apartheid supporters built a shanty in Polk Place in 1986 to protest UNC's investments in South Africa.

Polk Place Site of New Design, Student Protests

BY DENISE WALKER
STAFF WRITER

Like two regal giants standing guard over the University, South Building and Wilson Library tower quietly at the north and south ends of Polk Place.

The two buildings make up a chapter of UNC's history, marked by growth spurred on by Reconstruction-era philosophy that built the New South.

From Corraling Horses To Housing the Chancellor

The cornerstone of the first South Building was laid in April 1798. The original plan for the building that now houses the chancellor's office was that it would be 120 feet in length, 56 feet wide and three stories high.

Due to a shortage of funds, South Building stood at only 1 1/2 stories, half its intended height. South Building remained at this height until 1814 when a renewed, more modern plan of construction, along with a generous donation from Alumnus John Robert Donnell, allowed for its completion.

During its construction, South Building was home to student-constructed huts which served as a type of shelter, except on rainy days when the board roof of South Building would allow the rain to pass through.

Fifty years later, as the Civil War plagued the country, South Building was home not to students, but to Union soldiers. It also was reported that cattle and horses were corralled in South Building during the war.

At the time of the federal occupation of the University, classes were canceled, and ultimately, in 1871, the University closed due to the loss of its endowment and low enrollment, all results of the war.

In 1874, a committee was sent to examine the postwar conditions of UNC's buildings.

It was found that South Building needed new doors, windows, plastering and a roof. All of these necessary repairs were made at a total of \$800.

A Stately Landscape

Boldly facing South Building from the south is Wilson Library. But between the buildings is a grassy knoll joining South Building and Wilson Library. Once called the South Quadrangle, it was named Polk Place by the Board of Trustees in honor of President James K. Polk.

Polk Place originally was designed to be a grand landscaping development to complement the grandeur of South Building.

Today it plays host to UNC students who want to relax between classes.

But it also has seen countless protests and marches. From a march protesting U.S. involvement in Cambodia in 1970 to the 1993 Rape-Free Zone promoting awareness about sexual assault, the area is known as a place to voice opinion and opposition to the establishment.

The activities in Polk Place often seem to antagonize the old stately buildings around it.

Meanwhile, Across the Quad

Erected in 1929, Wilson Library allowed for the expansion of all special collection sections. For example, the N.C. Collection and the Rare Books Collection now are housed in Wilson Library.

The library is named in honor of Louis Round Wilson, an 1899 alumnus of UNC. It was in fact, the first building at UNC to be named in honor of a person while he was still living.

Wilson, who was a librarian for 58 years, worked at both UNC and the University of Chicago. He was responsible for the founding of the School of Library Science, Wilson Library, the Alumni Association and the Arch Press.

Architect A.C. Nash designed Wilson. Archibald Henderson wrote that "the building was placed in a dominating position, facing north and forming the south side of the South Quadrangle."

Campus Abounds in Legends, Myths About UNC's History

BY STEVE ROBBLEE
ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

The Legend of Peter Dromgoole

Peter Dromgoole thought he had found his one true love.

A young Chapel Hill girl named Fanny had caught Dromgoole's eye in spring 1833, and, by all accounts, the two quickly fell in love.

Dromgoole and Fanny often would head off to Gimghoul Castle, on the western edge of campus, to spend the afternoon together.

But Dromgoole was not the only University student who had an interest in the fair Fanny, according to legend.

When Dromgoole saw another UNC student spying on the two lovers one day outside the castle, he was outraged. The proud and possessive Dromgoole challenged the would-be suitor to a duel for Fanny's love.

The night of the duel was such that Dromgoole's superior marksmanship skills were nullified by a stiff rain and driving wind. Yet Dromgoole insisted that the duel not be postponed. At about midnight two shots rang out in the Chapel Hill night.

Dromgoole lay dead near the old castle, and the unknown dueler buried him in a shallow grave where he lay.

A few weeks after the duel, Dromgoole's uncle came down from Virginia and his nephew was nowhere to be found.

University students claimed Dromgoole had left town, but no stagecoach company could provide records showing a passenger by that name leaving Chapel Hill.

Fanny was inconsolable after Dromgoole's disappearance. She often would weep on the rocks outside Gimghoul Castle where she and Peter had spent much of their time.

Even today, those rocks contain an inexplicable reddish hue, and the wind that whistles through the trees late at night sounds strangely like the grief of a young woman in mourning.

A "Silent" Guardian

If Silent Sam, the statue facing Franklin Street on McCorkle Place, knows how the legend about him got started, he's sure not telling anybody.

According to legend, Sam is constantly on the watch for a virgin passing by among the hundreds of people who walk past his guard every day. Should Silent Sam spot a virgin, he will fire the rifle that stands on his shoulder.

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