

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 Corralling 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

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

Fifty years later, as the Civil Warplagued 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 build-

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 ent 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 pro 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 Qu

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 UNC 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 FOITOR

If history is a "distillation of rumor" as Thomas Carlyle said in 1837 when assessing the French Revolution - then the residue in history's filter is the substance from which myths and legends are created.

During the past 200 years, UNC not only has provided a rich history, but it also has produced many legends about its founders, its tradition and students' lives.

William R. Davie and the "Old Poplar

Were it not for the Davie Poplar, located near Old East on McCorkle Place, the University of North Carolina at Hillsborough might be celebrating its 200th anniversary today. Or, at least, that's how the story goes.

It is the Davie Poplar — or the "Old

Poplar" as it was referred to even in the 19th century — that captured the imagina-tion of William R. Davie and other University trustees searching for a suitable place in the center of the state to build the nation's first state-supported institution.

According to legend, one picnic under the thick foliage of the large poplar tree was all it took to convince the trustees that a site near the New Hope Chapel was the perfect place to put a school.

But Davie probably wasn't even involved with the selection process.

"That could be the premiere myth (at the University)," William Snider, UNC historian and author of "Light on the Hill," admitted in an interview. "There really is no evidence that (Davie) was even in that selection group.

The University's first buildings - Old East, Old West and Person Hall — were erected around the Davie Poplar, which was considered the center of campus before construction started on Polk Place in the 1920s.

Throughout its 200-year history as a UNC landmark, the Davie Poplar has survived a couple of near-death experiences that only have increased its legendary stat-

The tree was struck by lightning on Aug. 7, 1873, while Kemp Battle served as UNC president. And in August 1902, a strong northeast wind blew down branches from the Old Poplar.

The once-noble tree has lost some of its majesty since 1902. The poplar has been hollowed, and cement has been poured in its center to keep the tree from being up-

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

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

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 chal-lenged 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

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

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

Please See LEGENDS, Page 13



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