THE TAR HEEL

Thursday, August 4, 1966



SUN.-MON.-TUES.



Ancestors Of UNC Founder Seek Their Education Here

William Richardson Davie, founder of the University here, has great, great, great, great grandchildren - a brother and a sister - now registered to attend UNC in September.

Neil Owen Davis Jr. of Auburn, Alabama, and his sister, Katherine, who is Mrs. Tobin Savage, wife of an architect now living in Chapel Hill, are descendants of the man who was a prime mover in founding the first state university in United States. The University at Chapel Hill first admitted students in 1795.

The kinship became known when Neil O. Davis Jr., filled out an information sheet at the UNC admissions office. In reply to the inquiry whether any relatives have been con nected with the University, he wrote: "William R. Davie was my great, great, great, great grandfather.'

Neil Davis Jr. will become a freshman, and his sister, Mrs. Savage, will be a graduate student, majoring in American history. She has degrees from Agnes Scott College and Auburn University, and is presently enrolled in the second session of the summer school in the University here.

Neil O. Davis Jr. expects to continue the family tradition of newspapering. He will major in political science and in journalism. He achieved an outstanding high school record, and has served as a page in

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the United States Senate

Although the names Davis and Davie are similar, the relation to W. R. Davie is on the maternal side.

William Richardson Davie was a graduate of Princeton University who settled in North Carolina, was a General in the American Revolution, took leadership in establishing the University, directed the search for a site to locate the University, laid the corner-stone of the Old East Building October 12, 1793, and became a member of the first board of trustees.

board of trustees. The Davie Poplar, famous tree on the central campus, is named for him. Davie Hall, once the headquarters of the botany department, is now being rebuilt in modern design to house the department of psychology.



GREAT, GREAT ETC. grandson and ancestor's tree.

Papa Poplar And Junior Pass Physical

Alumni and sentimental friends of the University will be happy to learn that the centuries - old Davie Poplar and its 48-year-old offspring, Davie Poplar Jr., are thriving nicely despite the sweltering weather.

The University's tree specialist recently made his annual summer inspection of the grounds, taking especially close looks at the campus' most historic landmark and "junior." Trunks, limbs and leaves were all reported in

The ancient, ivey - shrouded parent poplar is named for William Richardson Davie of Halifax, a Revolutionary War general who is recognized as the "father" of the Univer-

Legend has it that Davie, a member of the committee to select a site for the University, paused for lunch in the shade of the towering tree in 1792 and decided the hilly, forested surroundings would make the perfect setting for the first state university.

Historians, however, maintain that Davie's visit under the poplar actually came in 1793.

Either way, the tree has become a sacred symbol for generations of students and alumni, and the University continues to take every precaution to keep it physically fit.

Long before the 1890's, there were predictions of death for the Davie Poplar. It has been struck by lightning several times, one of the earlier times being recorded in 1873. In 1902, a windstorm carried away two of its largest branches. Another of its major limbs was carried off in a 1944 storm.

Over the years, the tree has been pruned and pampered by tree surgeons. On several occasions, it has been treated for decay and rot. Surgeons have reported the trunk of the tree to be hollow from the ground up, with a cavity large enough for a man to crawl through.

There has been speculation that some of its limbs might fall on students, or that a strong wind might uproot the tree completely. A steel band about the upper portion of the trunk, with cables attached to nearby younger trees, holds the Poplar up.

When the tree was pruned several years ago, souvenir gavels were carved from the wood. One newspaper editor in the state has suggested that if the tree should die, its carcass should be encased in bronze - like baby shoes to endure through the ages.

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