

FEATURES

Campus tours give insight to history and traditions

By JEFF HIDAY

Every day at 2 p.m., a group of people leave the west entrance of the Morehead Planetarium. Sometimes the group is large, sometimes small; but always it is a group taking an historical tour, a tour fast growing in popularity.

The historical campus tour is sponsored by the Service League of Chapel Hill, and began five years ago as a Bicentennial project designed to last only during the summer. But the tour has continued as a year-round event. League members, town residents and even students act as guides on the hour-long tour which covers the old part of the campus.

Those who take the tour include prospective students, curious town residents, and a few visitors from foreign countries. Sylvia Noin, 20, arrived from Paris with her parents to look at UNC. She will go to an American university in two years after she graduates

from the political science university she is attending in Paris. Noin said she was most impressed by the "trees, squirrels, and the people" of Carolina.

The groups taking the tour vary in size. Guide Shara Partin called a 15-member group large, but the tour is still given if only one person shows up. No reservations are required—whichever shows up for the tour may go. Special tours for larger groups may also be arranged in advance. The tour runs every day from March 1 to the beginning of Christmas break in December.

Each day, the tour leaves from the Planetarium rotunda and proceeds to the Davie Poplar, with the guide continually spewing historical tidbits. After learning about the folklore of the Davie Poplar, the group hears the real story behind the tree and the founding of the campus site.

At this point, guide Harry Braiford describes the way things were when he attended Chapel Hill in 1926. Construction for

Kenan Stadium began then, and the "bowl" the stadium presently sits in had to be blasted out of a granite creek bed, he said. Everyone was up early because "you heard it at 6 every morning."

The group then continues to Person Hall, where the "Flemish Bond" brick design and previous purposes of the building are explained. The guide points out a couple of statues and a pair of gargoyles which adorn the outside walls of Person Hall. For your information the gargoyles were found in the early part of this century amid some rubble below Big Ben in London, waiting to be destroyed.

Next on the tour are the chambers of the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, located on the top floor of New West.

Along with an explanation of the history and tradition of the Societies, various artifacts in the Di-Phi Chambers are pointed out, like a bust of Sen. Sam Ervin and a painting of native author Thomas Wolfe.

After leaving New West, the tour visits Old West, an historic building that looks as old as Old East, but was actually built about 30 years later in 1824, the guide said. The cornerstone for Old East (not old West), the University's first building, was laid Oct. 12, 1793. The guide said that during those formative years of the University, Old East was the University. It was the only building on campus, and housed not only the students, as it does now, but also the classrooms and administrative offices. Old East is the oldest state university building, and a National Historic Landmark.

Between Old East and Old West lies the Old Well, described as the unofficial symbol of the University. The guide said that during the early part of the 19th century, public health officials closed down the well because it used a bucket to draw water; soon after, a pump was installed.

From the Old Well, the group circles around to the side of South Building facing Wilson Library. The building was originally built as an architectural companion to Old East and Old West, but construction was halted because of insufficient funds after the first floors-and-a-half were completed.

When construction was continued, planners decided to "spruce up" the front of the building to match "elegant" Wilson Library by adding the large columns and terracing, the guide said.

Next to South Building is Playmakers Theatre, describes as an 1851 Greek Revival structure, which was originally built to be the University Ballroom. State legislators were so enraged that state funds were to be used for such a "frivolous" activity, that the building was transformed into a library—with movable bookshelves that were cleared away for dancing.

The guide also pointed out the facade of granite blocks which is actually bricks covered with mortar.

From Playmakers Theater, the group wanders through Coker Arboretum, which was once a pasture for cows and horses.

Then the tour returns to the Morehead Building.

Guide Carolyn Oldham, a registered nurse in Chapel Hill, said the tour had been very successful and should continue indefinitely. The project could not have succeeded without the support of the University and the Morehead Building, she said.

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Another tour is given during the regular school term by Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed service fraternity. The APO tour is conducted Monday through Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at noon. The tour leaves from the Undergraduate Admissions office on Country Club Road.

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