

## Korner's Folly

# House embodies more than one vein of thought

By CINDY HAGA

Anyone traveling along Highway 70 to Chapel Hill in the early 1900's passed through Kernersville—probably not resisting a quizzical gaze at an oddly elaborate house on Main Street.

The House, with its 22 rooms built on seven levels of varying heights, seemed to embody more than any one vein of thought. It served as a theater, a ball room, a place to live and a place of work.

The builder of the house, an artist and interior decorator, attempted to blend richness of decor with practicality, lending the house a confusing mixture of mood.

Most people who see the house today are still trying to figure out just what it was Jule Korner, grandson of Kernersville's founder, had in mind, when he built the house in 1880.

While it was still under construction, a neighbor passing by commented that in a few years the house would be known as one of Korner's follies.

Jule overheard the comment and became so delighted with the idea that he adopted the name Korner's Folly and had it inscribed on the front porch tile.

At least, people assumed that the tile-floored porch facing Main Street designated the front of the house. However, any side of the hand-made brick home could pass for its front, since all four of the porches and sides look equally like entrances.

Jule probably loved the attention his house drew, as its name implies.

He had been a wealthy man ever since he drew a bull logo for the Blackwell Tobacco Co., and made the company and himself, under the penname of Reuben Rink, famous. He could afford to build the Folly to achieve a rather luxurious laugh.

Indeed, Jule was a man who loved to enjoy himself in a resplendent setting. The ornate ball room he built into his home proves his unending taste for luxury and society.

The ball room's walls are covered with silk damask, the ceiling is adorned with hand-painted

murals depicting Cupids and flowers, intricate wooden cases mask the room's corners, and unique furnishings, such as a chair designed for two people to sit facing each other, fill the room with its individual air of casual formality.

This room was not intended merely for looks, however. Jule, who loved guests and parties, often encouraged his college-age son and daughter to bring home friends for week-end dances.

If any preferred a different type evening, they could visit the theater, known as Cupid's Park, which Jule built on the top floor to promote his wife's interest in acting.

The theater is one of the few rooms in the Folly that achieves a mood fitted to its purpose. The lush, autumnal paintings filling its ceiling and walls blend together to make their own imaginary world looking down on an audience interested in escaping into fantasy. The triangular type shape of the ceiling also has the effect of binding the

audience together, making visitors feel at ease.

Most of the house's rooms tend to make guests feel out of place.

Murals cover the ceilings of most of the rooms; 20 fireplaces throughout the house are outlined in decorated tile; and the style of furnishings is kingly, in size and detail.

The problem with all the fineness is that it becomes mundane; the dining room is about as conducive to a wholesome family meal as the ball room would be.

Visitors find themselves asking if Jule knew what he was doing when he designed the Folly. Certainly, the house reveals his taste for art and splendor, and proves his genius for design—but was Jule interested in making a serious statement, or did he only design a parody of contemporary taste?

Several curiosities in the Folly imply that Jule was not at all serious in his design.



Korner's Folly

Sketch courtesy of Kernersville newspaper

For example, none of the doors inside the house are the same size. One doorway is so small heavy people attempting it would have to turn around and go another way.

The nursery's ceiling is only five and a half feet high, forcing guests to stoop as they enter it.

Two of the ball room's corners contain small spaces that resemble cloak closets—actually, they are kissing corners.

Along with all the fun, though, Jule attempted to make his house practical.

He designed an underground ventilation system of tunnels to naturally air condition the house. The system works well, although the large, swinging windows that connect various rooms in the house distract from the Folly's elegance.

Even this attempt at practicality had an odd twist to it. The Folly is so large that it is nearly impossible to heat in the winter. Jule was forced to hire one servant in the winter to do nothing more than tend fires.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the Folly, and of Jule's nature, is found in something that isn't even there anymore.

In an empty space above the foyer, there used to be a portrait of a woman. On close inspection, one could see that where the woman's right eye should have been, there was a tiny hole cut out.

Whenever Jule heard the doorbell ring, he slipped to the picture, placed his eye against the hole, and waited to see who the caller was. He would then be either 'in' or 'out' depending upon who the visitor was.

Even though he isn't around anymore, visitors today can still imagine Jule standing there, peering through the hole.

For today's curious visitors, he always says he's in.

Jule Korner loved attention.

Korner's Folly is open to visitors with groups of 10 or more, by appointment only. Call the Kernersville Chamber of Commerce for further information.

Cindy Haga is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

## Rameses speaks out on other side of his life

By DEBBI SYKES

Most people know me as "Rameses," the tough symbol of the charging ram. But a ram writing for *The Weekend*? This is a first, but I'm excited to finally tell my story.

It's tough being a school mascot. Sure, I'll bet you think this is a glamour job. I get to run onto the field on football Saturdays in front of crowds of cheering Tarheel fans. And I have fringe benefits, too. I don't have to camp out for tickets to the games, and I always get a spot on the 50-yard line.

But no one sees the other side of life as Carolina's ram. It's downright humiliating the way I look. What self-respecting ram would have his horns painted blue and wear a funny little cloth that covers me about as well as a hospital gown?

Actually, going to the games isn't too bad. I have my moment of glory, and then things settle down for me. But I would like to make a confession. Even an 85-year-old grandmother knows more about football than I do. I'm sure you often wonder what I'm thinking when I've got my back to the field and I'm chewing on grass during key plays. As much as I'm ashamed to admit it, I simply don't understand football.

I don't feel too dumb, though. I think I lend a gracious, dignified air to the Carolina playing field. How would you like having somebody dressed up as a ridiculous animal like a gamecock romping across Kenan Stadium as your mascot? Some people will do anything for a laugh.

But the worst hazard of my job is the constant threat of being kidnapped. I trust Carolina students, but I don't know what to expect from our rivals. Just let them laugh at me. Sure I get onto their trucks when they come to take me away. However, never trust a State student who's confronted with a balking ram.

Things used to be a lot safer in the old days. My predecessors were lucky enough to have UNC students looking for would-be ram nappers. Now things have gotten nastier. The N.C. State School of Textiles had no mercy. They didn't stop at painting my horns like most had; they even painted my fur that obnoxious shade of red.

I am learning to overcome the psychological handicaps of my job. At first it was hard coping with the fickle

nature of the fans. During the football season I'm treated with adulation, but I'm forgotten the rest of the year.

The post-game euphoria is always hard for me to shoulder. I often wonder why no one runs out to hug me after a big win. Maybe I should cut back on the wild onions I eat out at the farm.

I'm not really asking for a lot from Carolina fans. However, there still a few goals I'm aiming for. I don't under-

stand why I have to take a forced vacation after football season. I think the NCAA basketball champs deserve to have a live mascot at their games, too.

Besides that, at the end of my last game I'd feel truly honored to have my coat retired and to be granted an honorary berth in the Ram's Club.

Debbi Sykes is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.



RAMESES  
Loyal Tarheel Mascot

DTH/Tom Carr