

# Campus history, abridged version

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UNC's 197-year history is full of legends and little-known facts that are sure to raise an eyebrow or evoke a chuckle.

### In the beginning

It all started when William Richardson Davie, "Father of the University," stopped to give his horse a drink of water and stuck a twig in the ground to declare the site of the first state university in the nation. From that stick grew what is known as the Davie Poplar (actually a tulip tree).

In 1793, the cornerstone of Old East was laid, making it the first state university building. It became the center of residential and instructional life, but was extremely overcrowded, with 56 students packed into 14 one-window rooms. To escape, students erected huts in the forest and inside the unfinished South Building, which later housed horses.

UNC's first University president, Joseph Caldwell, was known for the way his ankles cracked when he walked. Caldwell would patrol campus in the middle of the night, but students who were playing cards or involved in some other mischief were always warned by the cracking before he could catch them.

Once, a group of students stole Caldwell's carriage and took it to the edge of a swamp two miles from campus. Caldwell told his coachman to fetch it back, but the students heard him, beat the coachman to the spot and hauled the carriage farther into the swamp.

Much to their surprise, Caldwell was seated inside with the curtains drawn. He leaned out the window and said, "Well, young gentlemen, I've had a very pleasant ride. Now take me back home."

### A bygone era

In 1800, tuition was \$10, Old East was still the only building on campus and the staff of clergy-professors and tutors watched three men graduate.

Six more buildings were built in the first half of the century, along with several stone walls to keep cows from entering the classrooms.

By the 1850s, about 425 students were enrolled, two-thirds of them from North Carolina. UNC was second in size only to Yale, and taught Latin, Greek, pure mathematics and philosophy. Back then, a UNC diploma was not proof of scholarship—rather, a diploma meant a graduate could manage an estate.

Students were required to attend chapel services twice a day. In class, students passed cheat sheets through holes sawed in the floors.

Then came the Civil War. Despite the Union's occupation of Chapel Hill, the University continued to conduct classes, but the graduating class of 1866 only had three members.

### The new University

Reconstruction closed UNC from 1871 to 1875. When it reopened, it more like the modern University: agriculture, engineering, natural sciences, literature, applied math, political science and history were added to the curriculum.

The new professors—all seven of them—were secular, with master's degrees, and they started the system of percentage grades. Labs and a modern elective system for upper-classmen replaced recitations and oral quizzes.

Some campus buildings acquired legendary status during this time. In 1875, Old East was vandalized and the commemorative plate was stolen. Forty-one years later, the plate was discovered in a pile of scrap brass destined for melting at a foundry in Tennessee. The foundry's owner, an alumnus of UNC, recognized the plate and returned it to its rightful place.

The student body also saw major changes. The first female student at Carolina arrived in 1897, but during the next 15 years, only six women attended. In fact, in 1912, former President Kemp Battle said, "The experiment has not met with much success." But the summer session of 1916 saw an unusual majority of female students—much to the shock of the predominately male student body. The "magnificent eight, Summer School girls of all description," led to a "Summer School diversion popular among the masculine element, serenading the girls as they marched by from supper. A crowd of boys would sing to the passing girls, 'I'll not rest until I labelled Mabel mine,'" according to *The Daily Tar Heel*.

### The lost generation

The effects of World War I hit UNC in 1917. By the fall of 1918, the "university (was) virtually converted into a government camp," the DTH said. But just as the war effort really began to take over the University, the armistice was signed. The athletic program resumed, and in 1924, head cheerleader Vic Huggins decided that UNC should have a mascot. Since football player Jack Merritt was known as "The Battering Ram," Huggins hit upon the idea of a ram. Rameses was purchased for \$25. He arrived the day UNC played VMI, and when UNC won the game, Rameses received the credit.

Fourteen buildings, including Wilson Library and the Bell Tower, were built in the 1920s and '30s. And yes, the Bell Tower really was meant to be a dunce cap for Wilson Library.

John Motley Morehead wanted to construct a bell tower on the top of South Building and to change the name to Morehead Building. Librarian Louis Wilson strongly disapproved of this site and opposed Morehead on every other site he mentioned.

While Wilson was on vacation, Morehead had the land behind Wilson Library cleared and began building the tower. On Thanksgiving Day, 1931, much to Wilson's chagrin, the tower was dedicated. Morehead and his family were served Thanksgiving dinner on the lawn while the bells played "How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours." Standing on the steps of South Building, one can see the cone of the tower sitting on top of Wilson's roof.

### The second world war

In the beginning of 1942, *The Daily Tar Heel* reported, "The University of North Carolina is rapidly throwing off its horn-rimmed spectacles and academic robes to become an all-out laborer producing victory."

That same year, half of the professors left to serve in the war, and the student body population decreased by 700. When 18- and 19-year-olds began to be drafted, 900 students enlisted in one week. Steele Building became the only civilian male dormitory left on campus.

The DTH published an editorial promoting the war effort. "There's only one issue—to WIN this war now," it read. "There'll be only one question when the Man with the whiskers comes calling: 'What can you do to help win the war?'"

### Bell-bottoms and sideburns

Many of the veterans who came to UNC "wanted to pick up with life. They were very businesslike, highly motivated, many married," said Carlyle Sitterson, Kenan professor emeritus of history. "Then the '50s came, in which it was said students had little intellectual curiosity. A 'me' generation who wanted to succeed materially and leave social problems to somebody else."

Sitterson, who has been at UNC since 1935, served as chancellor from 1966 to 1972.

Although protests peaked in the late '60s and early '70s, "there were some antecedents to the '60s. The '50s saw the first blacks—tentatively and very slowly—coming to the University. The first undergraduates came in 1955, and as late as 1966, only a small number had come," he said.

The bell-bottom jeans and love beads that replaced the bobby socks and pearls were worn by "certainly a minority," he said. Only about 15 percent of the campus were hippies, he estimated.

Bohemians didn't dominate the protests, said Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences Richard Cramer, who began his work in the sociology department in 1961 and who participated in the anti-war demonstrations. "They were around," he said. "Some of them were drop-outs who were never involved." In fact, student leaders and faculty members, some conforming in appearance, were the ones who were the most active, he said.

Anti-war demonstrations began in the mid-1960s. For five years, protesters conducted weekly peace vigils in front of the post office.

The largest protest came in the wake of the fatal Kent State shootings and the Cambodia invasion. Sitterson said. Nearly 9,000 students "assembled from South Building to Wilson Library and covered the whole area. It was the biggest crowd I've ever seen outside of a large athletic event."

Cramer described the change in students in the '60s: "The earlier students were less scruffy, less hippie-looking, more trying to show how good they were and expecting to be treated well. Toward the end of the decade, they were more hardened and had more anger, less naivete."

Why did the students lose their passion to change the world?

"The end of the draft," Cramer said. "Watergate was sort of a catharsis. The new students had baby-boom parents, growing up with prosperity."

But students did not lose their sense of fun. In 1974, diligent students looked up from their books to see 200 naked men run through the Undergraduate Library. A week later, 924 UNC students—including 65 women—broke the national streaking record as they ran naked through campus with 5,000 people looking on.

And how will the classes of the '80s be remembered? Silent Sam probably knows, but he isn't telling.

This article is reprinted from the October 11, 1989, edition of *The Daily Tar Heel*. The information on UNC was gathered from materials in the N.C. Collection and James Leloudis' dissertation, "A More Certain Means of Grace."

# CAROLINA IMAGES

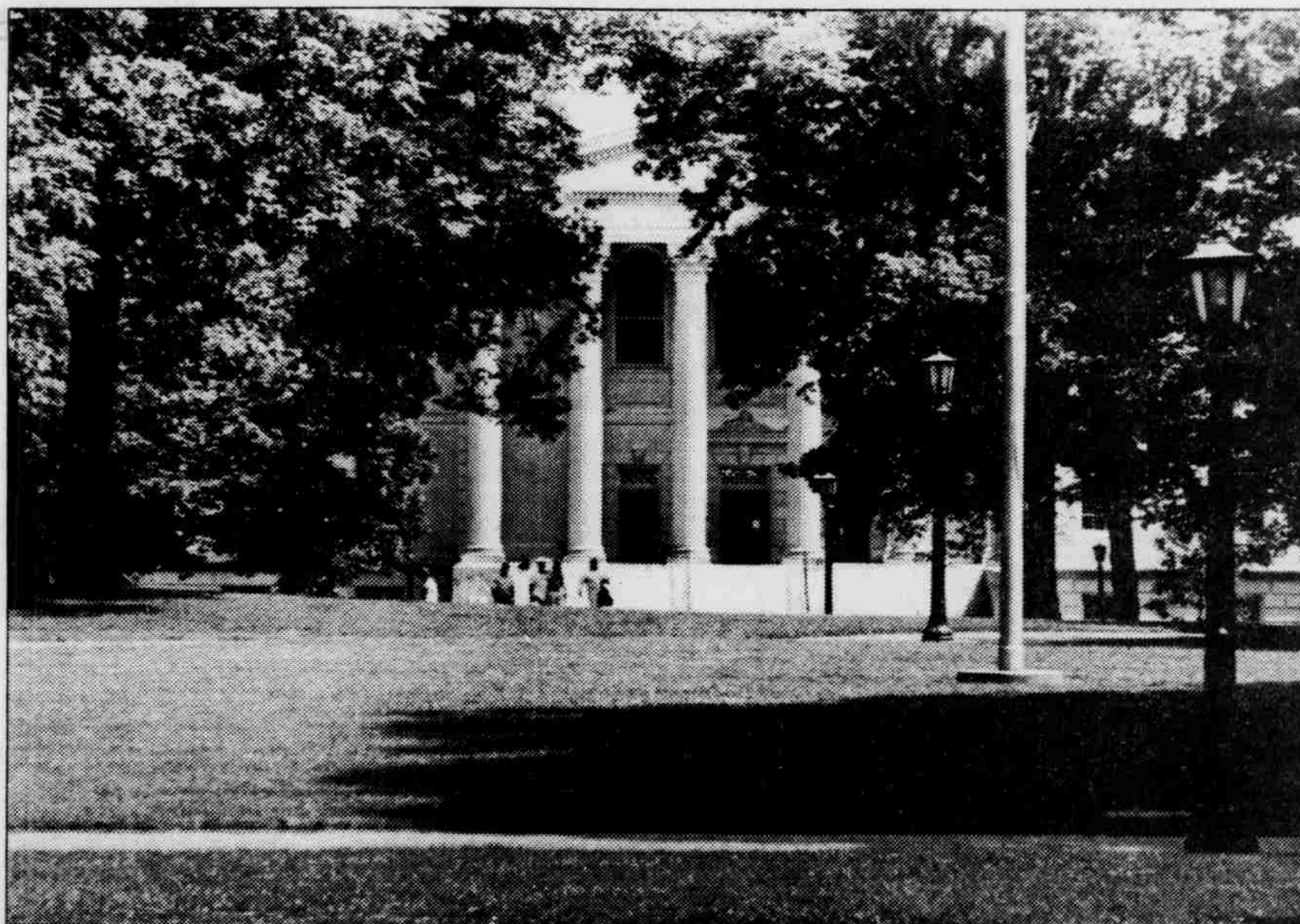
Silent Sam was erected in 1913 to memorialize University alumni who died in the Civil War.



Franklin Street is the closest source of restaurants, films and clothing stores to campus



The Old Well, now a symbol of UNC, was once the sole water supply for Old East and Old West dormitories



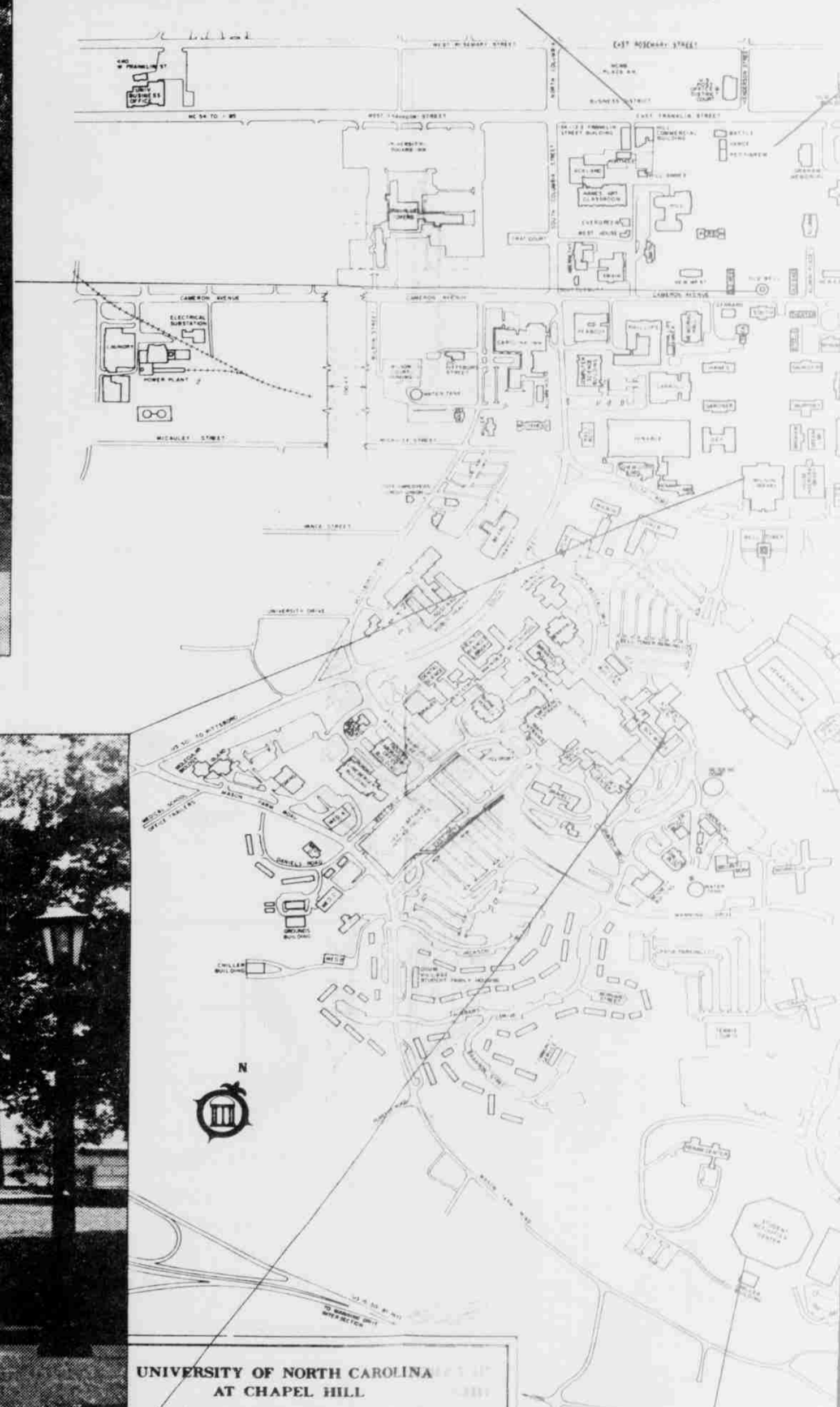
The Louis Round Wilson Library is home to the North Carolina and Southern Historical collections of rare books



Student Health Services provides mostly free medical care to the UNC student community



The Dean E. Smith Student Activities Center, which opened in January 1986, has a capacity of 21,444



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

SCALE IN FEET