

Building the History of Western Carolina University

1924

Moore Building

In 1924, the Moore Dormitory was completed and occupied by 180 women, and in 1929 the west wing was completed. It was named for Board of Trustees member Walter E. Moore and originally served as a women's dormitory. Monthly public teas were held in the front parlor to allow female students to practice being gracious hostesses. A 1927 edition of the Cullowhee Yodel, the campus newspaper, reported the somber funeral of "three orphan mice" which took place on the third floor of Moore Dormitory. Moore was also home to campus dining which was family style from 1930 until Brown Cafeteria opened in 1957. After many years of renovating and repurposing the building, Moore is now vacant and waiting for further plans.



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

Left and above: Exterior views of Moore c. 2010.

Below: Students serving tea in Moore's front parlor.



Image Courtesy of Public Relations



1930

Robertson Residence Hall



Above: 1961 aerial view of campus; McKee is in the foreground, with Reynolds and Robertson (top right) in the background.

Right: Exterior of Robertson c. 2010



Below: Young men at a Christmas party in Robertson, 1950.



The school began excavating for Robertson dormitory in November, 1929. Robertson was completed in 1930 but was not occupied until 1931. Like Moore, Robertson was named for a Board of Trustees member, Reuben B. Robertson, and it also held monthly teas where students perfected the arts of etiquette and entertaining. The hall featured a living room and a sun parlor for “date nights,” as well as kitchenettes, where a popular culinary creation was homemade fudge.

The red brick, marble pilasters, and triangular pediment of Robertson’s facade evoke the styles of classical Roman architecture. Robertson is now home to 80 undergraduate students on three floors, with double occupancy rooms and a private bathroom and kitchen. Robertson Dormitory is also home to Western Carolina University EMS students.

The New Deal comes to Cullowhee...

1939



Left: Dedication of New Deal buildings on campus.

Right: Winter scene of Graham.

Graham Building



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt initiated his celebrated New Deal, intended to create jobs and repair the struggling economy. The largest New Deal agency was the Works Progress Administration which built public roads and other projects across the country, including the Breese Gymnasium building at WCU, then Western Carolina Teachers College. Additionally, the Public Works Administration provided funding for Hoey Auditorium, McKee Building, Graham Building, Madison Residence Hall, and the Old Student Union Building. Dedicated in 1939 on the school's fiftieth anniversary, these buildings marked the first major building program in the school's history. New Deal-era projects were sturdily built and often utilized local materials to complement their natural surroundings. These characteristics are best exemplified in Breese Gymnasium, but are also visible in the five other buildings.

The Graham Building, was named in honor of Frank Porter Graham and served as the school infirmary until 2003 when the Bird Administration Building became the WCU Health Center.

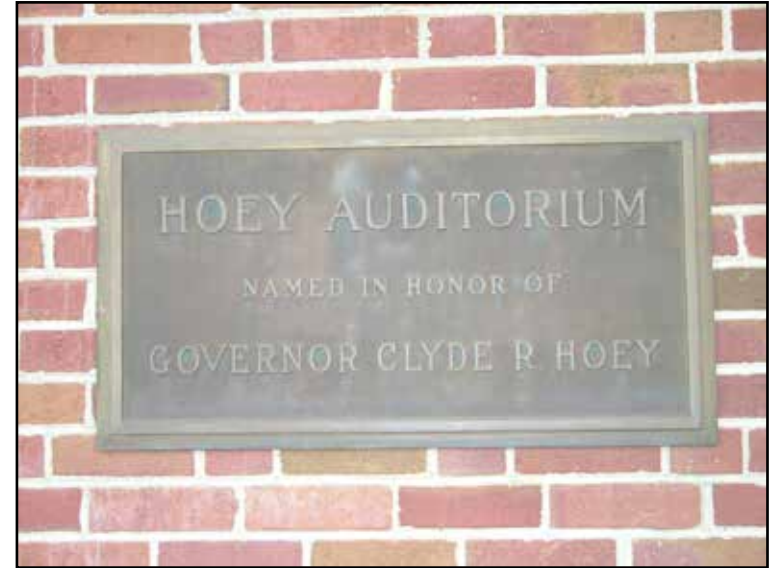
Frank Porter Graham was educated at the University of North Carolina and Columbia University. After teaching at the high school and university levels, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War I. He served on numerous federal committees, was an advisor to the Secretary of State, was appointed to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy in 1949, and served as United Nations representative to India and Pakistan. He was president of the University of North Carolina from 1930 until 1949.

1939

Hoey Auditorium



Above: Hoey Auditorium c. 1940.
Below: Hoey Auditorium c. 2014



The school's first theater was named for North Carolina Governor Clyde R. Hoey and was built on the site of Town House Field. The impressive auditorium featured huge windows that could only be opened and closed using ladders; once, during an opera performance, a sudden storm blew rain in the windows and onto the surprised audience. When Hoey was renovated in 1989, those windows were bricked up, most of the original interior walls were replaced, and a balcony was removed. Some of the seats were taken out to accommodate a larger stage and an orchestra pit, but the remaining seats are the 1939 originals - still in beautiful condition and better quality than many seats available today!

1939

McKee Building



Top left: Beautiful stonework and a bronze plaque mark the entrance of McKee.

Top right: Portrait of Gertrude Dills-McKee.

Right: McKee c. 2007



Image Courtesy of Anne McKee Austin

Image Courtesy of Public Relations

McKee Building, originally the McKee Laboratory School, was the first campus building named in honor of a woman. It provided hands-on experience for students studying education and many of Cullowhee's residents remember it with fond memories. Gertrude Dills McKee (1885-1948) served on the Board of Trustees and as North Carolina's first female state senator. Now housing such academic departments as Anthropology, World Languages, Cherokee Studies History, and Social Work, the McKee Building still retains some of its original woodwork. Legend has it that tunnels of the Nunnehi, Cherokee "Little People," have been found under McKee.



1939

Breese Gymnasium



Left: Original pipes on the exterior of Breese Gymnasium.

Right: Servicemen gather for a World War II-era ceremony at Breese's original front entrance.

Below: Breese Gymnasium in 2017.



The 144 ft. x 88 ft. structure is made of stone quarried near the college, with each block cut by hand to accurately fit the building. The building was named for the Board of Trustees Chairman William E. Breese, which houses a basketball court and swimming pool. Renovations in 2004 added a modern dance studio and classrooms for physical education, dance, and theater. It was built on the first site of the Cullowhee Methodist Church, which relocated nearby, and was once designated as a nuclear fallout shelter.

The original arched main entrance, now marked by a window, features a plaque honoring William Breese.

1939

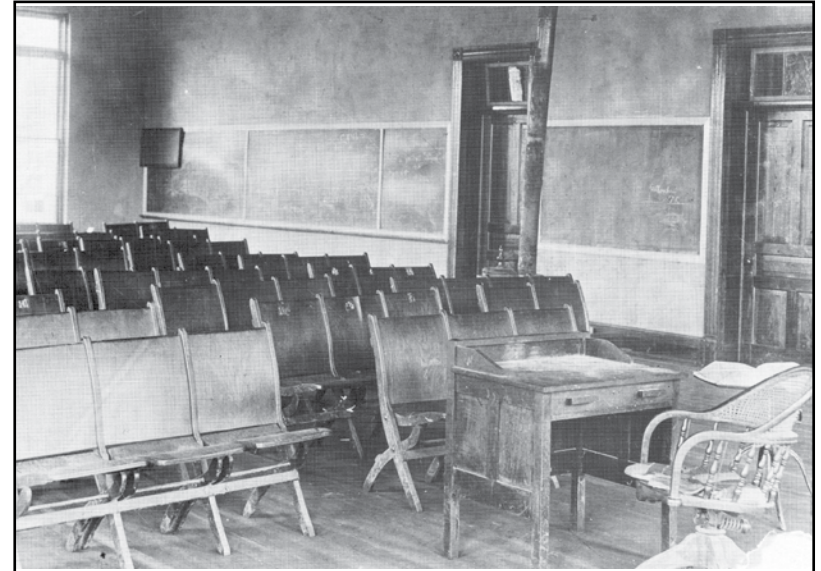
Madison Residence Hall



The 1939 Madison Residence Hall replaced the earlier, multi-purpose Madison Building. Both structures were named for WCU's founder and first president, Robert Lee Madison. Originally a women's dormitory, Madison now houses graduate students and is often used as housing for conference participants.



Top Right: A classroom in Old Madison, heated by a woodstove just visible between the doors.



Bottom Right: Old Madison



Left: Madison c. 2009

Old Madison was completed in 1904.

1939 Old Student Union Building



The first Student Union was built in 1939 as another Public Works Administration project. 1939 was the Fiftieth Anniversary of the university, and a celebration was held in the Student Union. The ceremony featured speeches by Frank Porter Graham and Harriet Elliott, a UNC-Greensboro political science professor, presidential appointee, and women's rights advocate. The building now houses the WVCU Radio Station.

Bird Alumni House 1940



Image courtesy of Public Relations

The Bird Alumni House, built in 1940, was the residence of Dean Ernest Bird, the university's acting president during the years 1947-1949 and 1956-1957. It was opened for guests by Chancellor Myron Coulter in 1991.



Image courtesy of Public Relations

1952

Stillwell Building



Home to some of the science disciplines and the Honors College, Stillwell was constructed in 1952 and named for Edgar H. Stillwell, a popular history professor and a 1899 graduate of WCU. For years, it was the primary academic building on campus, containing all departments except PE, health, and music.

Top left: Stillwell Building in the 1950s.
Right: Two exterior views of Stillwell's impressive new entrance c. 2007



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

1953

Hunter Library

Named in honor of Hiram Tyram Hunter, WCU president from 1923 to 1947, the library was completed in 1953 on the site of Town House Field. Additions, built in 1967 and 1983, made Hunter Library one of the largest libraries in western North Carolina. Before Hunter Library was built, the college books were housed in Joyner Building. Hunter Library is home to the Faculty Commons and also features group study rooms and Java City. Special Collections, on the second floor, houses many rare documents pertaining to WCU's history. The entrance before Java City is home to the Mountain Heritage Center which shares the history within these western mountains and the students new home.

Find the old entrance foyer to see a plaque to Hiram T. Hunter, then admire paintings of WCU's past presidents in the main stairwell.



Above: Students studying in Hunter Library in the 1950s and in the 21st century.

Below: Students walking around the Mountain Heritage Center



Image Courtesy of Public Relations



1956

Reid Gymnasium

Paul A. Reid served as president of WCU twice, from 1949-1956 and from 1957-1968. Reid Gym was built in 1956 with a 2,600-seat arena, a bowling alley, locker rooms, classrooms, and offices. The arena was expanded to 4,000 seats in 1965. WCU lost to UNC-Chapel Hill 77-59 in the first game played in Reid Gym; the last game was played in 1985 against Marshall University. Reid was renovated again recently in 2017 and the career center was moved into the building.

A painting of Paul Reid is displayed in the building, along with



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

Above: Career center at Reid Gym

Left: The main entrance of Reid Gymnasium.

Right: WCU and Reid Gymnasium host the UTC Mocs in 1984.



1960

Brown Cafeteria



Left: Newly renovated Brown Cafeteria c. 2018

Above: Brown c. 2014

Below: Brown in the spring of 1984.

Brown Cafeteria was completed in 1960 and was named for Frank H. Brown, class of 1898 and a chemistry professor from 1908 until 1950. Brown was renovated to no longer be a cafeteria, and was home to the Brown C3 Convenience Store, The Cat's Den, and the extremely popular Base Camp Cullowhee, which organizes trips to many of the most popular outdoor locations and activities in the area. The 2018 renovation turned Brown back into a Cafeteria which includes Steak and Shack, Starbucks, and parts of the Division of Student Affairs offices.



Images Courtesy of Public Relations

1960 Bird Health and Counseling Center



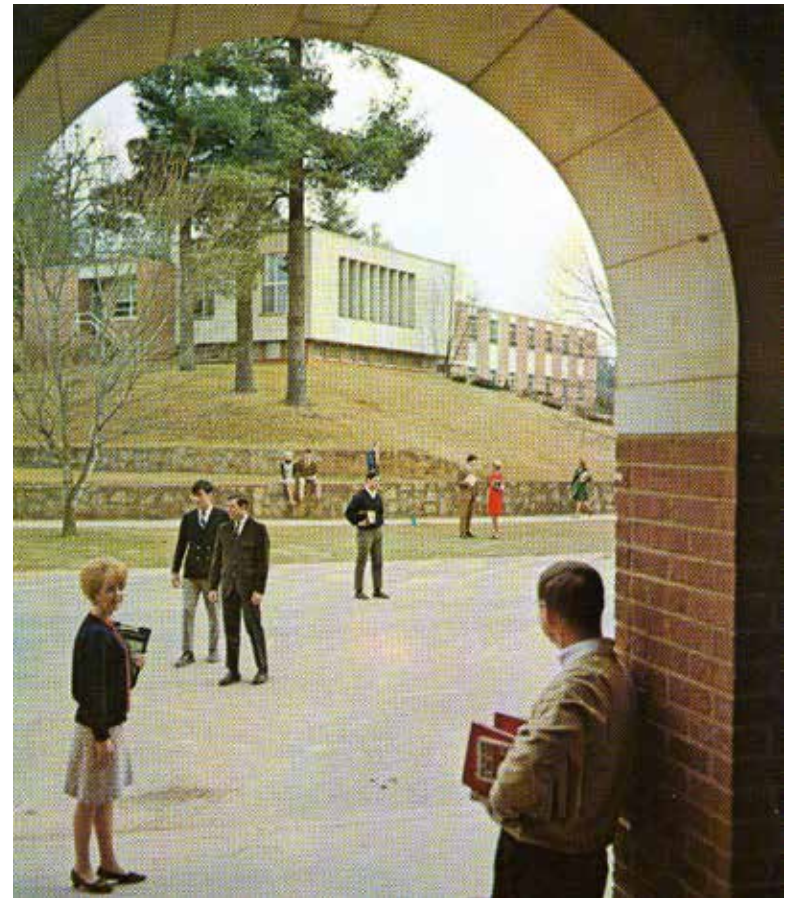
Image Courtesy of Public Relations

Above: A modern view of Bird Building.

Below: Bird's striking modernist design blends surprisingly well with the rural landscape of WCU.



Originally the Bird Administration Building, this campus building was built in 1960 and named for former WCU president W. Ernest Bird. It held offices of regional outreach and economic development before being remodeled in 2003 as the new student health center.



Above: Bird in 1969, seen from the entrance of Hoey Auditorium.

1965

Camp Building

Image Courtesy of Public Relations



Portrait of
Cordelia
Camp.



Camp Building, constructed in 1965, served as another K-8 laboratory school for local children and the students of WCU. It was named for Cordelia Camp (1884-1973), professor of education from 1927 until 1950. After the school closed in 1994, it became the University Outreach Center and home to the University Police Department and Mail Operations.



Cordelia Camp (left) and old students and friends at the dedication of the school, named in her honor.

Cordelia Camp also taught in the public school system and wrote textbooks during her career as an educator. At a ceremony to rename the former school the Cordelia Camp Building, Chancellor John Bardo said that “Miss Camp not only taught the ideals of democracy to a generation of students in a young and developing Tar Heel state, but exemplified them in her own life.”

Below: Students relax in a Noble dorm room.



Image Courtesy of Public Relations



Left: Noble (2017)
Below: Harrill Residence Hall (1971)



Above: Scott Residence Hall (1969)



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

Residence Halls

In WCU's earliest days, there was no on-campus housing. Instead, students roomed in homes of nearby residents or camped out in small shacks clustered around the edges of campus. These shacks were built by the students themselves, who preferred "shacking" to paying for a room in town. In addition to studying, these students had to haul water from the nearest creek, use outhouses, and cook on wood stoves or over campfires.

Over 100 years later, a wide variety of much more comfortable and convenient housing options are available to students. Many residence halls, like Buchanan, Albright-Benton, Harrill, Judaculla Hall, and Noble, Balsam and Blue Ridge have been built in recent decades. Students can now live in suites, townhouses, or traditional dorm rooms, and housing is even provided for married students. One of the newest additions is The Village, a community of brick townhouses for



Above: Balsam and Blue Ridge (2012).
Below: The Village (2015).



Image Courtesy of Public Relations

Left:
Judaculla
Hall
(2017)



Image Courtesy of Public Relations



Above: Hinds University Center (1968, renovated 1997 and 2004).

Below: Statues in front of Robinson (1979).



A Second Century of Building



Above: Courtyard Dinning (2017)

WCU buildings dating to the late twentieth century feature brick exteriors with few embellishments, but recent campus architecture returns to a more graceful, classical style. Columns, triangular pediments, and soaring, glass-enclosed lobbies are soothing in their familiarity, while impressive and inspiring in their unusual composition and use of modern materials. A dynamic blend of classical and modern now characterizes WCU's campus. Elegant, traditional buildings, like Moore, are juxtaposed with the Ramsey Center, Natural Sciences, and other attractive modern buildings. Even within the same structure, classical and modern are combined, as in Stillwell and the new Fine Arts Building. Classical materials, like the stone used in Breese Gymnasium, contrast with the modern materials of steel and glass. Instead of clashing or creating an architectural jumble, these buildings and materials intersect to create a visual reminder of WCU's diversity and natural mountain environment.



Far left: Viewing Hinds University Center through the Alumni Tower (1989).

Left: Belk Building (2017).

Bottom left: Mural in Forsyth Building (1971).

Bottom right: Outside the Fine Arts Building (2017).



Gone...But Not Forgotten

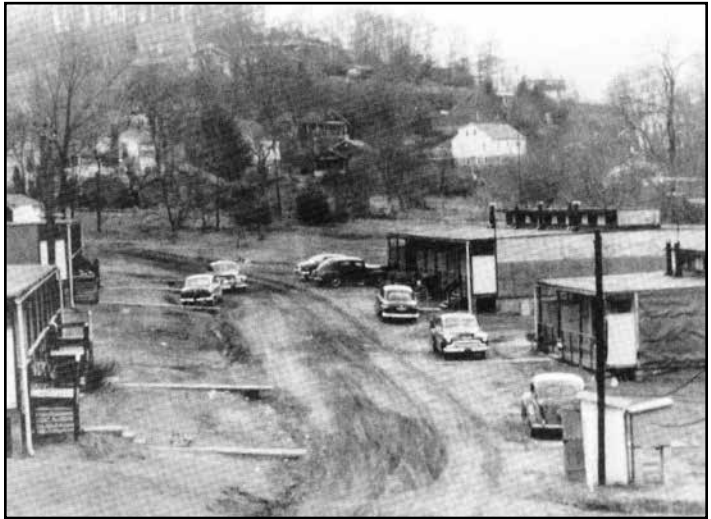


Above: The first campus buildings: The Academy Building (1890) and the Music and Arts Building (1891).

A few campus buildings exist only in photographs and the memories of alumni and faculty. Many of the earliest structures, like the Academy Building and the Music and Arts Building, were torn down to make way for larger, more modern facilities. Memorial Stadium, built in 1946 to honor students who served in World War II, was replaced by Hunter Library and the Natural Sciences Building. A new dining facility, the Courtyard Dining Hall, now graces the former site of Helder Residence Hall. Albright-Benton Residence Hall took the place of Boodleville, a small campus community built to house WWII veterans. Additionally, Dodson Dining Hall was destroyed along with Leatherwood Residence Hall. The only unplanned demolition occurred in 1981, when the much-loved Joyner Building went up in flames as students watched in shock.



Above: The campus library in Joyner, in the early 1940s.
Left: Fire destroys Joyner Building (1913).

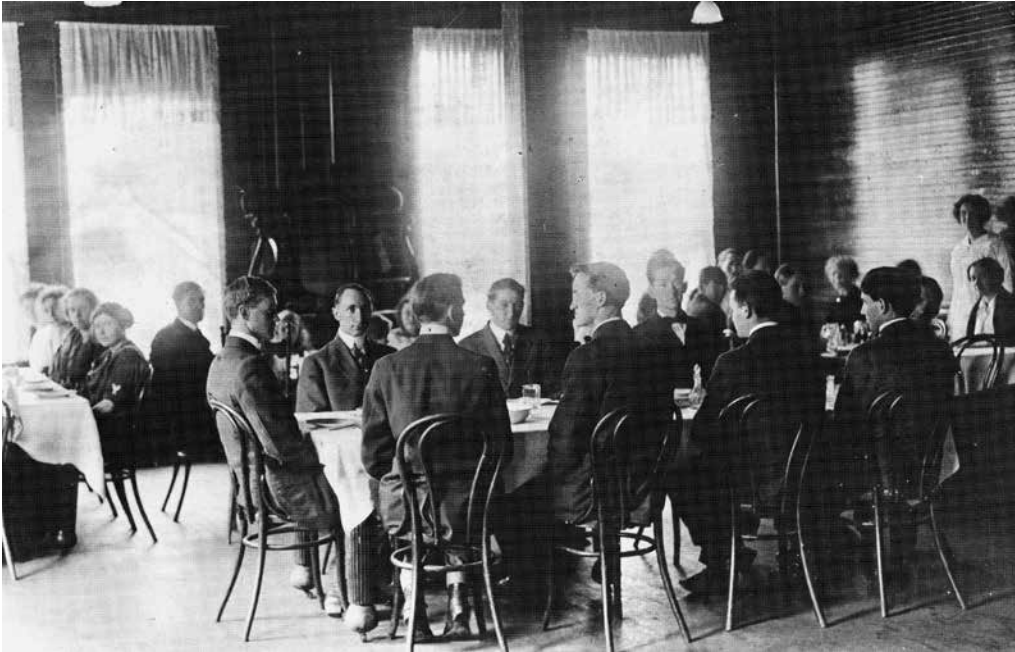


Above: Boodleville (1946).
Below: The Davies Home dining room.



Above: The first residence hall, Davies Home (1910-1949), was for women only.

Left: Students watch the demolition of Helder Residence Hall (1966-2007).



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