George Watts Hill Alumni Center
GEORGE WATTS HILL ALUMNI CENTER

Named in honor of George Watts Hill ’22
1901–1993

Dedicated on Commencement Weekend
May 14, 1993
Welcome Home

The George Watts Hill Alumni Center is both a gathering place and a launching pad—for alumni, students, faculty and friends of The University of North Carolina. With its almost 64,000 square feet of dining and meeting rooms, parlors, offices and library, the Alumni Center is designed as a home to which Carolina alumni always can return. Scores of activities and events, produced by the UNC General Alumni Association, also serve to enrich and enlighten as the Association fulfills our mission to involve and inform Carolina alumni about our alma mater. Each year more than 100,000 people attend an event or dine in the Alumni Center.

The Alumni Center, long a dream of loyal Carolina alumni, took its surest steps toward reality in 1986, when philanthropist and longtime GAA Treasurer George Watts Hill ’22 pledged a challenge gift of $3.5 million. It was the largest single donation by a living alumnus in the history of our University. Hill’s pledge, in addition to $39,000 in reserve from earlier efforts and a previous $500,000 gift in 1985 from the James M. Johnston Trust, culminated in a campaign that ultimately raised the $12.5 million total needed to complete the Alumni Center. No Alumni Association dues or state funds went toward construction of the building. Instead, all costs for building and furnishing the Alumni Center were met with the private gifts of 14,500 UNC friends, faculty and alumni.

The main entry into the Alumni Center through the Cooper entrance, named for the late Marshall Cooper ’23, brings visitors into the facility’s East Wing. This wing houses several gathering rooms, the Koury Library as well as offices for the Association’s staff. The Cates Lobby and Pope Conference Room, named for John Allen Cates ’53 and Anne Wilmoth Cates ’53 and the family of Mark C. Pope III ’45, respectively, are found on the third floor. The West Wing houses The Carolina Club, a member-supported dining facility. Aside from The Carolina Club, the use of the Center is open to all alumni and University visitors, regardless of whether they are members of the GAA or members of The Carolina Club.

James M. Johnston Room
Visitors to the Alumni Center are greeted by memorabilia marking the life of George Watts Hill ’22. The area is punctuated by a portrait of Mr. Hill by New York artist William E Draper. Anne G. Hill, who gave her late husband’s portrait to the Alumni Center, notes the accuracy of the painting’s detail: After returning home from World War II as a major, Mr. Hill—who went on to make his mark in business and banking—said he never would button his cuffs again. In this portrait, visitors will observe that Mr. Hill’s shirt sleeves are, indeed, unrestricted at the wrist.

Beneath the portrait is a bronze of Mr. Hill’s prized bull, Maximillian. It rests on an English demilune from the late 1790s that once belonged to John DeLorean. One drawer holds a tin-lined wine keeper and a drain.

Also in the reception area is a Persian carpet, woven and signed by the weavers of a Shah of Iran, and a table adorned with the faux art spines of assorted books. The table was built by two UNC alumni, Nick Strange ’76 and Meredith Strange ’81 (PhD).

The nearby breakfront contains memorabilia marking many of Mr. Hill’s accomplishments. The mahogany grandfather clock (circa 1850), a gift of the late Wade Cavin ’38 in memory of longtime Alumni Secretary J. Maryon “Spike” Saunders ’25, was made by James Caldwell of Philadelphia. Wall displays contain awards and medals given to Mr. Hill throughout his life, including one he received for his service in World War II. His N.C. Public Service Award also is here.

The oil paintings throughout the area are from a collection of paintings donated to the Alumni Center by Dr. Everette James Jr. ’59.

In the lobby’s sitting area are a Georgian-style bookcase and desk that date from the early 1900s. They were purchased by Mrs. Hill and donated to the Alumni Center.

Over the sofa is an oil painting of Venice that originally hung at Quail Roost, the former residence of the Hill family in Durham County. The wall sconces, found in the basement of The Carolina Inn, were redesigned and refurbished for the Alumni Center. The Remington bronze is a reproduction of *Coming Through the Rye*; it was given to the Alumni Center by the late Dr. J. Earl Somers ’49 and his wife, Betty. A second bronze donated by Dr. and Mrs. Somers can be found in the Alumni Center’s O’Herron Grill.

The lobby’s 16th-century Flemish tapestry is one of five displayed throughout the Alumni Center that are on permanent loan from the N.C. Museum of Art. Tom Kenan ’59 arranged for their display here.

The honor roll behind the reception desk displays the names of the nearly 1,200 individuals who each gave $1,000 or more to help build the Alumni Center.

The photograph near the elevator shows Mr. Hill with Bill Perkins ’27, Sam Ashton, George Herbert of the Research Triangle Institute, and Bill Little ’52 looking over plans for the Research Triangle Park at one of the internationally renowned research park’s original sites. Nearby is Mr. Hill’s diploma from UNC, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in commerce in 1922. He later attended the UNC School of Law.

**The Church Lobby**

Above the stairs leading to the ground floor John ’42 and Marion ’67 Church Lobby hangs the rug from Mr. Hill’s library. The rug, which was trimmed to fit this wall, belonged to Mr. Hill’s father, John Sprunt Hill, class of 1889, who gave the University The Carolina Inn.

Visitors to the Church Lobby can view the Bicentennial “windows” on display. These plaques, produced for UNC’s Bicentennial in 1993, found a home in the Alumni Center following the yearlong observation marking the University’s 200 years as the nation’s oldest public university.
The sitting area, along with a detail from a Flemish tapestry, a Georgian-style bookcase and a Remington reproduction.
The James M. Johnston Room

The Johnston Room, one of the Alumni Center’s showplace rooms off of the second-floor lobby, was funded by the trustees of the James M. Johnston Trust. It is designed in the style of an English library, with mahogany paneling and Georgian-style chandeliers. The room is intended to be reminiscent of the lounge in Graham Memorial from its days as the Student Union.

The man behind the room’s name, the late James Johnston ’17, was the benefactor of the noted Johnston Awards Program. It was Mr. Johnston’s desire to use part of his estate to educate children in North Carolina. It started as a modest nursing scholarship and mushroomed into what it is today. In its 27 years, the Johnston Awards Program has awarded in excess of $17 million to more than 3,400 students.

This room’s Victorian breakfront and coffee table, which was cut to size from a dining room table, date from 1890; the Heriz carpet also is antique. Photographs in this room include the Green Hill home where Johnston was born in northern Orange County and Johnston pictured with President John F. Kennedy and Sens. Hubert Humphrey and Mike Mansfield. Johnston’s draft notice from 1922 is framed on one wall.

The Kenan Room

The late Frank H. Kenan ’35, Tom S. Kenan ’59 and the Kenan Foundation funded this room to honor their forebear, Col. Thomas S. Kenan, class of 1857 and the longest-serving president of the GAA. The colors of the room were chosen to complement the colonel’s portrait, painted by noted portrait artist Joseph King of Winston-Salem.

The room’s furniture was purchased by Tom Kenan, who also donated books and vases from his home and the portrait of his father, Frank, and uncle, James G. Kenan ’32.

The china press, with its plates from the Kenan family home, and chest of drawers are 19th-century English pieces. The Meissen plates on the third shelf are from a set of more than 300 pieces that has been in Frank Kenan’s family since the late 1700s. The plates on the second shelf display the Kenan family crest.

The tapestry is from the N.C. Museum of Art.
The Koury Library

"If only these walls could talk" is a common observation made by guests to the Koury Library, named for Maurice ’48 and Ann Koury. These walls were built from the heart of pine installed in the 1824 construction of Old West Dormitory. The wood was removed from Old West during renovation work in the early 1990s. It was refinished and crafted for the library entrance and the facing of these bookshelves.

Each of the 700 volumes in the Koury Library was written by UNC faculty or alumni or is about the University. One of the Alumni Association’s ongoing projects is maintaining this collection. Many faculty members have donated their own books to this end. Edison Allen ’49 gave several first editions by Thomas Wolfe ’20 to the Center. Another highlight is an autographed copy of The Lost Colony by Paul Green ’21. For many alumni the greatest attraction is the library’s collection of Yackety Yacks dating back to 1901. For glimpses of campus before that time, the collection includes several Hellenians, which were published annually by fraternity members before the birth of the Yackety Yack. The library also contains a collection of bound editions of the Carolina Alumni Review since its first issue in 1912.

A portrait of William Starr Myers, class of 1897, famous for writing “Hark the Sound,” hangs in the library as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. John Hull McLean. The portrait was painted in the 1930s by a well-known New York society portrait artist, Leonebel Jacoby.

The map table was presented to the Alumni Center by the table’s craftsman, noted artist Bob Timberlake ’59.

The Phillip Hettleman Library Terrace, a gift from Ruth Rea Hettleman in honor of her late husband, Phillip Hettleman ’21, is located off both the Koury Library and the Kenan Room. The terrace furnishings are a gift of Anne Hill from the Quail Hill home of the late George Watts Hill ’22.

The Breezeway

Joining the two wings of the Alumni Center, this hallway was designed to preserve the original footpath — and later brick walkway — connecting the University’s North and South campuses. Students still walk underneath, through UNC’s geographic center, on their way to classes and back to their dormitories.

The bronze ram was purchased by Anne Hill for the Alumni Center. She spotted similar animal sculptures while visiting in Phoenix, Ariz., and convinced the artist, despite his policy of not selling to the general public, to sell her this ram.

The bronze-cast bust of Mr. Hill was created by sculptor David A. Dowdy Jr. ’54. Dowdy sculpted the bust for Central Carolina Bank, where Mr. Hill was chairman of the board for 43 years. Dowdy, who is a self-taught sculptor, notes this piece elicits more comments than any piece he has produced. As he often does, Dowdy sculpted the bust of Mr. Hill by working solely from photographs. Finding enough photographs was not a problem. "He was so well-known," Dowdy said, Central Carolina Bank’s archives "just had drawers full of Watts Hill.”
The West Wing

The second-floor lobby area of the Alumni Center’s West Wing leads visitors to Alumni Halls I, II and III and the Royall Conference Room. The Baccarat crystal animals were given to the Center by past GAA Chair Anne W. Cates ’53. Both Mrs. Cates and Ralph Strayhorn ’47 were leaders in the Alumni Center’s fund-raising effort and in overseeing the design of the building and its furnishings.

Nick Strange ’76 produced replicas of the Old Well atop the stairway banisters; the replicas are a 1:32 ratio of the actual Old Well. The paintings generally displayed in this hallway were given by Dr. Everette James Jr. ’59. In the long hallway are two consoles, which were created from a single table in Mr. Hill’s home.

The Alumni Hall

The Alumni Center’s Alumni Hall, covering 7,500 square feet including an elevated stage, can accommodate up to 1,000 guests. Using movable walls, it also can be configured into three individual rooms, each opening onto an outdoor terrace. The stage platform is oak wood paneling with a walnut stain. The base of each chandelier functions as a speaker for the audio system. Several hundred meetings, conferences and receptions each year are held in these halls. Off these halls is the Educational Foundation Terrace, another popular gathering place.

The hall features a painting titled Peonies by A. Worthington Ball that originally hung in a dormitory. The painting is one of many items managed by the University Historic Property office, from which this painting is on loan to the Alumni Center. Also featured is a battle scene tapestry, which is late 16th-century Flemish and is on loan from the N.C. Museum of Art.

The Circus Animals

One of the most popular features of the Alumni Center can be found along the West Wing staircase connecting the first and second floors. Here, the circus relief, which many alumni remember residing in the Jackson Hall Monogram Club or in the former Carolina Inn cafeteria, marks the entranceway to the Carolina Club area of the Center. The carvings—25 feet long and almost 6 feet high—were carved by Carl Boettcher about 50 years ago. William Meade Prince, a magazine illustrator who grew up in Chapel Hill, drew the sketches for the carvings. Boettcher, a refugee from pre-World War II Europe who became a University employee, spent his last years at Carolina with his own workshop practicing his craft for the University. His other carvings at UNC include the University Seals and Monogram Club seals now housed in the Giles Horney Building. He also did work for the Morehead Planetarium and the Navy ROTC Building.
Above: Alumni Hall; Inset: Detail from the Circus Animals carvings
Opposite: Detail of Old Well replicas atop stairway banisters
**Private Dining**

Several rooms in this wing are used for private dining as well as luncheon and dinner meetings.

**The Royall Room.** On the second floor, the Royall Executive Dining Room was funded by Sen. Kenneth Royall Jr. ’40 in memory of his father, Kenneth C. Royall ’14, a former U.S. Secretary of War whose portrait is on display here. The walnut paneling was brought to this room from the former executive offices of R.J. Reynolds in Winston-Salem.

**The Peebles Room.** On the first floor, the Peebles Dining Room features original murals depicting scenes from Chapel Hill. These murals were commissioned in 1947 by Marion Wooten Peebles ’23 for his Lawrenceville, Va., home. The name of the artist who painted them has since been lost to history. Thirty years later, Marion Wooten “Dyke” Peebles Jr. ’51 had the task of selling his parents’ home. These murals, he felt, belonged in Chapel Hill. The meticulous work of removing the oil-on-canvas paintings and mounting them on protective aluminum panels was undertaken by John Short, George Watts Hill’s private conservator for 20 years. They were kept in environmentally controlled storage until they could be placed on these walls in 1993. The names above each building and the border of this room were painted by Pat Scheibel. The chest is on loan from the Horace Williams House. It is American Country Federal style, made of cherry, and dates from 1820.

**The Dowd and Harris Rooms.** Also on the first floor are two private dining rooms, the Dowd Dining Room, endowed by the Dowd Foundation of Charlotte in honor of Elizabeth S. “Pepper” Dowd ’53, who served as the GAA’s elected president in 1992–93; and the Harris Dining Room, endowed by Deborah ’69 and John W. Harris ’69 of Charlotte.

In the hall outside the Peebles Room, a Carolina pillowcase is on display. It was provided by Robert Eaves ’28, who purchased it when he was a student at the University. J. Maryon “Spike” Saunders ’25, Alumni Secretary from 1904 to 1995, donated the sofa. The Renaissance-style oak court cupboard opposite the sofa is a gift from the law school and was donated to that department in memory of Samuel Field Phillips, class of 1841. It is of European origin, dating from the late 19th century. Its hand-carved doors depict figures in Roman and Elizabethan dress, and the legs are in the form of winged female figures.

*Above: Detail of mural in the Peebles Room
Opposite: Peebles Room*
The Carolina Club

Managed by Club Corporation of America, The Carolina Club is a member-supported dining club created for alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of UNC. Club membership is open to all members of the GAA. In addition to the main dining room and the O'Herron Grill, The Carolina Club offers private dining arrangements.

The Club’s lobby was funded by the family of C. Felix Harvey III ’43. A portrait of Charles Felix Harvey, class of 1892, hangs on the west wall. The curved reception desk and the sideboard for serving tea were custom-built for this area by Trosby craftsmen using antique wood. The coffee table for this room is made from pecan wood with a mahogany finish.

The O’Herron Grill is named for Edward M. O’Herron Jr. ’38 and his wife, Margaret, who funded this popular room.

The interior design of The Carolina Club Dining Room is notable for its Gracie wallpaper, similar to that found in the White House and Atlanta Ritz-Carlton dining rooms. The parchment is hand-painted by Gracie’s New York studio artists.

The garden outside the windows was funded by the Boney family in memory of Thomas Boney ’50. The front porch was a gift of Fred Councill ’52.

Carolina Club Dining Room
Inset: O’Herron Grill
The Alumni Center — First and Second Floors

First Floor • Funded Rooms

103  Harvey Lobby
109  O’Herron Grill
112  Peebles Dining Room
115A  Harris Room
115B  Dowd Room
135  Church Lobby

Second Floor • Funded Rooms

214  Royall Conference Room
231  Cooper Entrance
234  Johnston Room
239  Kenan Room
241  Harris/Davis Interview Room
242  Curry Interview Room
243  Siler Interview Room
247  Koury Library
248  Hettleman Terrace
   — Educational Foundation Terrace

Note: Room numbers not boldfaced still are available for a naming gift.
THE ALUMNI CENTER — THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS

THIRD FLOOR • FUNDED ROOMS

301 Cates Reception Area
303 Johnson/Cuthrell — office
304 Hamrick — office
305 Diamond — office
306 Pope Conference Room
307 Eaves — office
309 Saunders — office
311 Oberdorfer — office
312 Loudermilk — office
319 Townsend — office
321 Spaugh — office
326 Liles Sitting Area
329 Rand (Tony) — office
332 Garrell — office
333 Goldrich — office
336 Rand (Kenan) — office
337 Dark — OBT student office

FOURTH FLOOR • FUNDED ROOMS

401 Cavin Reception Area
402 Eldridge Records Research Room
406 Miller — office
407 UNC Medical Foundation Records Resource Room
408 Kimbel Alumni Records/Archives
409 Totherow — office
410 UNC Law Foundation — office
411 Dale — office
414 Boyle — office
418 Armfield — sitting area
420 Terrell — office
430 Grant/Whitefield — lounge
433 Strayhorn Conference Room

Note: Room numbers not boldfaced still are available for a naming gift.
Farewell — and Come Again

Building and strengthening ties among alumni and our University community have been a part of the General Alumni Association’s mission since our founding in 1843. This Alumni Center enables the fulfillment of that mission. In keeping with Carolina’s long tradition, alumni can leave the Alumni Center with pride that this facility embodies what you have done, not just for yourself, but for our entire University community.

We thank all who contributed to its construction and furnishings, and we are grateful to all who visit and participate in our many GAA programs. Without you the Alumni Center would be only a nice building. With your active participation, the George Watts Hill Alumni Center is home to all of Carolina’s more than 200,000 alumni, faculty and friends.

Yours at Carolina,

Doug

Douglas S. Dibbert ’70
President
General Alumni Association

Project Notes

Architect: O’Brien/Atkins Associates, Research Triangle Park
Designers: Claude May Company — Dan Addison and Robert Hyman, Durham
Total square footage: 63,794
Construction costs: $12.5 million
“I will never stop doing all I can for Carolina.”

George Watts Hill ’22