The Story of Whitaker Library

By: Stephen Sherman

Since 1906, the college library had been housed in the East Building, which was essentially a wing of the Columns Building. The reading room was built to accommodate a handful of students and housed only a few hundred books, which was perfectly adequate for its purpose at the time. Following the Second World War and the reopening of the college in 1949, however, enrollment had risen to nearly 700 students. The library had grown as well, with over 10,000 volumes catalogued by 1959. Two years earlier, a development program had been put into action calling for the construction of six new buildings at Chowan, including a new library. The need for additional space was readily apparent by 1961, when the library was packed to the brim every night and students were openly complaining about the crowded conditions.

By the end of 1961, the development program that began in 1957 had resulted in the construction of three new buildings on campus: a men’s dorm, a women’s dorm and a new cafeteria. The campaign then turned to fundraising for a two more additions – a classroom building and a library. These subsequent undertakings caused the college to renew its drive for contributions in the hope of raising $900,000 towards this goal. While the growth of other areas of the college put the library drive on hold for several years, plans for a new building, to be combined with a fine arts facility, were approved in 1966 and construction was set to begin the next year. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on
February 23rd, 1967 and the structure began to take shape later that year. While construction was moving ahead, the Board of Trustees decided unanimously in favor of naming the new library in honor of Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker, who, as president of Chowan since 1957, had overseen much of the expansion of the college. The building was completed and ready to open its doors for the fall semester of 1968, at which time the old East Building was torn down.

Dedication ceremonies for Whitaker Library and Daniel Hall were held on September 12, 1968. The college was hailed as a “modern miracle” by Claude F. Gaddy, the primary speaker at the event. Indeed, enrollment at Chowan had risen to over 1,300 students by that time and campus was buzzing with activity everywhere. The new library building had seating capacity for up to 400 people and was built to house 100,000 volumes in its collection. Also included in the construction were rooms to house collections of rare books and antiquities as well as for items pertaining to the Baptist faith. The academic support was then firmly in place for the growing institution.
Group 1: Larger Pictures of the Library
Students studying hard in our library.

Students use the library for research and a pleasant atmosphere for studying.

The Library
Group 2: Larger Pictures of the Library
"But, Sara, it won't open for another year!"—Leaning against a guard rail with equipment for study and research in her area, freshman Sara Elizabeth Lane waits patiently for the library to open.

Proposed Library and Fine Arts Center
MODEL OF NEW LIBRARY
and FINE ARTS BUILDING

Construction Scheduled
to Begin in 1967
Map of Chowan Campus

Key:
1. President's Home
2. "A" Men's Dorm
3. "B" Men's Dorm
4. J. O. Moon Dorm
5. Science Bldg.
6. Administration Bldg.
7. Columns Bldg.
8. Student Center
10. Gymnasium
11. Tennis Courts
12. Maintenance Bldg.
13. Football and Baseball Stadium
14. Seating Areas
15. Athletic Track
16. Cafeteria
17. Library
18. Fine Arts Bldg.
19. Graphic Arts
20. Classroom Bldg.
21. "A" Women's Dorm
22. "B" Women's Dorm
23. "C" Women's Dorm
24. Chapel
25. Cedar Lane
26. New Drive
27. Walkway
28. "A" Parking Area
29. "B" Parking Area
30. "C" Parking Area
31. "D" Parking Area
32. "E" Day Student Parking
33. Outdoor Chapel

Chowan College has a campus consisting of 121.8 acres. The main campus and athletic fields consist of 60 acres. The east campus, which is the college farm, contains 61.6 acres.
The Whitaker Library provides a good place for students to catch up with the news going on throughout the world. It is also a place where students may go to escape the noises of dorm life.

The staff at the library will assist students when they have any trouble locating books, resources, and other material.

The many volumes at the library provide for a well-rounded selection of educational and recreational reading materials.
One of the real assets and strengths of the college is Whitaker Library, which becomes evident when measured by many standards. Since its construction in 1968, the facility has “broken through” to become a leader among libraries at other institutions throughout the state and nation.

A three-story structure, the library contains very adequate space for students and faculty in several reading areas with individual carrels and tables where small groups may study and work together. Built to house 100,000 volumes, Whitaker Library is well on the way to reaching full capacity, and this year contains more than 88,000 volumes of books. The library also houses items of historical interest to the college and the region, as well as the “Baptist Collection” of materials in the Antiquities Room. A very wide variety of periodicals and newspapers is available with more being added each month.

Students attest that the library offers much more than books, reference materials, and periodicals, for it is a place for quiet study in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The very capable staff of librarians are always on hand to assist students in any way possible, whether it be in the operation of the microfilm and microfiche readers to information on an Early American novelist or a copy of a speech made by a past American president.