

Coker Arboretum ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006



William Chambers Coker
(1872-1953). Image courtesy
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^[2]The Coker Arboretum ^[3] on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ^[4] is a five-acre showplace that highlights plants of the temperate Southeast, their East Asian counterparts, gymnosperms, and seasonal plant and color displays. Established by William Chambers Coker ^[5], the university's first professor of botany, at the suggestion of President Francis P. Venable ^[6] in 1903, the area was formerly a damp pasture that for decades had been used as a home for campus animals, most notably President David L. Swain's ^[7] white mule, Old Cuddy. Coker transformed the five acres into a botanical laboratory planted with more than 400 species of ornamental flowers, trees, and shrubs. Despite its small size, it is one of the most complete botanical gardens in America. Laced with pathways, this parklike area is especially inviting when spring flowers are blooming and is a favorite study or relaxation spot for UNC's students. One of its most notable features is the purple wisteria and sweet-smelling yellow jessamine covering the trellis running along Cameron Avenue. Their perfume will long remain in a visitor's memory.

The main entrance of Coker Arboretum was reconstructed in 1998 as a gift by UNC's class of 1997. The arboretum is administered by the staff of the 329-acre North Carolina Botanical Garden ^[8], located south of the central Chapel Hill campus.

References:

Lawrence S. Earley, "One Hundred Years of Semi-Solitude," *Carolina Alumni Review* 92 (January-February 2003).

William S. Powell, *The First State University: A Pictorial History of the University of North Carolina* (3rd rev. ed., 1992).

Marguerite E. Schumann, *The First State University: A Walking Guide* (1972).

Additional Resources:

Coker Arboretum, UNC-CH: https://www.unc.edu/tour/LEVEL_2/coker.htm ^[3]

David Swain, NC Highway Historical Marker P-5: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=search&k=Markers&sv=P-5> ^[9]

North Carolina Botanical Garden: <http://ncbg.unc.edu/> ^[8]

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William Chambers Coker (1872-1953). Image courtesy of iBiblio. Available from <http://www.ibiblio.org/unc-biology/herbarium/collectors/coker.htm> ^[2] (accessed October 30, 2012).

Subjects:

N.C. Industrial Revolution (1900-1929) ^[10]

Places ^[11]

Plants ^[12]

Authors:

Williams, Wiley J. ^[13]

Origin - location:

Chapel Hill ^[14]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. ^[15]

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