

University of North Carolina Press ^[1]

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by Lillian E. Craton, 2006

The [University of North Carolina Press](#) ^[2] is a separately incorporated, not-for-profit [publishing](#) ^[3] company affiliated with the [University of North Carolina](#) ^[4] and located in Chapel Hill. It was founded on 13 Mar. 1922, making it the oldest university press in the South and one of the oldest in the nation. The press was organized by ten UNC faculty members and three members of the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees in order to publish books and periodicals prepared by the faculty as well as university catalogs and bulletins, and "to promote generally, by publishing deserving books, the advancement of the arts and sciences, and the development of [literature](#) ^[5]." Louis Round Wilson, the university librarian, was chosen as the press's first director. In 1923 the press produced its first book, *The Saprolegniaceae* ^[6], a study of water molds, by W. C. Coker. In 1932 Wilson was succeeded by William T. Couch, who headed the press from then until 1945.

Most UNC Press titles are scholarly material devoted chiefly to the humanities and social sciences, but the press also publishes some trade books (ranging from nature guides to cookbooks) each season. Original fiction formed part of the press's publishing program for some years, beginning with [Bernice Kelly Harris](#) ^[7]'s *Purslane* ^[8] in 1939, but is no longer issued under the press imprint.

Since its founding, the press has maintained a focus on regional research, publishing many distinguished works about North Carolina and the American South. This focus was a hallmark of Couch's tenure as director, when the press issued numerous books by faculty members associated with UNC's [Institute for Research in Social Science](#) ^[9]. The UNC Press was among the first publishing organizations to establish a continuing program of books by and about African Americans, a strength of its list throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Women's studies became an important focus beginning in the 1970s. The press has also published a number of important documentary collections-including *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, *The Papers of John Marshall*, and *The Black Abolitionist Papers*-and reference works, among them the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, the *North Carolina Atlas*, and the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. UNC Press titles have won hundreds of prestigious awards, including the [National Book Award](#) ^[10], the [Pulitzer Prize](#) ^[11] in History, and major prizes given by scholarly societies, such as the [American Historical Association](#) ^[12] and the [Organization of American Historians](#) ^[13], and professional organizations, such as the [American Bar Association](#) ^[14] and the [American Institute of Architects](#) ^[15]. In the early 2000s the UNC Press had more than 1,300 titles in print.

Additional Resources:

"History of UNC Press" University of North Carolina Press.<http://uncpress.unc.edu/browse/page/1> ^[16]

University of North Carolina Press blog: <http://uncpressblog.com/> ^[17]

Couch, William T. *A short history of the University of North Carolina Press : essays by former directors William T. Couch, Lambert Davis & Matthew Hodgson*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Couch, William Terry, "The University Press," in Knight and Adams, eds., *The Graduate School: Research and Publications*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946.

Couch, William Terry, *Books from Chapel Hill: A Complete Catalogue. 1923-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946.

Sharpe, David. "One Damn Book after Another." *Carolina Magazine*, January 1948. 8-9, 27, 32.

Wilson, Louis Round. *History of the University of North Carolina, 1900-1930* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

Brown, Sally Virginia. "A Study of the Reception of the Books Published by the University of North Carolina Press from 1922 through 1952 as Evidenced in Reviews." M.L.S. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1961.

Subjects:

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[Publishers and Printers](#) ^[21]

Authors:

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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill^[23]

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