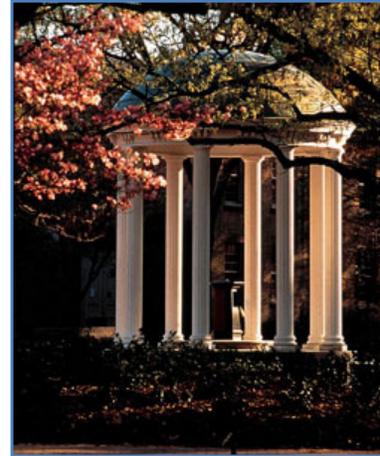


## Early University Benefactors

In 1753, William Barbee of Middlesex County, Virginia, received the first of two land grants in what is now the Chapel Hill-Durham area of North Carolina. This grant, received from the Earl of Granville, encompassed 585 acres and included the land that now houses Rizzo Conference Center. The second grant, received in 1757, grew William Barbee's holdings to more than 900 acres. Although William Barbee died in 1758, shortly after arriving in North Carolina, he was important to the settling of the area, serving as commissioner of roads and member of the grand jury.



In 1776, one of William Barbee's eight children received the first of three area land grants. During the years that followed, Christopher Barbee, or "Old Kit" as he was known, continued to add to his landholdings. By 1787, he owned at least 2,145 acres, making him one of the region's largest landholders. These holdings included the current Rizzo Center property originally owned by his father, which he purchased from siblings who inherited the land upon their father's death. At the highest elevation of this land, Christopher Barbee built a home and a plantation, which came to be known as "Barbee Mountain".

In 1789, George Washington took the oath of office as president of the newly independent United States. During that same year, the fledgling North Carolina legislature chartered The University of North Carolina. As the location of the new university was weighed and debated, Christopher Barbee offered a large tract of land near his own plantation as a possible site. On November 8, 1792, he deeded 221 acres to the Trustees, land that today forms the heart of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Christopher "Old Kit" Barbee died in 1832 at the age of 90. Just one year prior to his death, he sold his significant landholdings to his son William, including the tract now housing the Rizzo Center. William Barbee was a member of the first graduating class of The University of North Carolina, served as a University steward and was superintendent of buildings and grounds for the university. Although William acquired the land, it is uncertain whether he actually lived at "Barbee Mountain". He did establish his own plantation home near Morgan Creek and also kept a home in the Town of Chapel Hill proper. Upon William Barbee's death, the land was, in turn, acquired by his daughter, Margaret (Barbee) Hargrave. She subsequently willed the land to her son, Robert W. Hargrave. He is the last Barbee descendent to own the land, which he sold in 1873. In the years that followed, the property had several owners and was eventually acquired by Durham Realty and Insurance Company in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## The Vision of Meadowmont

For nearly 50 years, the Meadowmont property lay unoccupied. Then, in 1931 the second and most memorable phase in the life of the property began when Mr. and Mrs. David St. Pierre DuBose returned to North Carolina from Baltimore. Trained as an electrical engineer and graduated from The University of North Carolina in 1921, DuBose had worked for The Baltimore Gas and Electric Company. His wife, Laura Valinda (Hill) DuBose, was the daughter of John Sprunt Hill, a generous benefactor of The University of North Carolina, and Annie Watts Hill. Annie Watts Hill was the daughter of George W. Watts, originally of Baltimore, who became a partner of James B. Duke in the formation of The American Tobacco Company.

DuBose had long nurtured a dream of creating his own rural estate, and in 1931 he purchased several tracts of land bordering Orange and Durham counties. On this land, at the top of the small mountain that housed the original Christopher Barbee homeplace, DuBose established his own home and working farm. The highlight of the property was the handsome two-and-one-half story Georgian Revival country house, named Meadowmont for its location atop the small mountain surrounded by meadowland. This

home was to become the center of a distinguished social scene in North Carolina for more than 60 years, and the DuBose family became stewards of their families' long-standing traditions of generosity to The University of North Carolina.

Aided by drawings from DuBose, Meadowmont was designed by prominent Baltimore architects Herbert G. Crisp and James R. Edmunds Jr. The design of the house reflects many of DuBose's own innovations, and is influenced by his time in Baltimore. Many similarities to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Georgian houses of Annapolis, Maryland can be seen throughout the house, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **A Very Special Home**

Over the years, Mr. and Mrs. DuBose, along with their three children, created an extensive working farm at Meadowmont. The grounds included a children's playhouse, pool and pool house, garage, well house, stables, greenhouse, smokehouse and a number of barns and outbuildings. Livestock, poultry, food crops and extensive gardens were also a part of Meadowmont.

"This was quite a rural setting in those days, you could see the tops of church spires in downtown Chapel Hill," recalls Dr. J. McNeely (Mac) DuBose, son of the original Meadowmont owner. "I remember many happy hours as a youngster, rambling around the woods, hunting and fishing."



Throughout the years, the DuBose family entertained a great deal at Meadowmont, in both formal and informal settings. Thomas (Tom) S. Kenan III, related to the DuBose family through his mother notes: " The DuBose family was always generous with their home. Meadowmont had a special feeling, and an invitation to Meadowmont was very treasured, indeed...there was nothing else like it. A meal at Meadowmont was quite a treat, as most of the food came right from the farm. As a boy, I remember wonderful hay rides with horse-drawn wagons and picnic suppers near the small lake on the property."

Social gatherings at Meadowmont were special occasions, highlighted by the warmth and generosity of the DuBose family. The large center hall of the home could easily accommodate an orchestra and dance floor for formal occasions, although Dr. Mac DuBose remembers more informal gatherings as being the norm. "My parents liked parties. Not on a large scale, but more as an intimate gathering of friends," he recalls.

### **Classic Architecture and Modern Innovation**

Although designed as a classic Georgian Revival home, Meadowmont incorporates many innovative and practical features that are hallmarks of DuBose's training as an engineer. The house itself is constructed of steel beams reinforced with concrete with an overlying veneer of brick. The floors are cement with wood overlay. Each of these features provides not only remarkable energy efficiency, but also a superb degree of protection from fire. At the time of its construction, the area surrounding Meadowmont was quite undeveloped, and Chapel Hill existed only as a village, with rudimentary public services available. Thus, protection from fire was of paramount importance.



A two-story portico highlights the west exterior side of Meadowmont while a high gable roof and tall brick chimneys distinguish the main

portion of the house. The symmetry of classic Georgian architecture is evident in all aspects of the house, through window, door and dormer placement. Near the doorway on the east side of the house can be seen the columns that hold the white marble inscribed "DuBose" and "1933," the year of the house's construction.

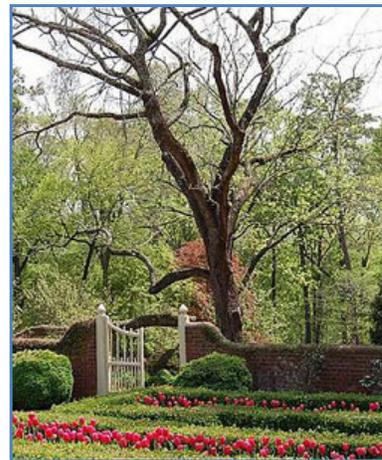
The interior of the house also displays both Georgian architectural details and DuBose's own stamp of ingenuity and foresight. Realizing that air conditioning would one day be a standard feature of private homes, particularly in the South, DuBose designed an ingenious network of ductwork and vents, all painstakingly disguised behind intricate and attractive Georgian-style open moldings. Meadowmont is believed to be one of the first private homes in the United States equipped for central air conditioning.

Throughout the rooms of the house one sees classic examples of paneling, moldings and chair rail. Symmetrical placement of doors and windows provides a sense of elegance and grace.

Today, more than 200 years later, reminders of the original Barbee homeplace can still be seen across the Meadowmont property. These include a family cemetery and what are believed to be the foundation stones of the original Barbee house. The heart-pine paneling that now graces the library of the DuBose home came from this house, which was still standing when Meadowmont was constructed in 1933.

### **Beautiful, Ethereal Gardens**

The first glimpse of Meadowmont for most visitors was through the extensive and varied gardens that adorned the property. "To visit Meadowmont in the spring was a visual delight," says Mr. Kenan. "Because the roadways were gravel, one drove slowly to the main entrance through acres of flowering trees, camellias and azaleas. It was dramatic and beautiful."



Both Mr. and Mrs. DuBose were avid gardeners, and in addition to the flowering trees and shrubs planted across the property, visitors could see vegetable, formal flower gardens and woodland gardens that replicated and enhanced the natural topography of Meadowmont. Mrs. DuBose was a charter member of the Chapel Hill Garden Club, and the formal walled garden that adjoined the house was a frequent site for entertaining.

### **A New Era of Service Begins**

In 1988, the home and 28 acres of adjoining land were deeded to The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The university formally took possession of the property following the death of Mr. DuBose in 1994. It was the decision of the late and former UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Michael Hooker to allow the Kenan-Flagler Business School to develop the DuBose House and grounds for use as a residential conference center for business executives. An advisory committee was formed to preserve and protect the integrity of the house, gardens and property and in 1997, the Kenan-Flagler Business School broke ground on a \$24 million renovation and adaptation of the property for its new mission.

"The architects and engineers involved in the Rizzo Center project deserve high marks for their adaptation of the home to executive education purposes," notes Dr. Mac DuBose, who serves on the advisory committee.

Although the DuBose House had enjoyed excellent maintenance over the years, project managers were faced with challenging design issues associated with adapting the formerly residential building to meet the needs of a modern conference center. These included the blending of commercial recessed lighting with Georgian-style chandeliers, as well as placing and installing elevators to ensure compliance with

regulations governing accessibility for the physically challenged. In addition, the porch on the south side of the house was enclosed and air-conditioned, and kitchen areas have been adapted for maximum efficiency in preparing meals for greater number of diners.

The home currently encompasses 15, 800 square feet of space and serves as a dining and social gathering place for The Rizzo Center. The spacious library retains its historic heart-pine paneling, and the ground floor can now accommodate up to 150 guests for dining. Throughout the house, the exquisitely detailed cornices, mantelpieces and other architectural enhancements have been kept intact. The second floor includes comfortable lounge areas and one bedroom suite. The third floor is comprised of three additional guest suites.



### **Always a Home**

This remarkable property is now entering its third century of service to The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the surrounding community. Vast changes have indeed taken place. The horse-drawn wagon that carried William Barbee to the mountain in the 1750s has given way to the working farm known as Meadowmont, and finally to the Rizzo Conference Center, where innovation and technology came together to shape the future of business.

In spite of its adaptation for the purposes of the business school, the congenial atmosphere and attractive aesthetic of Meadowmont remain unchanged. The legacy of style and grace instilled in the home by the DuBose family can still be felt today. Perhaps Dr. Mac DuBose summed it up best:

"As a child, I remember Meadowmont as a home, not as a grand, fancy place. I always insist that it be treated as a home, because that's what it was."