

## The Manure Piles of Chapel Hill

by Carol Ann McCormick, Asst. Curator, UNC Herbarium

It's a cool Sunday morning in June 1916 and Laura Mangum hears neighborhood dogs barking. Mildly concerned, she glances out her kitchen window and sees a man—a rather well-dressed man—squatting in her backyard at 510 East Franklin Street in Chapel Hill. “Charlie! Dr. Coker is in the manure pile again! Go make sure the dog doesn’t bite him!”

While I may have imagined the details of this scenario, it has become apparent to staff of the UNC Herbarium that esteemed members of the Botany Department—Drs. William Chambers Coker, H.R. Totten, John Nathaniel Couch, and Miss Alma Holland—spent many hours in the manure piles of Chapel Hill between 1900 and 1940 in search of fungi. The list of yards and manure piles that yielded specimens reads like a *Who's Who* of Chapel Hill faculty: Venable, Mangum, Cobb, Battle, Wagstaff, Howell.

The UNC Herbarium is cataloguing our fungal collection, estimated to include 25,000 macrofungi (mushrooms, puffballs, stink horns, and truffles), and 18,000 microfungi (molds, mildews, smuts and rusts). We are one part of the Macrofungi Collection Consortium (MaCC), a collaboration of 35 institutions in 24 states whose purpose is to digitally store specimen label information on 1.4 million dried scientific specimens of fungi collected over the past 150 years, making the data available to the public and to researchers. Despite the ecological and economic importance of macrofungi, the basic taxonomy of these organisms, including their full range of diversity, species-level characterization, description, and distribution ranges remain poorly known. The data stored by the MaCC will be the foundation of the first full catalog of the fungi of North America.

Daniel Adams, 2012 Charles T. Mohr Herbarium Intern, and herbarium staffers Shanna Oberreiter and Liane Salgado have already imaged well over 10,000 specimens encompassing more than a 1,500 species. The specimens are organized alphabetically by genus and species; Liane started at A and is working forward, while Shanna is working backwards from Z. We'll have to document where they meet by placing some memento, though probably not a Golden Spike, in the collection for future mycologists to enjoy. We've already found some mementoes. Liane found a spore print associated with a specimen. Most interesting was not the spore print itself, but the information on the back of the piece of paper used: “Information Concerning Instructors” was apparently an official University document. The form had been completed not by Dr.



Portion of “Chapel Hill and Suburbs,” September 1, 1934, drawn by H.D. Carter and held in the North Carolina Collection at the Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Note that the bottom of this map is north.

Coker, but by a student, J.B. Name: Coker, William Chambers. If married, give date of marriage: No; so far as we are concerned. Nearest relation: in gaol. Church’s affiliation or preference: Baptist with reservations. Undergraduate training: Morganton [location of the Western Carolina Insane Asylum]. Graduate or Professional training: Practically none. Clearly, a student was having a little fun.

An important aspect of the MaCC project is to assign latitude and longitude to all specimens. Mark Chilton, mayor of Carrboro and local historian, has proven a valuable resource for defining locations such as “Fern Bank Walk” (in what is now Umstead Park along Bolin Creek) and old mills in Orange County. Lily McCormick, a student at Cedar Ridge High School, used U.S. Census data and old maps to precisely locate various houses (and associated manure piles!) in Chapel Hill. Jay Gaidmore, UNC-CH archivist, found the precise location of Gimghoul Lodge (not Castle). Ran Schaffner of the Highlands Historical Society has helped with locations in Macon County, where Coker and colleagues collected each summer. Susan Newrock of the Chapel Hill Historical Society is seeking the location of “the volcano in Chapel Hill.” There are hundreds of locations around North Carolina still needing precision mapping. If you have an interest in history, geography, or mycology, we can use your help!

Images of specimen labels are available at [www.mycportal.org](http://www.mycportal.org)

