

Davenport College ^[1]

Davenport College

by Jerry L. Cross, 2006; Revised December 2021



"Davenport College's first building was built in 1855." Photo courtesy of Caldwell Heritage Museum.

Davenport College was established in Lenoir in 1855 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as an institution of higher learning for women. It was named for William Davenport, one of the founders of Davenport College. William Davenport, also known as Colonel William Davenport, fought in the American Revolution and was elected to the General Assembly from Wilkes County in 1813. William A. Lenoir offered land overlooking the town for the campus, on which a classroom building, a chapel, and a dormitory were erected. The school held its first classes in 1857 and was incorporated as Davenport Female College in 1859, when enrollment stood at 56 students, all from North Carolina and South Carolina. Despite hardships, the college stayed open during the [Civil War](#) ^[2] only to burn to the ground in 1877, without insurance to cover the \$25,000 loss. Davenport reopened in 1884, serving primarily as a local high school. By the early twentieth century, Davenport had elevated its academic standing and met the qualifications for accreditation as a two-year college, admitting both women and men. It held this status until 1933, when it succumbed to the economic chaos created by the [Great Depression](#) ^[3]. Five years later, all remaining assets and personal properties belonging to the school were merged with [Greensboro College](#) ^[4]. The buildings were transferred to the town of Lenoir for use as an elementary school.

References:

Nancy Alexander, *Here Will I Dwell: The Story of Caldwell County*(1956).

E. Carl Anderson, ed., *Heritage of Caldwell County, North Carolina*(ca. 1983).

Edmund Jones, "'The Fountain' and Its Builder [William Davenport]," *North Carolina Booklet* 16 (1916). <https://archive.org/stream/northcarolinaboo1916nort#page/n7/mode/2up/search/davenport> ^[5]

Additional resource:

Davenport College Yearbooks: <https://lib.digitalnc.org/search?In=en&p=691:%22Davenport+College%22%20AND%20655:%22Yearbooks%22&sf=year&so=a> ^[6]

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"Davenport College's first building was built in 1855." Photo courtesy of Caldwell Heritage Museum.

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Authors:

[Cross, Jerry L.](#) ^[9]

Origin - location:

[Caldwell County](#) ^[10]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#)^[11]

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