

Caldwell Institute ^[1]

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Caldwell Institute

by Jerry L. Cross, 2006

The Caldwell Institute, originally located in [Guilford County](#) ^[2], grew out of the determined effort of the [Presbyterian Church](#) ^[3] to establish a school providing a classical education imbued with Christian principles. In 1833 a committee appointed by the Orange Presbytery selected [Greensboro](#) ^[4] as the site for the proposed institution, but not until 21 Jan. 1837 did the [General Assembly](#) ^[5] ratify the charter of incorporation for the Caldwell Institute. The name honored [Joseph Caldwell](#) ^[6] (1773-1835), the first president of the [University of North Carolina](#) ^[7], whose distinguished career in education spanned more than four decades.

The Caldwell Institute's school year consisted of two sessions of five months each, with one-month vacations in April and August that coincided with the planting and harvesting seasons. The trustees chose not to construct a dormitory on campus because they believed that living in homes under family restraints would offer fewer temptations to students. Everyone attending the institute was required to attend public worship on Sundays and to spend time Sunday afternoon reciting from the Bible and Westminster Catechism.

The Caldwell Institute flourished for eight years, and, according to local tradition, attracted students from surrounding states as well as North Carolina. An outbreak of typhoid fever in [Greensboro](#) ^[4] in 1845 prompted the trustees to move the school to Hillsborough, where classes were held in the recently repaired and enlarged [Hillsborough Academy](#) ^[8] building. The Caldwell Institute, under the continuing leadership of [Alexander Wilson](#) ^[9], thrived for three years, reaching a peak enrollment of 100 in 1848. The next year attendance dropped back to 68, and in 1850 the trustees voted to discontinue the school.

References:

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Bettie D. Caldwell, *Founders and Builders of Greensboro* (1925).

Charles L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies, 1790-1840: A Documentary History* (1915).

Additional Resources:

Alexander Wilson, NC Highway Historical Marker G-65: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=G-55%20-%20ALEXANDER%20WILSON> ^[9]

Subjects:

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[UNC Press](#) ^[14]

Authors:

[Cross, Jerry L.](#) ^[15]

Origin - location:

[Greensboro](#) ^[16]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[17]

1 January 2006 | Cross, Jerry L.

- [1] <https://ncpedia.org/caldwell-institute>
- [2] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/guilford>
- [3] <https://ncpedia.org/presbyterian-church-0>
- [4] <https://ncpedia.org/greensboro-0>
- [5] <https://ncpedia.org/general-assembly>
- [6] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/caldwell-joseph>
- [7] <https://ncpedia.org/university-north-carolina-chapel-hi>
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- [9] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=G-55%20-%20ALEXANDER%20WILSON>
- [10] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/antebellum-1820-1>
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