

Carmichael, William Donald, Sr. ^[1]

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by Martha B. Caldwell, 1979

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William Donald Carmichael, Sr., tobacco company official, was born in Little Rock, S.C. His father was Captain William Donald Carmichael, a [Confederate](#) ^[2] veteran who fought throughout the [Civil War](#) ^[3] from [Bull Run](#) ^[4] to [Appomattox](#) ^[5], except for a brief period when he was recovering from a battle wound. His mother was Agnes Caroline Harlee, also from Little Rock.

Carmichael studied at [Oak Ridge Institute](#) ^[6] and entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[7] in 1892. At Chapel Hill he intended to study law but turned to education because of his admiration for [Dr. Edwin Alderman](#) ^[8]. Carmichael was interested in athletics at the university and served as manager of the baseball and football teams in 1896. He belonged to the [Order of Gimghouls](#) ^[9] and the Kappa Alpha Fraternity. He was graduated from the university in 1897 with a Ph.B. degree. Beginning in 1896, Carmichael was associated with the [Durham](#) ^[10] city schools for fifteen years, including six years, from 1906 to 1912, as superintendent. In 1911 he was coauthor, with Dr. E. C. Brooks, of [The Geography of North Carolina](#) ^[11], published by Rand McNally.

In 1912 he became manager of the Durham branch of [Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company](#) ^[12]. He was promoted to director in 1920 and to vice-president in charge of advertising in 1927. He moved to New York in 1927 and lived there until his retirement.

After his retirement to Chapel Hill in the early 1940s, Carmichael was active in Rotary, where he was made an honorary member, and in the local chapter of the [American Red Cross](#) ^[13], which he served as chairman in 1945–46. In recognition of his business leadership, he was made an honorary member of the Beta Gamma Sigma scholastic fraternity in The University of North Carolina School of Commerce in 1939. He maintained membership in the Metropolitan Club in New York.

Carmichael was very interested in the university and received an honorary LL.D. in 1946. He served as a trustee from 1925 to 1926 and as head of the Alumni Association in New York in 1932. He made contributions to the Emergency Student Loan Fund in 1932, when more than five hundred students were on the verge of departing the university because of lack of funds. He contributed to the building of Woollen Gymnasium and to the fund for the conversion of Person Hall into an art museum. Serving as the president of the class of 1897, he was a leader in the Alumni Annual Giving.

At Chapel Hill, Carmichael met Margaret McRobert McCaull of Salem, Va., a graduate of the [Woman's College in Greensboro](#) ^[14]. They were married in [Raleigh](#) ^[15] on 11 Oct. 1899 and had four sons: [W. D., Jr.](#) ^[16], vice-president of The University of North Carolina; R. Cartwright, of Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company, Durham; Robert H., in the advertising business in New York; and H. Martin of Weston, Conn.

Carmichael was a [Roman Catholic](#) ^[17] and a leader in the building of St. Thomas More Church in Chapel Hill. He was buried in the old Chapel Hill Cemetery.

References:

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Durham Morning Herald, 16 Jan. 1955.

Raleigh News and Observer, 26 July 1959.

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