

## History of Cape Fear Academy

Cape Fear Military Academy, a private military institution for boys, was founded in October 1868 by General Raleigh Edward Colston, a veteran of the Confederate Army. The school, located on the corner of Fourth and Mulberry (now Grace Street) in downtown Wilmington, opened with 76 students in attendance. Its purpose was to prepare students for college studies. Public education had been devastated by the Civil War, and while the state government was putting its schools back in order, education in many communities was limited to private institutions supported by tuition fees. In 1879, the school dropped the military features and changed its name to Cape Fear Academy. The school closed in 1916.

In February 1966, a group of Wilmington men, some of whom were descendants of alumni of Cape Fear Military Academy, formed the corporation, New Hanover Private Schools, Inc., in order to establish an independent school. Approximately 20 acres of land was donated on Highway 132 by Mr. Gilliam Horton and Mr. Alex Trask, and the school was built over the course of the next year. Cape Fear Academy opened its doors officially on September 11, 1967 with 54 students in grades 1 through 6.

Mr. T.O. Page was named as the first Headmaster of the school. The gymnasium building, named for Bruce B. Cameron, Jr., was added in 1970. In 1971, Mr. Jack Davis became Headmaster, and twenty students became the first graduating class of the new Cape Fear Academy.

In 1975, Mr. John Tuplin assumed the role of Headmaster. During this time a kindergarten program was added. Mr. Robert Coleman was chosen as Headmaster in 1978. The program was expanded to include a Pre-Kindergarten program under his leadership in 1983 and additions were made to the main classroom building.

In 1987, the main classroom building was officially named Godwin Hall, in honor of James Z. Godwin, the same year in which Mr. Erich Cluxton was named Headmaster. Dr. Raymond Stone was the Interim Headmaster for the 1994-95 school year.

Mr. Jay Dewey became Headmaster in 1995. Planning for a major capital campaign began shortly afterward and construction of a classroom building for primary grades was completed in 1998. The Beane Wright Student Center was completed in 1999. The new Upper School building, named Cameron Hall in memory of Rachel Trask Cameron, opened in 2000. Dr. Clauston Jenkins served as Interim Headmaster for the 2001-2002 academic year.

Mr. John Meehl was appointed Headmaster for the 2002-2003 school year and served for 10 years. He successfully led another capital campaign beginning in 2007 which added an athletic complex across from the main campus in 2011, a new road looping the main campus, a new 43,000 square foot gymnasium with classrooms in 2011, and the Erin E. McNeill Fine Arts Center in 2012.

Mr. Donald S. Berger was appointed Head of School on July 1, 2012. In 2014 the school graduated 66 seniors, the largest class in its history. The Penton Dining Hall was renovated in 2014. In 2015 the school added a greenhouse and in 2016 the iCenter was opened in Cameron Hall. In 2017 the school initiated a preK-12 leadership program, *Leaders for Life*. A new Welcome Center and Science and Innovation Center opened in the fall of 2018. In March 12, 2020, the School pivoted to remote instruction in all grades in response to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.

Mr. Edward M. Ellison was appointed the ninth Head of School on July 1, 2020. On August 18, 2020, Cape Fear Academy opened for in-person learning after implementing significant mitigation strategies in response to COVID-19. The school achieved record enrollment of 673 students on the opening day of school. In the summer of 2021, the Commons and Boardroom in Cameron Hall were completely renovated. During the 2021-2022 school year CFA enrolled 720 students, another new record. On May 27, 2022, the school acquired 11.4 acres of land previously owned by the Trinity United Methodist Church, bringing the school's total acreage to 46.4 acres. CFA completed a \$4 million campaign, raising funds for STEM renovations for Cameron Hall and substantial endowment funds for financial aid and faculty professional development.