

Katharine Lamont Boyd

When Katharine Lamont married James Boyd on December 15, 1917, little would she have imagined that her new name would one day grace the most important academic library in the rural Sandhills.

James Boyd was a poet and writer, and after serving in WWI, retreated to Weymouth, the family estate left to him by his father, in Southern Pines North Carolina, as a permanent resident to write, ride, and manage the estate with his wife Katharine.

James and Katharine Boyd were active in the community, supporting Moore County Hospital (now First Health) and the Southern Pines Library. In their later years, they donated a part of the Weymouth estate to establish Penick Village.

In 1941, James Boyd purchased the local newspaper and became editor of *The Pilot*. In February 1944, her husband of 27 years, 55-year-old James Boyd, suffered a fatal cerebral hemorrhage. His death presented a daunting challenge for the patrician daughter of New York tycoon (and Grover Cleveland's secretary of war) Daniel Lamont. Katharine assumed management of *The Pilot* until 1969, when it was sold to Sam Ragan, a well-known North Carolina journalist and poet laureate of NC. And James Boyd's style was a first-rate exemplar. During his heyday of 1925 until his death, few could better him, having practically invented the historical novel. His first book, *Drums*, published when Boyd was 37, became a best-seller and was lauded by reviewers at the time as perhaps the finest novel written about the American Revolution. Boyd authored four other historical novels and numerous short stories for literary magazines. After acquiring *The Pilot* in 1940, he wrote prodigiously for the paper.

Prior to James Boyd's death, Katharine's primary activities in Southern Pines had involved raising the couple's three children, riding to the hounds, gardening, and entertaining James' literary friends like F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sherwood Anderson, Thomas Wolfe, Paul Green and Maxwell Perkins at the couple's home, Weymouth, built by the Boyds in 1922. Her previous writing experience had "consisted of doing editorials one year for the *Sandhills Daily News*, "a small sheet whose fiercely Republican subscribers eventually got fed up with my writing and I was politely fired," as she later put it. She did, however, have one advantage. Since her husband suffered from writer's cramp, Katharine often took down his dictation of novels, stories and poems. "My real training in writing was gained through the experience of watching my husband work, learning something of his respect for words and feeling for style. Any facility I . . . acquired is due to him."

Katharine Boyd now served in the dual roles of publisher and editor, personally contributing columns and editorials to the weekly. She took over writing her deceased husband's popular "Grains of Sand" column. At first, Katharine could not bear to remove James' identification as the paper's publisher from the masthead. Only after the passage of several months did she start listing "Mrs. James Boyd" as publisher. It took another year before the masthead was changed to identify the publisher as "Katharine Boyd."

While Katharine Boyd enjoyed an outstanding career at *The Pilot*, her achievements as its editor and publisher are dwarfed by her acts of philanthropy that continue to enrich the lives of residents of Southern Pines, Moore County and North Carolina. Her unflagging contributions of time and treasure to charitable institutions such as Moore Memorial Hospital, St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Sandhills Community College, the Southern Pines Library, the North Carolina School of the Arts, the North Carolina Symphony, Penick Village and the American Ballet Theatre are unparalleled. Her deeding of 400 acres of wooded land to the State of North Carolina in 1963 for establishment of the Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve provided a permanent refuge for wildlife and a lasting benefit for our environment.

While the paper flourished during Katharine Boyd's tenure, declining health would force her to sell *The Pilot* in 1968 to veteran newspaperman Sam Ragan, although she did stay on for a time as a contributor. Ragan, who came to know and admire Mrs. Boyd, later summed her up this way: "Katharine Boyd was both tender and tough-minded in her views and outlook. She was gentle, generous, and gracious, but she could be equally strong against sham and hypocrisy."

In 1963, Katharine Boyd gave a wooded tract to the state of North Carolina which became the Weymouth Woods Nature Preserve.

Among Katharine Boyd's many gifts, she donated family land to create a state nature preserve, brought in the North Carolina Symphony to play for local school kids for free, endowed the Moore County Hospital, built a new wing on the town library, and gave land from the original estate to the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina for a major retirement community. Shortly before her death in 1974, Boyd insisted Weymouth House and its acreage be given to newly formed Sandhills Community College.

When that plan proved unfeasible, a group called Friends of Weymouth formed and preserved the house as a sustaining center for the arts and provided the funding for the creation of the Katharine L. Boyd Library on the new SCC campus, which was dedicated on August 22, 1988.

Today, Sandhills Community College is proud to have the Boyd legacy continue to advance intellectual growth through the Katharine L. Boyd Library. It is a research facility that welcomes all members of the community, young and old, and serves the research needs of the college.

Sources:

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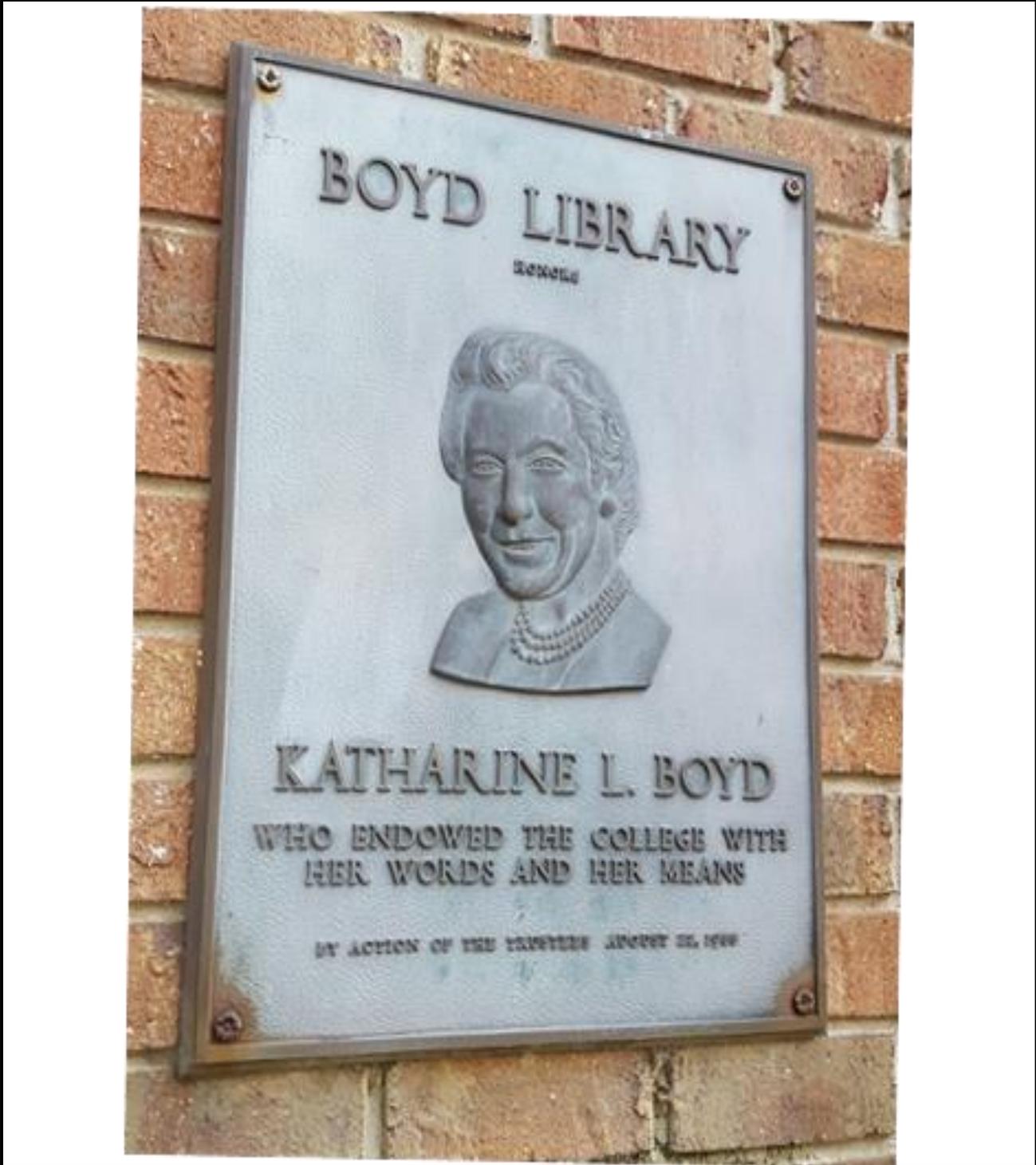
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Portrait at Weymouth Center



Plaque outside Boyd Library



Portrait in Boyd Library



Working at the Pilot





Meeting Adlai Stevenson