

New Billy Graham Archive Celebrates Grand Opening on Evangelist's Birthday

In the twilight of his 99 years, the Rev. Billy Graham met with Duke Divinity School historian Grant Wacker, who was writing a biography of the famous evangelist.

Graham leaned over at one point and, according to Wacker, asked the him, "'Do you think the archives at Wheaton are well run?'" I said, 'Yeah. They are,.'" Wacker told RNS. "He said, 'That's good.'"

History was on Graham's mind. Conscious that his legacy after his death would depend on how future generations saw him, he saw the need to preserve and maintain the record of his work.

On Monday, (Nov. 7), the birthday of the late evangelist, a new archive opened nearly 800 miles south of Wheaton College, in Charlotte, North Carolina, Graham's birthplace. The 30,000-square-foot state-of-the-art research center brings together videos, cassettes, films, newspaper clippings, sermon notes, correspondence and a lifetime of memorabilia from Graham's career, which began with a sermon at a Florida Baptist church in 1937.

A year after Graham's death in 2018, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association announced it was moving the archive from the highly regarded Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton, Graham's alma mater. For the intervening three years the archival materials have not been available to researchers.

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