

I. The Inception

When Ohio State University was founded in 1870 as the Ohio Agriculture and Mechanical College—Columbus, Ohio was a mid-sized town with a population of 32,000, minimal housing, but thousands of acreage of farmland for corn and grain.

Today, it is near impossible for anyone familiar with Columbus—to walk through The Ohio State University's vast campus, trying to picture a sole brick building settled near a farm in the northwest corner of the Oval, surrounded by nothing but open farmland and dirt paths. However, that is exactly what this land grant university created, and what is now today, The Ohio State University. Land grant university's were the product of the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, which provided 30,000 acres of federal land to eligible states for the founding of education institutions for training in agricultural and mechanical arts.

III. Construction Process

University Hall was constructed with wood framing, brick exterior (made from clay from the woods north of the current location of University Hall), and was to be four stories tall with stone trimming, slate roofing. The contractor & lowest bidder for the project was Kanmacher & Stark of Columbus, Ohio. The architect for University Hall was J. Snyder of Akron, Ohio. The building was not made fireproof, which was the cause of the University's Armory razing in 1958. The original University Hall was 87, 349 gross square feet, while 53,977 of the gross square feet were actually assigned.

On July 7, 1871, The Ohio State University Board of Trustees agreed to pay Mr. Kanmacher a total of \$112, 484.00 to complete the building on or before the first day of November 1872, including all the materials and furnishings needed. Needless to say, that

deadline was not met due to Kanmacher & Stark jumped on the bandwagon to make larger profits by lending their skills to rebuild Chicago after it was destroyed by the great fire of 1871. Some may have wished this had happened to Columbus, and the old University Hall—since only a mere 20 years after Chicago’s great fire, it was able to hold the World’s Columbian Exposition or World’s Fair in 1893. But no great fire ever hit Columbus, allowing the controversy of University Hall to keep haunting this building.

This was not the only item of the initial contract between the Board of Trustees serving the University and Kanmacher & Stark that was breached. The final costs were nearly \$40,000.00 higher than originally agreed upon. With a cost overrun of 1/3 the original estimate, University Hall was born with controversy.

Once the contractors were back in Columbus, University Hall was finally finished in late 1873, and was officially opened on September 17, 1873. While the building was open to students, it was not exactly finished. Doors were not latched, and much of the woodwork was unfinished. Then, on January 7th of 1874—it is recorded that President Orton had announced the building to be officially completed.

In 1896, the Board of Trustees decided to award a contract for an addition to Nichol & Carr, and in 1897 the addition was made. The chapel was doubled in size, with a topical addition, connecting it to the fourth floor. This space was utilized for classrooms.

II. Original Features & Functionality

A common misconception of University Hall is that it was the first building on campus. While this is not true, it was the first building devoted to educational instruction. Preceding University Hall was; the Rickly farm house, which once served as the President’s home was built

in the 1850's (where Mershon Auditorium now stands), a log cabin east of mirror lake, and two farm houses that were used as faculty housing on what is now 11th Ave.

Before University growth, University Hall served as the President's office, assembly room, chapel, geological & zoological museums, industrial drawing room, library, and classrooms, as well as, laboratories for the following fourteen departments of Agriculture, Mathematics, Physics, Civil Engineering, Physiology, Geology, Zoology, Political Science, History, Latin, Greek, French, German, and English. The multi-purpose serving aspect of University Hall did not stop here.

When out of town students began to attend the University, the lower east wing of the building was turned into a dormitory. Soon thereafter, faculty members began to occupy the second and third floors. University Hall's basement served as a common area and cafeteria for the faculty, staff, and students to enjoy their meals and converse.

In April of 1873, disgruntled parents were made aware of the steam boilers that were operating from University Hall's basement floor, where their children were often learning or dining. There were protests to remove these boilers to a less hazardous location. Almost immediately, construction began for a steam boiler house north of the building Chapel wing, and was at first just wood framing—then later filled in with brick.

Then in 1881, there was a shortage in water supply. Previously, water came from rain water barrels located at the north and south sides of University Hall, as well as, a dug well near the buildings chapel wing. This led to the University to pay the Columbus Fire Department \$50.00 to fill the rain water barrels, but this was not going to last. Soon a well was dug and lined with brick near Mirror Lake. Soon after, a windmill was built along with the installation of a

pump that would draw water through piping all the way to the water cisterns located in the basement of University Hall.

III. Falling with Age

Millions of students and faculty of the University have used University Hall for thousands of different purposes, for over 100 years. It should come as a surprise that the building has had to undergo both minor and major renovations.

First, in 1884 there were complaints of a “slight spreading of the walls from the main arch to the second floor of the building, resulting from uneven settling of the foundation. Applying proper supporting to the arch, in order to make the buildings safety adequate alleviated the buildings slumping foundation.

Two years later in 1886, the faculty had urged the President to both improve the insufficient water supply and gross condition of the toilets, and enhance the gas supply and pressure that was used for the several instructional laboratories.

In 1903, the graduating class proposed an effort to furnish a clock for University Hall’s tower. President Thompson relayed this message to the Board of Trustees who purchased a clock shortly after. The Board set aside \$375.00 for the Class of 1903, and the clock was implemented.

In 1905, the two front entrances, off of the main entrance, to the building, along with their steps were removed. Then in 1909, the doors were replaced by windows. This led to extensive alterations for the related interior divisions of the building that took place throughout the next five decades.

In 1913, bricks from the University Hall Tower almost struck a student passing the front of the building, missing by mere feet. This called for the front entrance of University Hall to be

closed-off and the barricaded. After inspection to determine the cause for the dangerous incident, the tower was rebuilt. This wouldn't be the first time such debris would decide to depart from the rest of University Hall.

Perhaps the most famous damage to University Hall's structural integrity was the lightning storm of 1929. During this storm, the clock tower was struck by lightning so fiercely that the clock tower had to be completely rebuilt. Upon reconstruction—the tower had to be erected fifteen feet lower than the original structure to avoid similar destruction. Then in 1930, the buildings mortar had experience such severe deterioration that the entire building had to be re-cemented. While University Hall was not built fireproof, it was never the victim of a serious fire.

The University was the subject of complaint for many “overcrowded students and faculty” through the next few decades. Then in 1967, a 100-pound chunk of sandstone collapsed from the main arches and fell—damaging the steps of the main entrance. Less than one year later, the north wing of the building was subject to a severe bulge on the floor, initiating strong concern for a likely collapse. This section of the building was subsequently closed down. This finding unfortunately, but necessarily marked the beginning of discussions for a plan to replace or reconstruct University Hall.

IV. Save or Raze?

In 1947, a University publication called Big Magazine On Campus published an article addressing the obvious need for a tremendous uplift or preservation effort of University Hall. It cites the building to be a “definite fire menace” for crowded conditions stemming partly from a student body that was 25,000 large. The issues ranged from, narrow hallways, minimal fire escapes, few main exits, doors blocked by chairs, unmarked restrooms, fire escapes that ran

through classrooms to cabinets with no handles, plywood elevator shaft doors, insufficient storage space. Ultimately, University Hall had become a place was serving as a home for too many uses and by too many people.

The building was often complained about, but no substantial plans were offered. Then in September of 1966, a survey was completed by a committee of 100 alumni of Ohio State, selected to be the voice of Reconstruction of University Hall. These alumni had been chosen for their expertise in their field of practice, and ranged from engineers at General Motors, General Electric, Goodyear Tire & Rubber and Proctor & Gamble, to presidents of companies who produced iron ore, concrete, and brick. Upon the completion of the survey, the 83 members of the committee responded to the survey. Eighty voted to raze and replace University Hall, while only 3 proposed an effort to retain and remodel the campus keepsake. Tremendous uproar and opposition followed this vote from alumni, students, faculty, and staff across the nation.

Those in favor of razing the building were quoted saying things like, “this is a case where engineering judgment as well as economics should override sentiment.” While others called for the definite replacement of the old building, but only if the new structure to be built would replicate the original buildings architectural theory and period. Ultimately, the decision would be based on the economics behind replacing or rehabilitating University Hall.

In fact, an official survey that inspected safety, physical arrangement, and adequacy was conducted to estimate the costs to save the building. Everything from floors, ceilings, walls, roofing, stairways, windows, electric, heating, framing, sprinkler system, and fire escaped was examined. In the end, the survey suggested that the cost to repair and maintain the existing University Hall would be half the cost to build a completely new facility of similar square footage. Yet, the same survey also prescribed that the physical arrangement of the existing

building does not offer adequate space for classroom and office use. This report also said that the rehabilitation of University Hall would only result in “a burdensome floor to floor plan strained to fit the existing frame, wasteful of cubic footage and expensive to heat, cool, and ventilation.

V. Last Hope

On November 11, 1966, The Ohio State Lantern’s staff writer James Ensley reported that University trustees accepted the initial recommendations made by the aforementioned advisory committee to raze north wing and interior of the building and replace it with a completely new structure built within the former shell of University Hall. However, this was all contingent upon the presentation of concluding evidence that this renovation of the old building would exceed costs of a new one. If there were no savings or equal costs, then University Hall was to be demolished at once, and an entirely new building was to be built. Leaving this slim margin for debate launched one last effort to save by students and other university affiliates who shared the same sentiment for University Hall.

The next few months can be defined as a chaotic frenzy for those calling for a new building and those trying to save the old one. The latter was given hope in March of 1967 when a panel comprised of contractors from the Associated General Contractors of America, along with the University President, Novice. G. Fawcett the renovation for University Hall would only cost \$19.00 a square foot, while a new building would cost at least \$28.00 a square foot. This seemed to offer new hope for the old building.

However, The Ohio State Lantern reported on May 10, 1968 that University Hall was to be shut down due to lack of safety. This marked the...

GO THRU controversy and decision to raze it...Herrick misc facts...historical pres...throw those in...conclude with demolition....cite everything..email to adam and Jennifer....include pictures.

VI.

I can take it 6-7 pages.

CITED:

The Ohio State Archives. Information files. "University Hall (original): 1873-1971.

Mccracken

Herrick

Etc