A LANDMARK FALLS
An Old Main Memory Book
MILLERSVILLE STATE COLLEGE
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OLD MAIN, 1965
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- Featuring five columns from SNAPPER, the weekly newspaper at Millersville State College, on Old Main under the title "Good Ol' Days" by Andrea Robison, 1964-65 co-editor.

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Good Ol’ Days

Old Main Had Many Faces

January 29, 1964

When Old Main, at least half of it, comes tumbling down this spring, memories will remain for years to come. Checking now is fascinating reading. Think back for a moment . . .

When the Lancaster County Normal School was officially approved as the first Pennsylvania State Normal School on Dec. 3, 1859, the accommodations for living consisted of two groups of connected buildings. The larger building was erected in 1854 and consisted of a three-story red-brick academy building. In 1855 a three-story, L-shaped brick building was added. This became the men’s dormitory.

The latest structure in 1859 was a four-story brick building which was known for more than 50 years as the Ladies’ Building. The oldest part of Old Main which is now Old Main South contained all the classrooms, literary society library rooms, boys’ dormitory facilities, chapel and quarters for the steward’s department. The dining room was located in the southeast section of the basement (where the women’s day room was located) until 1875.

The Ladies’ Building or Old Main North, besides providing women with a place to live, consisted of a gymnasium which was located in the attic. There was no formal instruction for this gym course. Above the roof was constructed an observatory platform large enough to accommodate an astronomy class. What is now known as Music Hall was once a model school with small recitation rooms. The fifty feet by forty feet model school chapel occupied the south portion of the first floor and was later used by Professor Porter as a music room.

The whitewashed rooms of Old Main were plain although probably not much plainer than they are today. The rooms contained chairs, tables, wash stands, book shelves, and double beds with mattresses made of heavy ticking filled with corn husks. Porcelain pitchers, wash basins (hotel style), porcelain chambers with covers, and a waste basket completed the rooms. Pictures, posters, or pennants on the walls were not permitted.

Since there was no running water in any of the dormitory rooms, students found it necessary to go to the well or the spring for a drink of water. There were, however, rules which forbade students to leave their rooms during study hours. A line of privies on the banks above the practice field provided the only sanitary accommodations. In fact, bathrooms weren’t introduced to Millersville Normal School until 1910. Bathing was inconvenient and there is evidence that “some of the students did not inconvenience themselves too frequently.”

With the eventual downfall of Old Main will go many, many memories, memories which will be humorous for some and unpleasant for others.
Good Ol’ Days

Old Chapel Filled a Void

February 19, 1964

There doesn’t appear to be a great deal of concern among many students of Millersville (women especially) about the tearing down of the dormitory section of Old Main. In fact, many can’t wait! However, it is disheartening to gaze into the empty Chapel at the stained glass windows, the frescoed walls and ceilings, and the walnut paneling, and realize that this also must soon be demolished.

Actually the original Chapel was built in 1857. Then in 1874 the new four-story chapel was placed between the Ladies’ and Men’s Buildings to make it easier for everyone to get to it. However, this was such a fire hazard that the one-story passageway between the old buildings was removed and part of the old Chapel was removed.

Later a fifth story was added to accommodate the one thousand pound bell which rang out on special occasions. In 1895 the central tower of the Chapel Building was raised from five to seven stories which made the Chapel Building the largest single building that had ever been constructed by the Normal School.

The first floor of the building contained the kitchen, dining room, and Trustees’ room. The trustees’ room occupied the space enclosed by the heavy pillars opposite Dean Clyde Stine’s old lobby now used as a lobby to the Women’s Day Room. This same space was later made into a reference library room, a dining room annex and a lobby.

The second floor was occupied by the book room, the principal’s office and the public office. The Chapel room occupied the west end of the second and third stories. The only direct way to the Chapel was by using two spiral staircases leading from the first floor to the fourth. It wasn’t until 1906 that the large iron stairways were added to make direct access from the outside possible.

The Chapel was made with selected ash and walnut. Heavy settees of walnut and ash were installed to seat comfortably at least one thousand people. On the ceiling were frescoed portraits of men and women well-known in literature, art, education and statesmanship including Shakespeare, Isaac Newton, Mary Lyon, Horace Mann and Washington.

Directly in front of the Chapel on the third floor were located the two literary society rooms and on the fourth floor were the classrooms.
Good Ol’ Days

Chapel Got Tearful Farewell

February 26, 1964

This is the second of two columns on the Chapel Building which was originally constructed in 1857 and will be demolished in the spring.

After the construction of the new building was completed, the old Chapel, the recitation rooms, the library rooms, and offices were no longer needed so they were converted into dormitory rooms for some of the 655 summer students.

Six new hot air furnaces were purchased for $1,475 and were installed in the basement. The total number of hot air furnaces now numbered 26 in the three buildings and it kept two firemen quite busy making the rounds. Previously, the buildings had been heated by means of coal stoves in the halls, but Dr. Edward Brooks believed that this new system was superior to steam.

The new building was at last completed and occupied on February 15, 1875 after a farewell service was held in the old chapel by representatives of the Normal and Page Literary Societies and by Dr. Brooks. I’m sure our farewells to the chapel will not be as emotional and as dramatic as the normal society speaker made his speech that day.

After saying farewell to the Chapel table on which rested the Bible, to the chair occupied daily by the “beloved principal” and to the organ, he finally came to the clock.

"O thou old clock that hangest on the wall, faithful recorder of the passing hours wasted by us, and telling us time is fast passing away, and warning us to improve the precious moments as they fly... we know that thou wilt ever be true to thy duty; telling, and I trust convincing many of us, that now is the only time we can call our own, and that the time is fast approaching when we will leave our earthly home, to dwell in one prepared by Him who has so graciously blessed us during the sojourn of life."

Students of the Normal School were required to attend chapel every day or demerits would be given. Unexcused tardiness resulted in one demerit mark and an unexcused absence resulted in three marks. Besides the regular prayer meetings and Bible classes, weekly meetings of the Page Literary Society were also held in the chapel.
Before the building began

In the good old days
In the horse and buggy days

Old Main with its once-famous porches
It has always been campus focal point even in 1872.

Aerial view of Old Main complex
Good Ol’ Days

‘Famous’ Names Dot Tower

April 29, 1964

Students who have never taken a tour of the tower of Old Main are certainly missing one of the most unusual parts of the building. Although the tower is vacant except for the old bell, six dead birds, and the “calling cards” of the pigeons, every part of the structure has been utilized at one time or another.

The long climb to the top of the eight-story-tower begins at the fifth floor. A room to the right of the entrance would not appear impressive to most people, until certain points were explained. For example, you would find yourself standing on 20-inch wide beams which have been there almost 100 years. This part of the building, directly over the chapel, was constructed in 1870 and can boast of the fact that it has a ceiling without support.

The ceiling rests on two pilasters which meet to form a triangle. In fact, this is one of the only buildings in the country to have this type of construction — that of suspended beams. Millersville State Normal School became a prototype for this kind of construction.

To get to the sixth floor one must go through the art studio which is used today by the creative art classes. When this room was first constructed, it was a gymnasium for women’s physical education classes. Once you’ve passed through this room, the real test of endurance begins.

One wouldn’t be too far off to call the room on the sixth floor the “Millersville Hall of Fame” or the “Archives Room of MSC” for it is here records have been preserved (in lipstick, paint, pencil and crayons) of famous and infamous personalities. Students as far back as the early 1900’s have scribbled down their names and sayings in one manner or another.

Some of these have become important personages today. For instance, the president of the Board of Trustees, Raymond S. Hovis, signed his name in 1930. Paul Brenneman “John Hancocked” his name in 1922. And speaking of John Hancock, his name also appears there . . . ? A more recent name which may be familiar to many is that of Joe Labatch, a former Marauder basketball great.
Good Ol’ Days

Millersvilliana Fills Tower

May 6, 1964

This column concludes the “journey” to the top of the tower of Old Main where we added our name to the list of those already there.

Among the many names and sayings on the wall, this columnist found her high school biology teacher’s signature, but to save him embarrassment neither his name nor the date will be mentioned.

Where some of the earlier signatures were written in ink, more recent ones were smeared in paint or lipstick. Someone even went to the trouble to write, very neatly, with several different colored pencils.

Not only were there names on the walls, but also short sayings. Sue Schiele on November 21, 1961, wrote “Class of 1962 and darn glad of it.” One lonely Marauder asked for “some pretty girls to write to a lonesome sailor.”

Before leaving the sixth floor, one cannot help being amazed by the fact that the desk which Mr. Simons, former college business manager, used is still intact. The unique shutters decorated with scrolls are a type not found too commonly today.

To reach the next plateau one must ascend another steep staircase. Precautions must be taken against stepping on dead birds and pigeon drippings. On the seventh floor rests the 1,000 pound bell which was rung after athletic victories. Also in the dark, dank room are hearts and initials carved on the wooden columns. Again, some of them ancient, some very recent (hmmmm . . .)

After mounting the last set of stairs, the eighth and final level is reached. This room, which at one time provided students as an observatory tower for astronomy classes, still serves as an excellent spot to view all of Millersville’s expanding campus and surrounding areas.

Looking through the portholes, one can see the new dorms to the south, the new science building to the east, Landis Hall to the north, and Brooks Hall and beyond to the west.

Thus, the tallest and the oldest structure on campus has been standing by watching Millersville expand. Soon Old Main will have to make way for the new. However, the name of Old Main will always remain synonymous with Millersville State College.
Four views from the tower
Old Main South, soon a memory
The tower framed by a campus tree
Good Ol’ Days

A Landmark Falls

Like the fabled walls of Jericho, the walls of one of the great structures of all time are falling—Old Main South is rapidly becoming just a memory in the hearts and minds of thousands of Millersville State College alumni, students and friends.

Threatened time and again by demolition, Old Main always won a reprieve, but this time the time-honored building has run out of luck. The campus, expanding by leaps and bounds, has seen great changes wrought, all in the name of progress.

In fact, as late as this spring (1965), the building received one last reprieve. Scheduled to be razed in July 1964, the postponement carried over until February 1965. But this time Old Main South had defied the odds for the last time. Campus construction at other sites had been delayed and the delays kept OMS standing a while longer. In September 1964 the building once again housed coeds, but Easter 1965 saw the women students moved to Bard Hall and the Bard men moved to the new dormitory area adjacent to Frederick Street. This signalled the end.

With Old Main South gone, the new split-level library building, one of the most-needed structures in the future growth of MSC, will rise on its site. This will leave only Old Main North still standing and even its days are numbered.

Within a few short years the rest of the grand building will be razed. Only the construction of a new health building and several more dormitories stand between Old Main and oblivion. The old tower bell and some of the stained glass windows from the Old Chapel will be salvaged. Some relics will find their way into the college museum.

Near the present site of Old Main a new Student Center will be built within the next few years. A landmark falls—this is true—but the memories, ah, the memories—they will always remain in the hearts of Millersville people. Workmen cannot erase Old Main by tearing it down. It will always be a part of Millersville State College, the link between past and future.