

University architecture spans 100 years

The styles vary from baroque to the latest in modern cubism

By Tom Visoky
Of the Emerald

The University is not particularly noted for its architectural innovations. Nevertheless, it is a visually appealing campus with buildings representing a variety of architectural styles.

For those who fret about the budget, some of these buildings are mute testimonies to the University's ability to survive periods of economic hardship.

For example, Deady Hall, the oldest and most venerable edifice on campus is a grizzled survivor of the University's first and noblest financial struggle. Excavation for Deady Hall began May 7, 1873 on a barren knoll just outside Eugene's city limits.

Construction progressed rapidly at first but soon ground to a halt as funds dried up. The situation seemed grim and many of the building's supporters despaired of ever finishing the job. But a few men, led by Judge Joshua Walton, mounted a vigorous campaign to raise the funds needed to complete the building.

The county grange donated thousands of bushels of wheat which were

sold for funds and young children dug into their piggy banks to support the cause.

Nonetheless, paydays often found the judge penniless. On those occasions he would leave his office and scour the surrounding countryside, soliciting donations from local farmers, frequently returning with boxes of apples, bushels of wheat and a calf or pig in tow. The animals and produce were sold by general store manager, Thomas Hendricks, and the proceeds were turned over to pay the laborers.

Thanks to Walton's perseverance, Deady Hall was finally completed and approved by the state board of regents in July, 1876.

The building itself — a classic example of Second Empire Baroque — was built to last. Its brick walls, made from clay dug from a pit where MacArthur Court now stands, are three feet thick in the basement tapering off to two feet thick above ground.

Villard Hall — also Second Empire Baroque — is, indirectly, the product of another early financial crisis. Built in 1886, it is named in honor of Northern Pacific Railroad tycoon, Henry Villard,

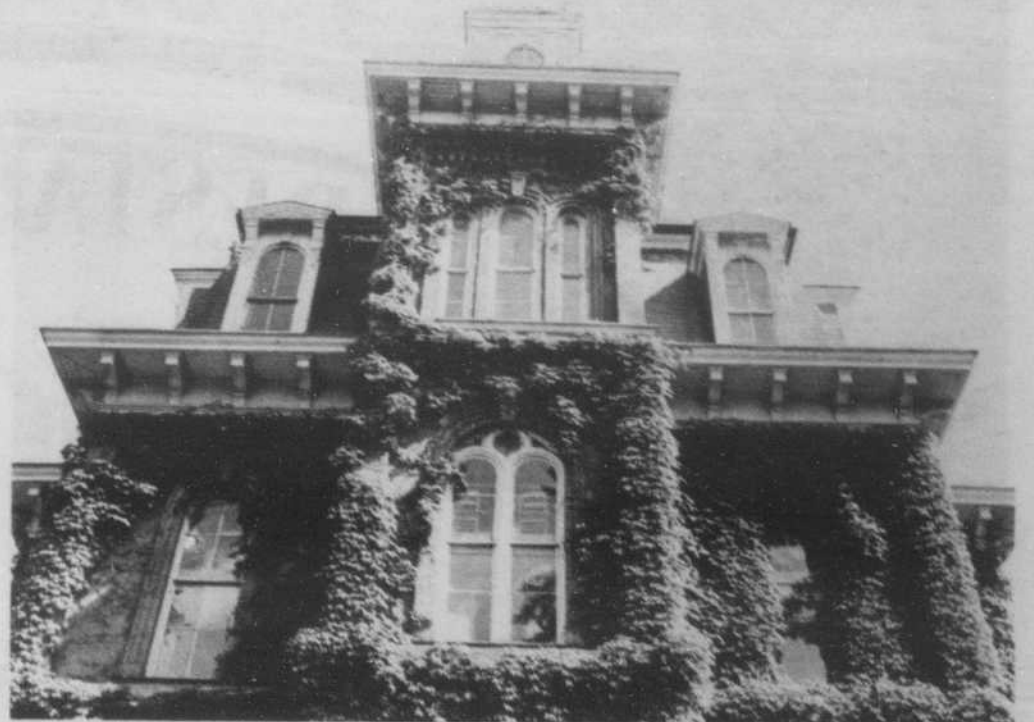


Photo by Mark Pynes

Deady Hall was completed and dedicated in July, 1876

who rescued the University from bankruptcy in 1881. His donation of \$50,000 in Northern Pacific bonds two years later enabled the school to get solidly on its financial feet.

Gerlinger Hall, Hendricks Hall and Susan Campbell Hall are probably the most architecturally unified buildings on campus. Georgian in style these buildings were erected during a period of frantic construction between 1918-1921.

Gerlinger Hall, which houses the swanky Alumni social hall, a gymnasium, swimming pool and assorted classrooms, is yet another product of a tenacious, fund-raiser/lobbyer, Mrs. George Gerlinger.

In 1915 Gerlinger began collecting donations for a building which would house all the University's women's activities and, simultaneously, serve as a center for receptions and other formal occasions. By 1919 she had raised more than \$50,000 from hundreds of small contributors. This sum was matched by \$100,000 from the state legislature and another \$50,000 in private donations.

When the soaring costs of labor and materials threatened to halt construction, Gerlinger and other supporters of the project secured another \$50,000 from the legislature and an equal amount from the millage tax to complete the building.

The Museum of Art, an example of Lombardic architecture built in 1931, was a gift from University Alumni and

friends. One of the primary contributors, Gertrude Bass Warner, also donated the Murray Warner Collection of Oriental Art on display on the second floor.

With the advent of FDR's New Deal, the University, through the use of Public Works Administration (PWA) labor, acquired four new buildings: Esslinger Hall (1936), Chapman Hall (1939), the Volcanology Center (1935), which served as the infirmary, and the crown jewel, the University Library (1937).

On June 11, 1948 members of the class of '23, at their 25th reunion, turned the first spadeful of earth for the new Student Union, which the 1923 Emerald had called a "Dream of the Future."

The initial movement for a student union fell apart in 1926, but the dream was revived again in 1939 by University President Dr. Donald Erb in whose honor the building is named.

Erb's plans for erecting the building were temporarily shelved after his death in 1943. But in 1947 the University, through a combination of numerous private gifts and student building fees, raised the \$1,500,000 needed to start the project. And in 1950 the University dedicated what was then recognized as one of the finest student unions in the country.

Oregon Hall, an example of modern Cube architecture, is the newest addition to the University's major buildings family. Built in 1973, it houses the University business offices.



Photo by Mark Pynes

Oregon Hall, built in 1973, is an example of cubist design.

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