

2008

Stately Halls and Utilitarian Shacks: A History of the Buildings of Ouachita Baptist University

Victoria Utterback
Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses

Part of the [History Commons](#), and the [Organizational Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Utterback, Victoria, "Stately Halls and Utilitarian Shacks: A History of the Buildings of Ouachita Baptist University" (2008). *Honors Theses*. 67.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/67

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Stately Halls and Utilitarian Shacks: A History of the Buildings of
Ouachita Baptist University”**

written by

Victoria Utterback

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

(Name) thesis director

(Name) second reader

(Name) third reader

honors program director

April 15, 2008

Stately Halls and Utilitarian Shacks: A History of the Buildings of Ouachita Baptist University

When you step onto the campus of Ouachita Baptist University, you might stop to admire the lovely landscaping and trees lining 6th and Ouachita Street. You might appreciate the architectural beauty of Cone-Bottoms, once said to be the most beautiful residence hall in the South.¹ The abundance of places to sit and relax such as the International Flag Plaza and Fountain, Daniel R. Grant Plaza, and the Katie Speer Pavilion and Gardens only embellish the peaceful atmosphere of the campus. The new state-of-the-art Hickingbotham Hall impresses with its computer labs, classrooms, and lecture halls. Although an essential part of the campus, the buildings consist of nothing more than bricks and mortar. However, the brick and mortar of those buildings come to life when the stories of the people who learned and taught within those walls are shared. The students and professors of Ouachita help give the campus its unique atmosphere. Their stories belong in the history of Ouachita Baptist University as much as the historic timeline of the school does.

The physical state of the campus today differs greatly from its humble beginnings in 1886. The struggle to maintain the school financially in its beginning years affected the buildings, or lack thereof. In 1850, Arkansas Baptists began to discuss the possibility of establishing an institution of higher education within the state. Unfortunately, the Civil War interrupted fundraising efforts as well as distracting those interested in creating such an institution.² After the end of the Civil War, thoughts turned once again to trying to establish the school. The location and financing of the school proved to be the main

¹ Arrington 72.

² Ibid 14.

problems facing the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Finally, in 1883, the Convention appointed an Educational Commission to take over the process of creating a Baptist state college. On April 8, 1885, the newly appointed Board of Trustees met to consider bids for the new school's location.³ The next day, after the seventy-second ballot, the Trustees voted Arkadelphia the location for the college.⁴ As part of Arkadelphia's bid for the school, the college received thirteen acres and the old building used by the Baptist High School, as well as a pledge of \$10,000 to go towards the fund for a new building. Elected on June 22, 1886, John William Conger became the first president of Ouachita Baptist College, named for the surrounding mountains and the nearby river. The word *Ouachita* is a Caddo Indian word believed to have meant "eastern boundary," though the exact meaning is unknown.⁵

Ouachita Baptist College opened formally on September 6, 1886. It had just three departments: Primary, Preparatory, and Collegiate, with courses in music, art, and bookkeeping also available for the 166 enrolled students.⁶ The facilities reflected the limited resources of the time. The lone building, built in 1859, had previously housed the Arkansas Institute for the Blind and the Arkadelphia Baptist High School. Originally located in Arkadelphia, the school moved to Little Rock in 1868.⁷ The Red River Association then purchased the building and property from the state to create its own Baptist High School in 1876.⁸ After the decision to locate the college in Arkadelphia, the building received repairs to ensure its suitability for the college's needs.⁹ The Trustees

³ Arrington 15.

⁴ *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), April 9, 1886, p.1.

⁵ Arrington 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2442>

⁸ Arrington 15.

⁹ <http://www.obu.edu/about/history.asp>

believed the building would be adequate as a multipurpose building until necessity and a growing enrollment demanded more facilities be built. In 1889, the first new building opened. Known simply as the “Main Building,” it soon came to be called Old Main. It housed the administration offices, the library, and chemistry and biology classrooms. The Institute building received renovations that transformed it into a women’s dormitory. Unfortunately, it burned the next year.¹⁰

With the burning of the institute building, the school needed additional space once again. In 1891, the Young Ladies Home opened as a women’s dormitory to help take the place of the Institute building. As the struggle to keep the school out of financial trouble continued, the cost of construction outweighed the need for more buildings. Finally, in 1898, the school found the funds needed to construct the new Conservatory, a beautiful three-story brick building that housed the music department. The first floor held music rooms, the director’s office, and the auditorium in which they also held daily chapel services.¹¹ The second floor served as a dormitory, and the third floor held a large practice room.¹² Music students loved the new building and spent most of their time in it. The building had cubbyholes for them to keep their things in.¹³

In 1904, President Conger built a two-story brick residence that would serve as his personal home until his resignation in 1907, at which time he sold the home to the college to serve as the President’s Home, or the Mansion as it came to be called.¹⁴ The same year he built his home, President Conger also accepted the role of Financial Agent

¹⁰ President’s Office files-“Old Main.”

¹¹ Arrington 39.

¹² President’s Office files-“Conservatory.”

¹³ Personal interview with Mrs. Meador.

¹⁴ Arrington 39.

to try to raise funds to combat the school's debt, which was increasing at an alarming rate. While finding prospective sponsors did not create problems, collecting on those pledges proved to be much more challenging. The lack of funds not only affected the physical aspect of the college but also the salaries of the faculty and staff. The faculty covered the majority of scholarships offered to students in the early years, causing them to become "involuntary philanthropists."¹⁵ It proved a blessing then, when in 1906, Reverend W. A. Forbes provided the funds to build the Mary Forbes Industrial Home for Young Ladies, which housed fifteen young women of limited financial resources. That same year, President Conger built a simple wooden structure to serve as the Laboratory Building for the Department of Natural Sciences.¹⁶

Dr. Henry Simms Hartzog became president in 1907 and served only four years, but the students greatly respected and loved him. Dr. Hartzog resigned the presidency in 1911, and Dr. Robert Graves Bowers replaced him.¹⁷ During his brief stint as president, Dr. A. U. Williams donated seven acres of land to Ouachita College. This land would become the site for the first football field and field house, built after Dr. Bower's time as president.¹⁸

Dr. Samuel Young Jameson replaced him in 1913 and inherited not only the daily requirements of a college president but also the worrisome school debt.¹⁹ Under Dr. Jameson's administration, on-campus housing for boys became available for the first time. W. T. Cone purchased a home and lot next to the campus and donated it to the

¹⁵ Arrington 43.

¹⁶ Ibid. 40.

¹⁷ Ibid. 53.

¹⁸ President's Office files-"A.U. Williams Athletic Field."

¹⁹ Arrington 54.

school in 1914. Although named the Cone Building, students called it the Cone Castle.²⁰ In 1915, the lab building for the natural science department burned and was replaced by S. A. T. C. barracks which also served as part of a World War I student training camp.²¹ One of the greatest achievements of Dr. Jameson was the successful elimination of the school debt of \$65,000, an enormous relief to all. He resigned in 1916 and took up a career in the ministry.²²

Dr. Charles Ernest Dicken became the fifth president of Ouachita in 1916 and led the college through the turbulent times of World War I. Several key events occurred early in his presidency. One of which was the establishment of *The Signal* as the school newspaper, thereby replacing the monthly journal, *Ripples*. Another key event changed the physical appearance of the campus.²³ Early in the morning on Sunday, October 14, 1917, a fire started in the kitchen of the Cone Home. College students, Coach Morley Jennings, and the fire department fought hard to save the building but unfortunately could save only the front walls of the wooden building. Fortunately, none of the young men living in the house lost any personal belongings. The displaced young men stayed in rooms in the Caddo Hotel until new lodging could be found.²⁴ As World War I continued to rage, President Dicken traveled to Washington, D. C. to secure the selection of Ouachita as a site for the Students' Army Training Corp, until the war's end called for the termination of the program. He did, however, succeed in receiving a unit of the brand new ROTC, or Reserve Officer's Training Corps, for the school, which continues to

²⁰ President's Office File-"Cone-Bottoms Dormitory."

²¹ Ibid. -"Lab Building."

²² Arrington 54, 55.

²³ Ibid. 68.

²⁴ Signal, Oct 20, 1917.

operate on campus today.²⁵ President Dicken worked throughout his time in office not only to secure Ouachita's membership and accreditation in the North Central Association but also to generate a sizeable endowment fund. He managed, with the aid of John Lile, to enlarge the endowment to over half a million.²⁶

Because of the importance placed on increasing the endowment fund and decreasing the school debt, the focus of adding new buildings dimmed slightly. In 1920, construction on a new dining hall began.²⁷ That same year the school built a gym, which Walton Gym later replaced,²⁸ and a music practice hall that consisted of basically a frame building.²⁹ In 1923, the Young Ladies Home received the new name of Old North Dorm and became a dormitory for young men.³⁰ Returning veterans from World War I and II lived in the large rooms, usually with three roommates.³¹ The dormitory had lots of fancy wooden carvings and banisters, as well as really high ceilings. A large porch outside contributed to the grandeur of the dormitory.³²

Cone-Bottoms Hall, a three-story dormitory for women, completed and opened in 1923, became the last major building built during Dr. Dicken's presidency. For many years, it held its place as the largest residence hall in Arkansas, as well as being considered one of the most beautiful.³³ Mrs. Meador, a former resident of Cone-Bottoms remembers learning to dance in her room that today is the location of the President's

²⁵ Arrington 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 70.

²⁷ President's Office Files-"R.C. Daily Hall."

²⁸ *Ibid.* -"Walton Gym."

²⁹ *Ibid.* -"Bookstore."

³⁰ *Ibid.* -"Old North Dorm."

³¹ Personal interview with Mr. Vining.

³² Personal interview with Mr. Hardin, November 2.

³³ President's Office Files-"Cone-Bottoms Dormitory."

Office.³⁴ Unfortunately, the impact that Dr. Dicken had on Ouachita was overshadowed by the big evolution controversy that threatened the academic principles of the school and resulted in his resignation in 1926 as well as the resignations of several other faculty members.³⁵

In 1924, former President John Conger died. He had received special permission to be buried on Ouachita's campus, the only Arkadelphian grave allowed outside an official cemetery. The above ground mausoleum stood near the location of the tiger. Later, the mausoleum would be moved close to Flenniken to make way for a campus drive. The now buried grave's marker was placed over it to identify its location.³⁶

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved Arthur B. Hill to be Dicken's successor. Mr. Hill took over during a crucial time in Ouachita's history. However, he did a remarkable job of smoothing over the tensions and problems that had arisen towards the end of Dr. Dicken's time as president.³⁷ The new football field and field house across the ravine opened with bleachers to seat 5,000 as the football program continued to improve.³⁸ On March 18, 1927, the North Central Association granted accreditation to Ouachita. This success was largely due to President Dicken and the work he did with the endowment, but Mr. Hill also played a role in the impressive faculty that he gathered at the school.³⁹

Dr. Charles D. Johnson followed Mr. Hill as Ouachita's President in 1929 but only served until 1933. His tenure was marred by the school's loss of the recently earned

³⁴ Personal interview with Mrs. Meador.

³⁵ Arrington 73, 76.

³⁶ Ibid. 48.

³⁷ Ibid. 78.

³⁸ President's Office Files--"A.U. Williams Athletic Field."

³⁹ Arrington 78.

accreditation due to financial problems and questionable recruiting for athletics.⁴⁰ Dr. James Richard Grant replaced him officially in 1934. Dr. Grant served as Vice President and acting administrator in the year between Dr. Johnson's resignation and his taking office.⁴¹

That same year the campus acquired one of its most well known landmarks. Two students, B. F. Worley and Marvin Faulkner, carved the marble tiger to help pay for their tuition. First displayed Thanksgiving Day, the day of the annual "Battle of the Ravine" football game between Ouachita and their rivals, the Henderson State Teachers' College, it quickly became the goal of the Henderson "Reddies" to make raids on the Ouachita campus in attempts to paint the tiger. Sometime during the years, the tiger lost its tail and several teeth as well as gaining a few pounds courtesy of red and gold paint.⁴² Several almost skirmishes between Ouachita and Henderson students over the tiger have occurred throughout the years.⁴³ No matter the changes, the tiger still remains one of the rallying points for the Ouachita students.

By 1936, the school had once again begun to slowly overcome its previous financial difficulties, and although the North Central Association once again refused to reinstate accreditation, the school continued to try to resolve the financial and athletic issues.⁴⁴ The progress made in settling the school debt would eventually allow several desperately needed buildings to be constructed. Converted from the old gym, the Little Theatre became an auditorium that housed the speech and drama department as well as

⁴⁰ Arrington 83.

⁴¹ <http://www.obu.edu/about/history.asp>

⁴² President's Office Files-"Tiger."

⁴³ Personal Interview with Dr. Everett.

⁴⁴ Arrington 93, 96.

being the location for the now weekly chapel services.⁴⁵ According to Dr. Francis McBeth, the close proximity to the ravine and lake, a mosquito heaven, meant that swarms of mosquitoes had you swatting at them the entire time you were there.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, that same year the Conservatory burned, resulting in a shortage of rooms for male students. Wallis Hall soon replaced the Conservatory, serving as a men's dormitory on the same location as its unfortunate predecessor.⁴⁷ The young men enjoyed living in Wallis Hall and loved playing pranks on each other. A favorite prank turned out to be pouring water on guys as they returned from a date. Dr. J.D. Patterson even created a miniature bomb out of pickard acid and a bottle and threw it off the roof. Unfortunately for him, they caught him in the act.⁴⁸ The Physical Education Building, built in 1937, fulfilled the athletic facility opening left by the conversion of the old gym into the Little Theatre.⁴⁹

Besides meeting the physical and educational needs of the students, the buildings also met the students' social needs. In 1941, thanks in large part to a generous donation from Miss Emma Riley, Flenniken Memorial Hall opened. The large two-story student center had rooms that met a variety of needs. The top floor hosted prayer services, while the first floor had a large lounge and recreation room. It would also come to house the post office, bookstore, and a snack bar complete with booths and a jukebox.⁵⁰ West Hall, a two-story house remodeled to serve as a women's dormitory, opened in 1942, close to Cone-Bottoms.⁵¹ North Central Association once again granted accreditation to the

⁴⁵ President's Office Files-"Little Theatre."

⁴⁶ Personal Interview with Dr. McBeth.

⁴⁷ Arrington 93.

⁴⁸ Personal interview with Dr. Everett.

⁴⁹ Arrington 93.

⁵⁰ President's Office Files-"Flenniken."

⁵¹ Ibid. -"West Hall."

school that same year. However, the accreditation gave the school a probationary status that required yearly check-ups to ensure the continued meeting of the standards propagated by the Association.⁵²

The replacement chapel and music conservatory building, later to be called Mitchell Hall, opened in 1942 but was only half finished. On February 3, 1943, Governor Homer Adkins announced that 750 army aviation cadets would be assigned to Ouachita and Henderson for training in a joint program.⁵³ The schools would provide rigorous academic training, and the Franklin School of Aviation in Arkadelphia would provide pilot training, all at the expense of the government. Given two weeks to prepare for the students, their arrival three days later caught the college off guard and ill-equipped. Those two weeks would have been more than enough time to finish Mitchell Hall, which was being prepared for the cadets' usage; however, the early arrival necessitated a trip to Camp Robinson for supplies, including mattresses. The cadets slept in the gymnasium for several nights until Mitchell Hall was finished.⁵⁴ Because the school intended Mitchell Hall to serve as an auditorium, the floor sloped down toward the stage. Therefore, the bunks had to have longer legs on one side in order for the soldiers to sleep level.⁵⁵ The biggest problem with the unfinished hall, which earned it the nickname "Pneumonia Gulch", proved to be the lack of a heating system.⁵⁶

With the last of the soldiers shipping out in 1944, the campus returned to a more normal state. The school decided to honor Professor Livingston Harvey Mitchell's forty

⁵² Arrington 101.

⁵³ *Southern Standard*, February 4, 1943, Arkadelphia, AR.

⁵⁴ Arnold, Arnold, Richter, *We Were There*, 229.

⁵⁵ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

⁵⁶ President's Office Files-"Mitchell Hall."

years of service by naming the music auditorium and building, Mitchell Hall.⁵⁷ In the attic of Mitchell Hall, lived several bats. Dr. Phelps and the campus crew used to climb up and use tennis racquets to play “batmitten” in order to get rid of them. The hall served as the location for chapel services, and students constantly pulled pranks during chapel. A popular prank involved the pouring of a can of marbles down the concrete floor, creating a funny sound as the marbles rolled down the slope. One time, students set up a cage of chickens in the flyway with a loop over the door connected to an alarm clock. When the alarm went off, the door opened and the chickens flew out into the auditorium.⁵⁸

That same year, the campus added a bookstore. It held the post office for the campus for the next six years.⁵⁹ Thanks to a large fundraising campaign conducted by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention called the “Million Dollar Campaign,” the school raised enough money to build several more buildings.⁶⁰ In 1948, the nurse’s office, as well as a location for patient isolation should it become necessary, found a place in the Cannon Infirmary. Terral-Moore and Ernest Bailey Halls, two old World War II barracks buildings, received brick veneers and transformed into women’s dormitories.⁶¹

Graduation Day fell on May 23 in the year 1949. This date made memories for two particular reasons. Firstly, it was the date that Dr. J. R. Grant retired from the presidency. Dr. Grant moved to Little Rock with his wife where he lived until his death in 1951.⁶² Ouachita remembers Dr. Grant as one of the most influential presidents in its history. The second memorable event happened late that night as the few people left on

⁵⁷ Arrington 99.

⁵⁸ Personal interview with Dr. McBeth.

⁵⁹ President’s Office Files-“Bookstore.”

⁶⁰ Arrington 94.

⁶¹ Ibid. 95.

⁶² Ibid. 102-103.

campus slept. Future president, Dr. Daniel Ross Grant was sleeping on the porch of the President's Home due to an influx of relatives. It stormed that night, and lightning struck the roof of Old Main. A fire quickly started and began to burn its way through the building. Although the fire was a slow burner, the storage of chemicals for the chemistry labs in the attic did much to escalate the fire's path. Students and town residents came to the rescue of the library's books and the school's papers from the administration offices. Dr. Dan Grant remembers using his raincoat to carry the books out and stacking them around a large tree out in the yard. The combination of water and colored bookbindings stained his raincoat with a multitude of colors.⁶³ President J.R. Grant graciously offered the President's Home to become the new administration building.⁶⁴ However, the school still needed a new science building and library.

Dr. S. William Eubanks became the next president of Ouachita for the following two years. During that period, the school added the Riley Library and the Hamilton Moses Science Building. Renovations to the Little Theatre, Flenniken Student Center, and the women's dormitories helped spruce up the campus.⁶⁵ The post office changed locations to the bottom floor of Flenniken, while the bookstore became the political science building.⁶⁶ Shortly before Dr. Eubanks' resignation in 1951, the North Central Association once again dropped Ouachita Baptist College from its accreditation lists. The Dean of the Faculty, Harold A. Haswell, served in the capacity of college administrator until 1952, when the Board of Trustees extended the invitation to officially become the President. Dr. Haswell did much for the school, including removing all

⁶³ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

⁶⁴ President's Office Files-"President's Home."

⁶⁵ Arrington 106.

⁶⁶ President's Office Files-"Bookstore."

school debt, reorganization of the curriculum, and the building of two new buildings: Conger Hall, a new men's dormitory, and J.R. Grant Memorial Hall, which served as the new administration building. His hard work paid off when in 1953, Ouachita regained accreditation. Dr. Haswell hoped that it would be the last time that Ouachita faced the struggle of losing accreditation. He resigned later that year.⁶⁷

Another one of the most influential presidents in Ouachita's history would prove to be Dr. Haswell's successor. Dr. Ralph Arloe Phelps, Jr. would serve sixteen years as Ouachita's president and would help Ouachita become the university it is today.⁶⁸ One of Dr. Phelps' great contributions to the campus was the transformation of the campus through the construction of many new buildings. In 1954, an old World War II barracks building known as the "Tin Can Hall" by the troops received brick veneers and renovations. To honor Dr. and Mrs. W.S. Johnson who left the first "living will" to the college consisting of their estate, it received the name Johnson Hall and served as the Education Department and Graduate School Building.⁶⁹ President Phelps also developed a faculty-housing plan that enabled faculty members to purchase lots for one dollar if they built and lived in their homes until retirement. If the faculty member moved in less than five years, the school received the appraised value of the lot. The neighborhood came to be called "Ouachita Hills."⁷⁰

Providing housing for the increasing numbers of students remained the key purpose for adding new buildings. Accordingly, the school approved the demolition of Wallis Hall, a condemned men's dormitory, in order to build O.C. Bailey. Initially

⁶⁷ Arrington 106-107.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 107.

⁶⁹ President's Office Files-"Johnson Hall."

⁷⁰ Arrington 108.

utilized as a dormitory for men, O.C. Bailey later obtained renovations in order to be converted into a women's dormitory. In 1958, the school added another men's dormitory. Lakeside Hall was a smaller frame building that housed around fifty male students.⁷¹ The next year saw the addition of a new women's dorm that received the name of Blake Hall in honor of Estelle Blake, Ouachita's English teacher for fifty-one years.⁷²

While these new dormitories helped relieve the housing need, the need for renovations to several other buildings became increasingly apparent. The larger and more modern Birkett Williams Dining Hall replaced the old cafeteria in 1958. The students quickly christened the dining hall "Walt's Place" to express their love for the food service manager, Walt Kehoe. The new dining hall introduced the new feature of the cafeteria line. Previously, students sat at coed tables with a faculty member or senior and received meals at the table, like a family.⁷³ The old cafeteria received renovations and the new name of R.C. Daily Hall, and it housed classrooms and offices.⁷⁴ An unexpected danger of teaching in Daily Hall proved to be the result of the damp floors. Professors and students would find snakes on the floors and would have to kick them out of the way in order to continue on to class.⁷⁵ Two years earlier, a student, Ruth Lamb, drowned in the Ouachita River in a canoe accident because she was unable to swim. In order to prevent such a tragedy from ever occurring again, Dr. Phelps led a student campaign to build the Ruth Lamb Memorial Swimming Pool in 1958.⁷⁶ The pool sat next to Walton Gym,

⁷¹ Arrington 109.

⁷² Ibid. 110.

⁷³ President's Office Files-"Birkett Williams Dining Hall."

⁷⁴ Ibid. -"R.C. Daily Hall."

⁷⁵ Personal interview with Dr. Downs.

⁷⁶ President's Office Files-"Ruth Lamb Memorial Pool."

named after a beloved Ouachita football coach.⁷⁷ Riley Library received additions the next year to help meet the growing student population's needs.⁷⁸

The need for dormitories remained the main concern for the campus. In 1961, the construction finished on two new dorms. Because the original West Hall had been torn down to make way for the new women's dorm, the name transferred to the new men's dorm, built on the north side of the campus, across the ravine where the football bleachers used to be located.⁷⁹ Flippen Hall opened next to Terral-Moore Hall that same year. However, increases in student enrollment every year outgrew the new dorms quicker than they could be built.⁸⁰

In 1962, Berry Bible Building opened. Built mostly by campus crews with the help of Dr. Phelps, it stood on the site of the old President's Home, which had been condemned as a fire hazard.⁸¹ It would provide classrooms, offices, and a chapel for the Religion Department.⁸² In 1964, two more dormitories opened. In order to house more girls, the school built a hallway connecting Flippen Hall to Perrin Hall, the dorm located where the old West Hall had been. The new dormitory's name changed to Flippen-Perrin Hall. Next to the new West Hall across the ravine, Northwest Hall opened. The following year, Blake Hall had new expansions put in so that more girls could be housed. Dr. Phelps had plans made for the construction of at least two more dormitories within the next few years.⁸³

⁷⁷ Arrington 109.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 110.

⁷⁹ President's Office Files-"West Hall."

⁸⁰ Arrington 111.

⁸¹ Personal Interview with Dr. Everett.

⁸² Arrington 110.

⁸³ Ibid. 111.

The year 1965 was another significant year in the history of Ouachita Baptist College. President Phelps had asked the Board in 1963 to look into changing the school's name. On January 14, 1965, the Board of Trustees voted to change the charter and name of Ouachita Baptist College to Ouachita Baptist University. The North Central Association approved the change as well. The name change helped the already increasing student population grow even more by adding respectability to an already growing reputation of strong academics and caring faculty.⁸⁴ The next year saw several new additions to the school. The students and drama department had outgrown the old Little Theatre, so donations and another financial campaign created enough funds to build the new Verser Theatre. Unfortunately, the Little Theatre required demolition. To help meet all the academic needs of the students, Riley Library added an audio section, as well as a third floor the next year.⁸⁵

As the athletic department continued to grow and become more successful and popular, Dr. Phelps felt the school needed to construct another gymnasium. One night after a basketball game at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, Dr. Phelps told Coach Bill Vining that he would be meeting with an architect the next day to go over the plans for the new gym, and Coach Vining was to bring his plans for the gym the next day. Coach Vining stayed up late that night finishing the plans and presented them the next day. His worries seemed to be for nothing because the architect patterned the gym off of his plans. Thanks to several big donors, the dedication of the Winthrop Rockefeller Field House took place in 1966. The first season that the basketball team played in the new

⁸⁴ Arrington 120.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 110-111.

gym, they went all the way to nationals and received third place there.⁸⁶ Walton gym became the practice gym for the women's basketball team. Intramural teams used the gym as well. Students who wanted to play ball at night found ways around the locked doors.⁸⁷

Two additional dorms, Frances Crawford and Daniel Memorial Dormitories, would be the last buildings added to the campus in Dr. Phelps' administration. Both dorms contained two wings connected by a lobby, and a unique arrangement helped finance the construction of both. Built by the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company and leased back to Ouachita, ownership of the buildings reverted back to the school after 25 years.⁸⁸ Dr. Phelps resigned in 1969, and Dr. Donald Seward served as the interim president until the newly elected president Dr. Daniel Ross Grant could take office.⁸⁹

Dr. Dan Grant, having grown up on campus, had big plans for the school. The physical campus of the school appeared to him to be one of the biggest problems. The first solution to fixing that problem that he saw proved to be that of funding, so he called in Ben Elrod to lead the fundraising for a new building campaign. Dr. Grant came up with the idea of creating a long-range campus plan. The architect firm hired made plans to create a megastructure in the center of campus. A much-needed new student center would be the first part of the structure built. Flenniken had become inadequate and run down. Below in the post office, many of the glass doors covering the mailboxes that three

⁸⁶ Personal interview with Mr. Bill Vining.

⁸⁷ Personal interview with Mr. Hardin, November 2.

⁸⁸ Arrington 111.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 193-194.

or four students shared had become broken presenting a security risk.⁹⁰ However, in order to build the new student center, Ernest Bailey, Old North Dorm and Lakeside had to be torn down. By this time, the buildings had deteriorated to the point that the ground could be seen through cracks in the floors.⁹¹ In order to preserve the Bailey name on the campus, Northwest Dormitory received the name of Ernest Bailey Hall. The Home Economics Department that had previously been in Ernest Bailey moved to a house on Ouachita and 6th Street purchased by Ouachita for that purpose. The Hobgood House, built in 1907, had previously been the home of James Hobgood, a 1936 Ouachita graduate.⁹² The home proved to have more room for the Home Economics Department. The large brick house's two floors enabled students to live on the upper floor and practice their coursework on the ground floor.⁹³

In the summer of 1973, Evans Student Center and John G. Lile Hall opened. The new student center had three floors and housed the post office, bookstore, snack bar, and several lounges and banquet rooms. The Baptist Student Union and student government, as well as several other offices moved locations to the new student center.⁹⁴ J.G. Lile, the second building of the megastructure, became the location for the Business Department as well as the offices for data processing. The next year, the Hamilton Moses Science Building received renovations that resulted in it being renamed the Moses-Provine Science Center.⁹⁵ The students and professors of the chemistry department used to have a traditional water fight. Students would use the concrete porch to ambush people exiting

⁹⁰ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

⁹¹ Personal interview with Dr. Downs.

⁹² President's Office Files-"Home Economics Building."

⁹³ Personal interview with Mr. Hardin, March 27.

⁹⁴ President's Office Files-"Evans Student Center."

⁹⁵ Arrington 200.

the building. The water fights stopped when the department moved into the Jones Science Center.⁹⁶

Although major strides toward fixing the first problem of the physical campus had been made, more changes still needed to occur. It making no sense not to try to coordinate things with Henderson State University, Dr. Grant began having monthly breakfasts with Martin Garrison, Henderson's new president. One of the first joint projects the two schools did together created new street signs with both schools' names on them. They hoped to avoid the painting of the signs as had happened in previous years. Other arrangements led to the coordination of class schedules, as well as the creation of an online catalog for both libraries therefore allowing interlibrary loans for students of both schools.⁹⁷ The Joint Educational Consortium helped coordinate relations between the oftentimes rivals.⁹⁸

In 1975, construction on the third building of the megastructure commenced. Built on the site of Cannon Infirmary, the new Mabee Fine Arts Center held the departments of Music and Art.⁹⁹ Donations from the Mabee Foundation made the completion of the building possible. The Foundation also provided funds to build a bridge for students across the ravine, finish the new street around campus, and to help with funding for the construction of the fourth megastructure building, which would come to be called McClellan Hall.¹⁰⁰

The Blackmon family donated money to help renovate the field house. In thanks,

⁹⁶ Personal interview with Dr. Everett.

⁹⁷ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

⁹⁸ Arrington 194.

⁹⁹ President's Office Files-"Cannon Infirmary."

¹⁰⁰ Arrington 200.

it acquired the name of the Eddie Blackmon Field House. The new facilities provided dressing rooms for the football, track, and baseball teams as well as providing offices for the coaches.¹⁰¹ The need to keep up the campus and buildings led to the construction of several buildings for maintenance's use.¹⁰² The Mary Forbes Industrial Home for Young Ladies that had previously served as the building for home economics classes proved to be unsafe due to its old age, so the school tore it down and left the lot between Mitchell and Moses-Provine empty.¹⁰³

The plans for building the fourth part of the megastructure continued. In anticipation of the departments of sociology and psychology being moved to the new building, the school demolished the Faculty Hall, originally the field house, and turned it into additional parking for West Hall.¹⁰⁴ That same year, despite protests by Dr. Grant, the Board of Trustees approved an anonymous gift of a home on a generous five-acre lot to serve as the new president's home.¹⁰⁵ The following year, McClellan Hall opened. Named after Senator John L. McClellan, the building housed the departments of education and social sciences. It also housed the senator's personal papers for many years until they found a new home in the library.¹⁰⁶

As Ouachita neared its centennial anniversary, the campus continued to experience changes. In 1981, the Rockefeller Gymnasium transformed from a basketball gym into a large sports complex through multiple renovations and several other additions. In addition to an Olympic-sized swimming pool, racquetball courts, classrooms, offices,

¹⁰¹ President's Office Files-"Field House."

¹⁰² <http://www.obu.edu/about/history.asp>

¹⁰³ President's Office Files-"Mary Forbes."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. -"Faculty Hall."

¹⁰⁵ Arrington 201.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 200.

and a weight room, the new gym now had two practice gyms. The basketball arena obtained a remodeled and enlarged seating area.¹⁰⁷ The architect put openings in the floor that led to the lower level in order to make sure the lower level did not become isolated from the rest of the building.¹⁰⁸ Originally called the Ouachita Physical Education Center, or OPEC, the new Sturgis Physical Education Center received its new name in 1986, just three years after its dedication.¹⁰⁹ However, the new additions brought sad changes with them. Having outlived their use, the school demolished the old Walton gym as well as the Ruth Lamb Memorial Pool in 1985. Although the pool had been out of use for almost twenty years due to leaks and other problems, students still used Walton gym for intramural activities as well as a place to play pick-up games. While the students would miss the old gym, they welcomed the new changes.

The library expansion proved to be one of the last additions to the campus under Dr. Grant's administration. In order to create a library that would meet all the needs of students, the school created a committee that spent three days looking at six libraries of different universities. The committee came up with a unified idea of what they wanted and communicated with the architect through the entire process. The resulting new and improved library retained a section of the old library. Connected to the front of the old library, the new additions created a delightful mix of old and new.¹¹⁰ The library's name changed to the Riley-Hickingbotham Library to help commemorate Frank Hickingbotham, who gave a large donation that helped meet the needed construction

¹⁰⁷ Arrington 202.

¹⁰⁸ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

¹⁰⁹ President's Office Files-"SPEC."

¹¹⁰ Personal interview with Dr. Keck.

costs.¹¹¹ Mrs. Grant helped contribute to the new library through the suggestion of a circular stained-glass window that contained an “O,” flame, and book.¹¹² Dr. Johnny Wink mentioned the “red and golden, green and purple light” that the window cast into the library in his poem, “An Invitation” written specially for the dedication of the new library.¹¹³ Dr. Grant retired as president in 1987.

His replacement, Dr. Ben M. Elrod, continued in the steps of Dr. Grant in pushing Ouachita to continue to improve and grow. The same year that he accepted his presidential responsibilities, the campus experienced more changes. Blake Hall received renovations that transformed it into a two-story dormitory. A hallway connected the new dorm, named Perrin West, to Perrin Dorm.¹¹⁴ Not only did the school remodel the cafeteria, but it also renamed the SPEC swimming pool, the Waggoner Pool.¹¹⁵ To honor all the former presidents of Ouachita and Dr. Grant particularly, the school built the Daniel R. Grant Plaza, located near the Tiger.¹¹⁶ A busy year for new buildings, construction finally finished on the fifth building of the megastructure. Built next to J.G. Lile, the R.A. “Brick” Lile building honored the son of John G. Lile who was an alumni and former trustee. It housed computer science, English, history, and foreign languages departments.¹¹⁷

As Ouachita entered the 1990’s, the campus continued to change. To help create a more sophisticated entrance to Ouachita, the Roy and Christine Sturgis Charitable and Educational Trust of Malvern provided new campus signs. Choosing three key locations

¹¹¹ President’s Office Files-“Riley-Hickingbotham Library.”

¹¹² Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

¹¹³ Wink, “An Invitation.”

¹¹⁴ President’s Office Files-“Blake Hall.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid. -“SPEC” and “Birkett Williams Dining Hall.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid. -“Daniel R. Grant Plaza.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid. -“R.A. Lile Hall.”

to optimize the new signs, the school placed them in front of Cone Bottoms Hall, in front of the former West Dorm that is now called Conger Hall, and near the Heflin Tennis Center that was under construction at the time. The foundation also helped donate funds to help create a landscaped parking lot with a gazebo near the Frances Crawford Dorm. However, this required the razing of two former dormitories and classrooms, Terral-Moore and Johnson Halls.¹¹⁸ Johnny Heflin, an avid tennis player and good friend of Dr. Grant, provided blueprints that resulted in the construction of the Heflin Tennis Center.¹¹⁹ It opened in 1991, the same year that construction began on a new auditorium and performing arts center.

Ouachita purchased the Sloan House that had come to be known as the “Embassy” due to its use as housing for Henderson students. Built in 1893, the house possessed not only almost a century of history but also beautiful woodwork.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, the old house stood on the proposed site of the new fine arts center, and despite requests to salvage and remodel the home, the school tore it down in order to begin construction.¹²¹ The resulting Jones Performing Arts Center, opened and dedicated in 1992, has an auditorium that seats 1,488 people.¹²² Part of the funds raised for the construction of JPAC served to provide renovations for the now connected Verser Theatre.¹²³

In order to continue with additions to the campus, the demolition or renovation of many old buildings became necessary in the next few years. In order to make room for a

¹¹⁸ President’s Office Files-“Campus Entrance Signs.”

¹¹⁹ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

¹²⁰ Personal interview with Dr. Wink.

¹²¹ President’s Office Files-“Sloan House.”

¹²² <http://www.obu.edu/jpac/jpacseating-08-17-08.pdf>

¹²³ President’s Office Files-“JPAC.”

new men's dorm soon to be built, the school tore down Flenniken Memorial Hall and Conger Hall.¹²⁴ However, before Flenniken could be torn down, the Conger grave needed to be moved. After attempts to lift the mausoleum with a track hoe failed, possibly due to cracks resulting in water seepage, a crane was brought in to move it. The crane lifted the mausoleum onto an 18-wheeler flatbed truck. It was driven half a block to its current site on the bluff overlooking the Ouachita River behind Evans Student Center and then placed in the new hole. While the grave still remained on campus, the school wanted to continue to preserve the Conger name on campus so the name Conger Hall was placed on the dormitory formerly known as West Hall.¹²⁵ A much-needed new women's dormitory required that the old Home Economics House be torn down.¹²⁶ In 1993, a campaign to make the campus more appealing started. Part of the campaign led to the development of the Katie Speers Pavilion and Gardens, located near Evans Student Center and overlooking the Ouachita River. The Garden has several paths with benches along the route that enable people to enjoy the scenic view of the river.¹²⁷

Cone-Bottoms received a complete makeover and was transformed from a girls' dormitory into a modern office building in 1994. It now housed the administration, business, alumni, admissions, academic affairs, and many more offices.¹²⁸ Two new dormitories, almost identical in design, opened shortly after each other that same year. Anthony Residence Hall would serve as the new men's dormitory, while Maddox Residence Hall served as a women's dorm. The Tiger Den, constructed for students to

¹²⁴ President's Office Files-"Flenniken Memorial Hall."

¹²⁵ Personal interview with Mr. Hardin, March 27.

¹²⁶ President's Office Files-"Home Economics Building."

¹²⁷ Ibid. -"Riverfront Project."

¹²⁸ Ibid. -"Cone-Bottoms Dormitory."

use for various activities, opened in 1996. In 1997, construction on the International Flag Plaza and Fountain finished, the same year that the new science center opened. A five-story building, the Harvey Jones Science Center housed the biology, chemistry, math and computer science, and physics departments.¹²⁹ Because both Jones buildings were located across the street from the residential neighborhood of Cherry Street, the school's neighbors had several concerns. The noise level from campus increased, as well as exposing the school more, erasing the somewhat isolated feel previously felt by residents. However, the school tried to work out a compromise, moving the buildings farther away from the street and building the wall to separate the two communities.¹³⁰

Dr. Andrew Westmoreland became the fourteenth president of Ouachita in 1998. Although not as much as his predecessors, Dr. Westmoreland did help make changes to the physical campus. The A.U. Williams Stadium received renovations consisting of new burms, scoreboard, and a brick wall encircling the field in 2000. The Ouachita Commons opened the next year, providing a much larger dining area for students as well as a coffee shop connected to the library. The Crews Indoor Athletic Pavilion, a brand new indoor practice facility opened in 2003. It provided an indoor field for the baseball and football teams to practice on in cases of inclement weather.¹³¹

In January of 2006, Dr. Westmoreland accepted the president's position at Samford University. Dr. Rex M. Horne, Jr. officially became Ouachita's new president in June of that same year. He began his new job with the dedications of Hickingbotham Hall, the new business building and final part of the megastructure, and the Walker

¹²⁹ <http://www.obu.edu/about/history.asp>

¹³⁰ Personal interview with Dr. Keck.

¹³¹ Personal interview with Dr. Grant.

Conference Center, the newly renovated bottom floor of the Commons. While construction on Hickingbotham Hall took place, classes continued to be held in Lile Hall. One day, while several professors held a conference, a machine broke through the wall right by Dr. Jeffers.¹³² Needless to say, the conference finished quickly. The next year, Ouachita dedicated the Rachel Fuller and Ouachita Singers Memorial Amphitheatre. Located in the center of campus, it serves as a memorial to the members of the Ouachita Singers and their families who suffered through the crash of American Airlines Flight 1420 in 1999.¹³³ Although the construction seems to have come to a temporary halt, plans have already been made for a new entrance, new pedestrian bridge, and new dorms.¹³⁴ Students might soon see signs of construction, as the first new dorm will hopefully open by January of 2009.¹³⁵

From its humble beginning in one used building, Ouachita Baptist University has changed dramatically. As the years have gone by, changes in society and in the school itself have demanded that the buildings change too. The two World Wars enabled the school to expand and utilize barrack buildings as classroom buildings. As the curriculum called for more departments and as the enrollment grew, new construction became vitally important to the continued success of the school. Generous gifts from alumni and friends enabled Ouachita to continue to grow and add more functional and modern buildings to the campus. Changes in the economy caused the price of construction to change, from under \$1 million for Evans Student Center and Lile Hall to more than \$6 million for

¹³² Personal interview with Dr. Auffenberg.

¹³³ <http://www.obu.edu/news/story.asp?ID=2300>

¹³⁴ *Signal*, May 3, 2007, p 1-2.

¹³⁵ *Signal*, April 19, 2007.

Hickingbotham Hall.¹³⁶ Although the names, locations, prices, forms, and material of the buildings look different, the purpose of the buildings remains the same: to provide an environment that is conducive to the learning and growth of students, academically as well as spiritually.

¹³⁶ Personal interview with Phil Hardin, March 27.

Bibliography

Arkansas Gazette 9 Apr. 1886: 1.

"Arkansas School for the Blind." The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. 22 Sept. 2007. <<http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2442>>.

Arnold, H. B., Norma S. Arnold, and Wendy B. Richter. We Were There, Clark Countians in World War II. Baltimore: Genealogical Co., Inc., 1995. 229.

Arrington, Michael E. Ouachita Baptist University: the First 100 Years. Little Rock: August House, 1985.

Auffenberg, Tom. Personal interview. 1 Nov. 2007.

A.U. Williams Athletic Field. Ts. President's Office Files.

Blake Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Birkett Williams Dining Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Bookstore. Ts. President's Office Files.

Campus Entrance Signs. Ts. President's Office Files.

Cannon Infirmary. Ts. President's Office Files.

Cone-Bottoms Dormitory. Ts. President's Office Files.

Conger Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Daniel R. Grant Plaza. Ts. President's Office Files.

Downs, Bill. Personal interview. 28 March 2008.

Evans Student Center. Ts. President's Office Files.

Everett, Wilbur W. Personal interview. 24 Oct. 2007.

Faculty Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Field House. Ts. President's Office Files.

"Fire Destroys Cone Home." Ouachita Signal 20 Oct. 1917.

Flenniken Memorial Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Grant, Daniel R. Personal interview. 17 Sep. 2007.

Hardin, Phil. Personal interview. 2 Nov. 2007.

---, 27 March 2008.

"History of Ouachita." Ouachita Baptist University.
<<http://www.obu.edu/about/history.asp>>.

Home Economics Building. Ts. President's Office Files.

Johnson Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Jones Performing Arts Center. Ts. President's Office Files.

Jones, Rebecca, and Jennifer Byrd. "Ouachita Will Dedicate the Rachel Fuller and Ouachita Singers Memorial Amphitheatre." Ouachita Baptist University News. 5 Apr. 2007. <<http://www.obu.edu/news/story.asp?ID=2300>>.

Keck, George. Personal interview. 21 Sep. 2007.

Lab Building. Ts. President's Office Files.

Little Theatre. Ts. President's Office Files.

Mary Forbes Industrial Home for Young Ladies. Ts. President's Office Files.

McBeth, W. Francis. Personal interview. 8 Dec. 2007.

Meador, Frances B. Personal interview. 9 Nov. 2007.

Mitchell Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Old Main. Ts. President's Office Files.

Old North Dorm. Ts. President's Office Files.

President's Home. Ts. President's Office Files.

R.A. Lile Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

R.C. Daily Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Riley-Hickingbotham Library. Ts. President's Office Files.

Riverfront Project. Ts. President's Office Files.

Ruth Lamb Memorial Pool. Ts. President's Office Files.

Sloan House. Ts. President's Office Files.

Smethers, Will. "City Gives Preliminary Approval Entrance Plans, Ouachita Considers Dorm Improvements." Signal 3 May 2007: 1-2.

Smethers, Will. "Planning Underway to Construct New Housing on North Campus by 2009." Signal 19 Apr. 2007: 1+.

Southern Standard 4 Feb. 1943.

Sturgis Physical Education Center. Ts. President's Office Files.

Tiger. Ts. President's Office Files.

Vining, Bill. Personal interview. 3 Dec. 2007.

Walton Gym. Ts. President's Office Files.

West Hall. Ts. President's Office Files.

Wink, Johnny. "An Invitation."

Wink, Johnny. Personal interview. 28 March 2008.