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ALBION'S McMILLAN CHEMICAL LABORATORY TO BE RAZED

ALBION, Mich. -- Soon memories and souvenirs will be all that will be left of the McMillan Chemical Laboratory on the Albion College campus.

Demolition crews are scheduled to begin razing the building right after Christmas. They expect it to be down within four or five days and hauled away in another three weeks.

The colonial, four-story brick structure on the southwest corner of the campus quadrangle has been in almost constant use by science students since it was build in 1893. The last College structure to be erected in the 19th Century, it was financed by a \$25,000 gift from the late U.S. Sen. James McMillan.

The McMillan gift was the culmination of some strong "missionary" work by Dr. Delos Fall, then professor of chemistry at Albion, and Washington Gardner, who was at various times an attorney, Methodist minister, professor, financial agent and vice president of the College, member of Congress, banker and industrialist.

McMillan's original pledge of \$20,000 was later raised by \$5,000. The total cost was \$24,850 for the building and another \$7,500 to furnish and outfit it.

The heirs of Sen. McMillan then gave another \$500 in 1905 to finance redecorating and renovating the building.

A major renovation of laboratory facilities and the balance room was financed less than 20 years ago by a \$25,000 gift from Dr. and Mrs. Mark E. Putnam.

The late Dr. Putnam, a 1910 Albion graduate, was executive vice president of the Dow Chemical Co. as well as being a member of the College's Board of Trustees when he died in 1960.

The chemistry building in the College's \$3 million Science Center -- just put into operation last fall -- also was a memorial to Dr. Putnam from his widow, Mrs. Charlotte Sheldon Putnam, and their children, Mrs. Ruth Putnam Caldwell and Mark S. Putnam.

As originally planned the McMILLAN building, with its stone foundation and brick exterior and interior walls, housed a boiler and fuel room in the basement, along with a technical lab, storage vault, research room and gas storage facilities.

The first floor provided organic and quantitative chemistry lab facilities as well as faculty offices and private labs. The second floor housed the qualitative lab, lecture room and apparatus room.

On the third floor was to be a chemistry museum, a meeting room for the College chemical society, research facilities and storage space.

The contents of the cornerstone, which was laid in May, 1893, included such memorabilia as the College yearbook, faculty and trustee names, the College history, description of the building -- which at the time was considered to be one of the finest in the Midwest -- and its facilities, as well as a list of contributions by alumni and College groups.

Other items included the New York, Northwestern and Michigan Christian Advocates, the Epworth Herald and Handbook, the College newspaper, the Pleiad; the Albion Evening Recorder and the Mirror, a copy of the city charter, the College YMCA constitution and membership list, a copy of the New Testament, and a program of the day's events, complete with the autograph of Bishop H.W. Warren, who was speaker for the occasion.

When it was originally built and until the Epworth Physics Laboratory was erected in 1912, the chemistry students had to share the third floor with Albion's prospective physicists.

It was just a few years later -- in the 1920's -- when fire severely damaged Robinson Hall on the east edge of the campus that the McMillan building provided temporary class space for Albion's young biologists and journalists.

Among Albion chemistry students who have gone to make names for themselves, in addition to Dr. Putnam, is Dr. B. Smith Hopkins, discoverer of the element illinium. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Albion, and then went on to get a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1906.

Another is Dr. Floyd Bartell, a 1905 Albion graduate, who went on to the University of Michigan to become an outstanding chemistry professor.

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