



Alumni Hall has been an integral part of Alfred University for 120 odd years. It has served as a chapel, a gymnasium, a classroom building, but most importantly as a symbol of Alfred University.



One of the two broken beams which was discovered on Thursday. The 2x4 in the foreground and others like it were put in after the damage was discovered.

'Fiat' probes Alumni Hall's condition

By DAN BLOOM and JOHN LUCADAMO

Last Monday, after having heard wide-spread rumors of structural deficiencies in Alfred University's oldest building, one which has come to stand almost as a symbol of the University, four members of the editorial board journeyed up to Alumni Hall to see and photograph whatever they might find.

Our first concern was to discover the whereabouts of two broken beams. To this end, we climbed two ladders which lead to a small catwalk spanning the length of Alumni Hall from which we hoped to see the damage.

We did see the broken beams and were quite surprised by their size. Hand-hewn, the roof supports were a foot square.

Scrutinizing the situation further, we noted the presence of new lumber in various places in the attic. Presumably these boards are there to ameliorate the damage.

Since we are all of a non-technical nature, we could not determine the extent of the damage. Nevertheless, we were surprised by the presence of these broken beams and other defects there, in our view.

We noted the presence of long cracks in several of the roof beams as well as several instances of struts, supporting the roof beams being out of position by several inches.

Continuing our tour of the attic, we moved to the front of the building and found what used to be an apartment. There were several rooms which contained an inordinate amount of junk.

Furthermore, we discovered a program from a play dated 1953. Obviously this area of Alumni Hall had not been cleaned out for a number of years. This assumption may be substantiated by the presence of several articles of clothing which have been well chewed by rodents.

We thought that this accumulation of refuse might constitute a fire hazard.

Laboring under this premise we decided to exit to the theater downstairs and examine the escape routes. We noted on Friday night, the fire marshal on duty spent three minutes trying to open one fire escape window.

We found the doors leading to the fire escape opened easily; easy opening was also true of the windows in the main seating area.

We were alarmed, however, by the absence of an "exit" light or red light to denote the window to be used in case of fire. We think that this is a safety hazard, since it might be difficult to read the painted sign in the dark.

We are under the impression that other safety precautions are also lacking: 1) all three aisles are narrow, particularly the two outer ones; 2) there is no adequate fire escape in the front of the hall, save an ill lit, winding stairway on the left side; 3) there are no emergency light in Alumni Hall which would illuminate it in case of power failure; and 4) the downstairs classroom doors open inward.

Imagining there was a fire, we prepared to descend the fire escape on the west side. It is quite steep and might be treacherous to climb down particularly if there were ice on it as on Wednesday.

We also noted that the outside rail is quite shaky. Finally, although there is a light on the fire escape, we thought that it would be ineffective at night.

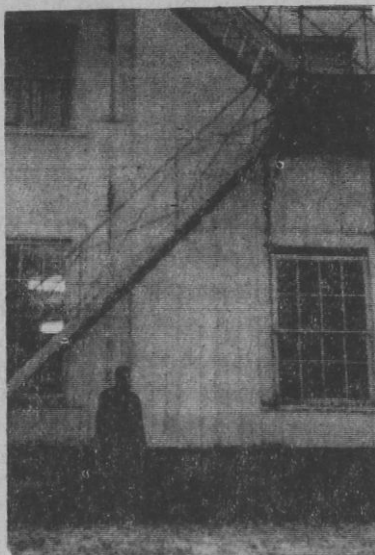
On terra firma once again we looked at the outside of the building. We found that parts of the foundation beneath the fire escape were crumbling. We also took note of the obvious fact that Alumni Hall needs a paint job. Our conclusion was borne out when we circumnavigated the building.

We then entered the ground floor, bent on checking this area. The men's lavatory is particularly inadequate. We thought, furthermore, that the wash basin was quite filthy.

Entering one of the classrooms we noted how dirty it was; mostly ordinary grime with a few cigarette butts. We further



This painted sign would be difficult to see in the dark. The exit leads to the fire escape.



The fire escape, because of its steep slope, would be difficult to descend under icy conditions.

viewed the abominable condition of the desks in the classrooms.

The faculty members are no better off, however, because their working conditions are overcrowded as well. Indeed, one office has three inhabitants and this office also contains an English department telephone which is on a party line with the Brick kitchen. Suffice it to say, the offices are overcrowded particularly when students attempt to discuss something with their professor.

Before leaving Alumni Hall after our tour, we looked in the closet across from Dr. David Ohara's office and noted that it contained a good amount of refuse. Again we thought this constituted a fire hazard.

Our excursion through Alumni Hall acquainted us first hand with its many problems. Although we are not engineers and profess no knowledge concerning structures, what we saw in the building on Monday startled us.

We do not want Alumni Hall to be condemned: this is not our purpose. Rather, our design is to make known the problems contained in the building.

Most of these deficiencies are obvious—lack of "exit" lamps, inadequate lavatories, poor seating equipment—and this is what amazed us: how could the University allow its English building, its theater, its oldest building, its symbol to deteriorate so much?

To us, Alumni Hall is Alfred's most beautiful building. From across the valley, it is a wonderful sight: its tiled roof and spire with the quill pen surrounded by trees on the opposite hill. And yet, coming close to the building we see it in need of paint and other restoration.

What are we doing to save our symbol? We smoke in it and janitors tell us not to; yet there are piles of inflammable material lying around. Granted, we feel that smoking is out of order, but so are the building's deficiencies.

Again we wish to reiterate our purpose: to save Alumni Hall. We want it neither burned nor condemned. We do not want it to become a building off limits or a memory. We want it to continue as our campus' focal point and symbol. We want it to be an integral part of the University.

In short, we would like to see something done to preserve Alumni Hall. It may not be falling down around us, but little is being done to save it.



FIAT LUX

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Cornellian historian has problems also

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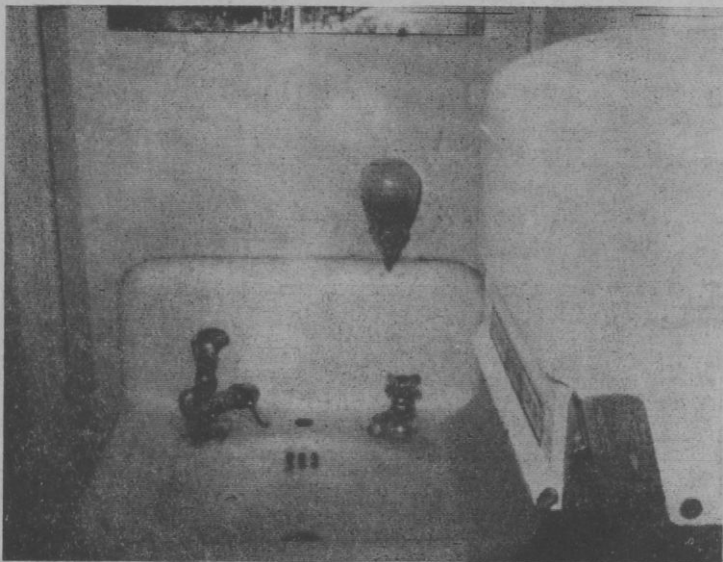
Cornell University's West-Sibley Hall had a jewel of a panitor—for a couple of hours, anyway, as Historian Clinton Rossiter, 49, scrambled around with bucket and scrub brush. Rossiter doesn't think the hired help who are supposed to clean up the 100-year-old home of the government and history departments have been paying

attention to his office. "The janitors have no time to clean up here," Rossiter announced, as he staged a protest "scrub-in" with six of his students and three other professors.

"They're too busy watering the potted palms over at the Business School. I think this whole situation deflects the priorities on this campus. The sciences must work in antiseptic surroundings, but the humanities can live in dirt."



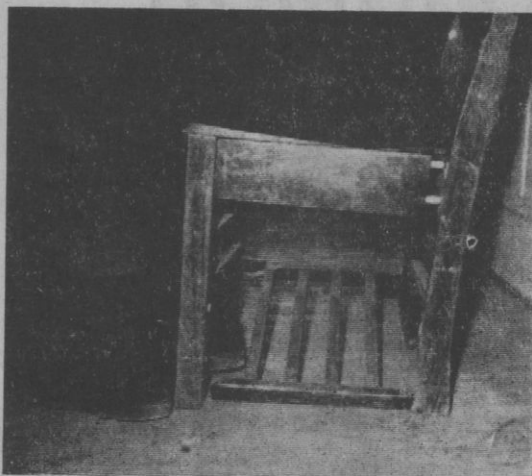
Dirty sinks, shoddy furniture, and refuse upstairs



Not Harlem but rather the men's lavatory sink in Alumni Hall.



This photograph was taken on Monday and shows the accumulation of refuse in the attic. Interestingly, a play program dated 1953 was found in the rubble.



Not atypical, this desk has many counterparts equally as shoddy.



This is a photograph of the same room the next day. A considerable improvement was made yet some of the debris was merely thrown into an adjacent room.



Above this lighting pole is where a beam broke. Note how the pipe was drive through the balcony.

AH 'has distinctive style'

When Dr. Ernest Finch, the present chairman of the English department, first came to Alfred, the campus was visited by the reputable author John Dos Passos.

What Dos Passos was most impressed by was Alumni Hall, as it was the only building "with a distinctive style and personality."

To Dr. Finch it is Alumni Hall that is the most appealing to anyone associated with literature in any way; it is both a distinctive feature of the campus and the respected home of the English department.

"Alumni Hall needs refurbishing, to be sure. The inside classrooms should be renovated to match the general architecture of the building."

"As it is now, this building is being used for too many things." Dr. Finch gestured to his small shared office: "This place is used for a storeroom and dressing room for the play productions!"

When asked his opinions of the possible demolition of the building, he replied, "I am told by some that the foundation is weak. But this must be able to be remedied. I just can't imagine the campus without Alumni Hall."

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By DONALD B. MCKENZIE

Ed. note: Dr. McKenzie is an associate professor of English Literature.

There is a certain misguided, presumptuous, unreasonable faction within our community, no doubt funded by CIA and CORE, which asserts, most injudiciously, that the 'sentimental' cause for saving an already defunct structure is paramount and necessary.

Such a foolish matter of the heart, albeit aesthetic, is certainly too costly in this, an era of utility, mass-production, and implementation of essential programs. Heating, maintaining, and cleaning a riddled ruin, just to please a minority of fickle students, usually freshmen who understand, appreciate, and merge with visual decay, are a facile luxury which we can scarcely afford.

Atmosphere of decadence

Then too, any reasonable, clear-thinking informant knows that whatever literature of books, especially the modern liberal ilk, which are viewed (some invidiously say studied) in that abandoned edifice, deserve their proper atmosphere of decadence and debility.

Advantageous it is that even the darkness of Milton and the rages of Pound have their unique setting therein. In what more profound surroundings can one so clearly ascertain and perceive the collapse of Western bourgeoisie values, traditions, and the notorious Civilization Course—bigger and better than life, films, or microfilm documents!

Students will learn succinct-

ly that dirt is abhorrent; cleanliness, godly.

Any right-thinking intellect recognizes the profound utility of close-communication. Interchange of ideas and checking on plagiarized term papers are facilitated quickly by having at least two faculty members conjoined at proximate desks there.

Togetherness is beneficial

Isolated offices and conference spaces tend, as modern psychology informs us, to breed unwholesome fanciful ideas, malignancies of the spirit, uncorrected individualism, and anti-social behavior.

Students and faculty alike learn the prerequisites for modern corporate and graduate behavior, for by being overheard, watched, and checked, they are early indoctrinated into the latest techniques of useful surveillance, and situated in properly dingy quarters, they quickly conduct themselves accordingly to resist subversive and threatening ideologies.

Holds no attraction

More pragmatic applications come from the rapid demise, now assuredly imminent, of Alumni Hall—which has neither portraits nor palms to attract the trustees, neither Muzak nor air-conditioning to appeal to administrators, neither drinking fountains nor spirits to refresh the undergraduates—the collapse and attendant snuffing-out of a few expendable lives would appreciably benefit the languishing memorial funds for the library and

simultaneously increase scholarship opportunities for more worthy students.

Likewise, the wreck could then be applicable for Urban Renewal Funds or at least a Rockefeller Grant for Restoration with the precedent of Williamsburg before us.

Furthermore, because of the ubiquitous smoking in what remains of a useful building, the possible combustion therefrom would dramatically corroborate for unbelievers the U.S. Dept. of Health's statistics on the hazards to health, as well as elicit from non-believers a manifestation that God is not Dead, for he has acted unerringly in his wisdom by striking down Man's folly and presumption and at most only 20% of the largest department on campus, though he in his abject mercy spares a remnant of 80% to perpetuate his glory and lessons elsewhere, humbled and contrite.

Thus we could realistically have at last a gloriously razed area to alleviate the pressing parking problems of our campus—a terraced place in the sun, one would hopefully dream, to be used at all hours for a drive-in movie spot during the evening, which would bring forth as much revenue as the daytime parking fees, convocations outdoors, fraternity block parties, and more healthful outdoor classes. Then and only then will we finally appreciate the heritage which is ours and scorn the income which we have wasted heretofore on silly sentiment.