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Gettysburg College Fountain

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Description

When visiting Gettysburg most people are surprised to find a college nestled amongst the acres of battlefields and quaint tourist town. The few that find their way to the campus are taken back by its unique array of architecture, beautifully manicured lawns, and a fountain right in the middle of all of it. Prospective students often have the same reaction. On paper Gettysburg College seems like any other school, but usually once a student visits, they fall in love with the with the campus, charming in every shade of green in spring, and ablaze with vibrant oranges and reds in the fall. It is hard to imagine a better place to spend a college career. The one element that ties the campus together aesthetically is the simple splendor of the fountain. It is not an elaborate piece, a simple circle with a sitting wall and a few jets of water, but somehow it manages to draw viewers in to revel in its simplicity. [*excerpt*]

Course Information:

- Course Title: *HIST 300: Historical Method*
- Academic Term: Spring 2006
- Course Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Birkner '72

Hidden in Plain Sight is a collection of student papers on objects that are "hidden in plain sight" around the Gettysburg College campus. Topics range from the Glatfelter Hall gargoyles to the statue of Eisenhower and from historical markers to athletic accomplishments. You can download the paper in pdf format and click "View Photo" to see the image in greater detail.

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Hidden in Plain Sight, fountain, J. William Warehime, Masters Hall

Disciplines

Public History | United States History

Campus Location

Masters Hall

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Hidden in Plain Sight:
Gettysburg College Fountain

History 300

Historical Methods

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By

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Spring 2006

When visiting Gettysburg most people are surprised to find a college nestled amongst the acres of battlefields and quaint tourist town. The few that find their way to the campus are taken back by its unique array of architecture, beautifully manicured lawns, and a fountain right in the middle of all of it. Prospective students often have the same reaction. On paper Gettysburg College seems like any other school, but usually once a student visits, they fall in love with the campus, charming in every shade of green in spring, and ablaze with vibrant oranges and reds in the fall. It is hard to imagine a better place to spend a college career. The one element that ties the campus together aesthetically is the simple splendor of the fountain. It is not an elaborate piece, a simple circle with a sitting wall and a few jets of water, but somehow it manages to draw viewers in to revel in its simplicity.

So what is the story behind this structure? It is a focal point of the campus and it's fitted with a plaque memorializing people, there must be a story behind it, right? Well sort of, there is a story there, but it is an unexpected one. First of all on the plaque, there is a date of 1950, so looking at it you might assume it was built in that year, but it was built in 1991. Then you might see the names and assume they were central to the college in some way, that they were very important people, but they were not. They were friends of the man who wanted it built. That's right, it was not the college that built it, it was a private donor who wanted to make the campus look better. The man was John William Warehime, a wealthy alumnus who graduated in the class of 1950. During his time at Gettysburg, Warehime was an economics major, a member of Alpha Tau Omega

fraternity and Pi Lambda Sigma (an honorary fraternity for economic and political science majors). He was also on the *Gettysburgian* staff, in the Spanish club, and worked on the college radio station, WWGC.¹ He was the typical college student. The plaque on the fountain is a memorial to the class of 1950 and in particular, four men in that class. The names listed on the plaque are that of Charles A. Musselman, James K. Long, J. Calvin Lang, and Phillip H. Waltersdorf. The reason for their names on the plaque is not because of any significant contribution to the college. However they were classmates and friends of Mr. Warehime and had died at a young age. As Mr. Warehime commented in the *Gettysburgian*, “three of the men were in my fraternity [Alpha Tau Omega]. They were all in my graduating class.”² Not only does the fountain not have an interesting story of origin, the college actually did not want to build it. The development offices had initially resisted Warehime’s requests but ultimately gave in when he refused to give any more money until a fountain was built. Warehime was a very generous donor to the college. In fact he was a senior fellow and within the Cupola Society Lifetime Membership Circle, he was a member of the “professor’s circle,” meaning that he donated between \$100,000 and \$249,999 to the college.³ In addition, when a plan was finally made to install the fountain, it did not resemble what Warehime had in mind. He said, “I would have like something in cast iron with tiers for the water to come out.”⁴ The

¹ *Gettysburg College Spectrum* (Nashville, TN: Benson Printing Co., 1951):47.

² Ann Marie Schropp, “Renovations on Campus to Include 26 Foot Fountain” (*Gettysburgian*, April 25, 1991): 1-2.

³ “Report of Gifts 1989-1990” in *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, January 1990: 4&11.

⁴ Ann Marie Schropp, “Renovations on Campus to Include 26 Foot Fountain,” *Gettysburgian*, April 25, 1991, 1.

building of the fountain became more of a “moral victory” for Warehime than anything else.⁵ Great story, right? Some rich guy bribed his way to getting a fountain put on campus that the school did not want and he did not like, to commemorate a few of his old college cronies. So it seems that, historically, the fountain is nowhere near as interesting as one might think, at least not at first glance anyway.

What happens if one digs a little deeper, peels away a few layers? Could a seemingly shallow object have more behind it? In this case, it certainly can. It is a doorway, a symbol to a major part of the college’s long and prestigious history. Looking at the dates involved, one might first be drawn to 1950, and it seems like good lead. But after investigating there is still no real story behind the fountain. At that time things were happening on campus, veterans were returning after their service in the Second World War and the college was trying to get off of its wartime operation, but nothing huge (pertaining to the fountain). The class and men listed on the plaque, sure they were all great people, but nothing significant can be found here either. As we know there is nothing extraordinary about the donor. So, what is left? The date that it was built, 1991, is the key to the investigation.

The late 1980’s and early 1990’s were turbulent times throughout the world; almost nothing was the same as it had been ten years earlier. In 1987, DNA was first used to connect convicts to crimes; scientists now could prove for certain things that they could not prove before. In 1988, Pan Am flight 103 was

⁵ Ibid.

bombed in retaliation of a US bombing of Libya signaling a start to high-tech international terrorism. The Berlin Wall came down in 1989 which was a symbol of the fall of communism, student protesters were massacred in Tiananmen Square for demanding democracy, and the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill occurred, causing incalculable damage to the environment.⁶ The Hubble telescope was launched, connecting outer space to earth in 1990. 1991 brought with it the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the South African Apartheid, and the start of operation Desert Storm, thus a whole new generation of political unrest began. In 1992 the Cold War officially ended and the US was now ensured its place as *the* world super power. Plus, the internet was beginning to grow exponentially, allowing information to be shared quickly and easily almost anywhere, making the world smaller and more connected than ever before.⁷ Essentially, it was a time of tremendous growth; international terrorism was beginning to become more prevalent, the environment was being considered even less in the pursuit of technological advances, political systems were breaking down and changing, and technology was of the utmost priority throughout the world, things were now possible that few ever dreamed of. What does this have to do with the fountain on Gettysburg's campus? Everything.

The college was trying to adjust and adapt to the change. In the spring of 1987, enrollment in the college was approximately 1,850 students and there was 144 full time faculty members, 88% of whom held a doctorates degree (or highest

⁶"20th Century History: Timeline of the Twentieth Century: 1980-1989," <http://history1900s.about.com/library/time/bltime1980.htm>.

⁷"20th Century History: Timeline of the Twentieth Century: 1990-1999," <http://history1900s.about.com/library/time/bltime1990.htm>.

degree available) in their field. The campus itself included 200 acres and 44 buildings.⁸ By the spring of 1992, just 5 years later, these numbers increased rather dramatically. There was an enrollment of 1,900 students and 154 faculty members with 94% holding the highest degree in their field. The campus still comprised 200 acres, but 16 new buildings were added, making the total 60.⁹ In addition the college's applicant pool was growing and becoming more selective. An article in the autumn 1991 edition of Gettysburg Alumni Magazine stated, "Gettysburg's reputation for the quality of teaching has attracted more student applicants. While colleges and universities across the country in recent years have experienced significant declines in applications, Gettysburg has seen its student applications rise from 2,000 in 1980, to 2,500 in 1985, and to 3,500 in 1991."¹⁰ The college needed to expand both physically and academically if it wanted to keep up with swift changes surrounding it.

Many of the college's building are older buildings, could not contain the growing population. But the college did not have the means to erect any new buildings. Instead, it renovated their existing buildings and tried to acquire preexisting buildings in close proximity to the school. Between 1990 and 1992, renovations took place in almost every academic building on campus. For example, heating systems were revamped in Glatfelter, McKnight, Penn Hall,

⁸ *Gettysburg College: Course Catalogue*, 77:5 (Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College, April 1987): 15.

⁹ *Gettysburg College: Course Catalogue*, 82:2 (Gettysburg, PA: Gettysburg College, April 1992): 14.

¹⁰ "Gettysburg College Announces a New Campaign: Sharing a Distinctive Vision," *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3, ed. Jerold Wikoff (Autumn 1991): 10.

Schmucker, and the white house.¹¹ In 1991, “2200 feet of steam lines were installed to replace old ones”¹² in the College Union Building (CUB). The Interior of Schmucker was renovated and a new studio annex was built. Masters Hall was being renovated and expanded and a new entrance was being constructed to serve as a backdrop for the fountain.¹³ Breidenbaugh and Weidensall both had all of their windows replaced and the athletic department was moved from Plank Gym into the newly completed Bream-Wright-Hauser Athletic Complex. In Glatfelter Hall the exterior elevator was completed and the basement was redone in order to accommodate an “expanding academic computer program.”¹⁴ In addition, the attics of Glatfelter, Weidensall, and McKnight were remodeled to house faculty offices and additional classrooms. Academic facilities were not the only buildings being addressed, housing issues also needed to be addressed as the college expanded. In the spring of 1991, 400 students were living off campus, the college wanted to decrease this number and make Gettysburg a primarily residential college. Once again the college did not have the money to build any additional structures. In May 1990, the college had obtained a local motel from Kermit and Renee Paxton. The newly renovated hotel, known as Paxton Hall, could house about 60 students. Then in the summer of 1990, George Olinger donated the Ice House Complex to Gettysburg, which consisted of seven buildings that were to be used as housing for students and temporary faculty members. Ice House also housed meeting rooms for sororities. The

¹¹ “Around the Campus,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 80:1, (January 1990): 4.

¹² Ann Marie Schropp, “Renovations on Campus to Include 26 Foot Fountain” (*Gettysburgian*, April 25, 1991): 2.

¹³ *Ibid.* 1-2.

¹⁴ “Around the Campus,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 80:1, (January 1990): 4.

largest of the buildings would be turned into student apartments housing upwards of 100 students. By having the sorority rooms in the complex, rooms were also made available in Huber and Hanson Halls, allowing for even more housing. The Majestic was also renovated to house an additional 60 students. So basically, there was somewhere around 250 new available places to live and not a single new building built.¹⁵ The college also attempted to make the campus more unified by removing the railroad track running through it. In a deal made with the National Park Service, the tracks were moved to the outskirts of the campus. After much controversy, with even more to come, “the last train ran through campus at 5:45pm on May 22nd and in the next 90 days [from September 5, 1991] all of the track will be removed.”¹⁶

The look of the campus was not all that was changing at Gettysburg at the time. The college was also overhauling its academics. As the *Gettysburg Alumni Bulletin* describes it,

“despite [its] considerable achievements Gettysburg College today faces new challenges as it seeks to sustain its vision for the students of the future. The college was founded in the horse-and-buggy era and reached maturity in the heyday of the automobile and must now adapt to the realities of an ever-increasing technological society of computers and electronic instruments. To educate the individuals who will shape and mold the twenty-first century, Gettysburg must develop effective new programs, firmly based on its liberal arts tradition, but clearly focused on the needs of tomorrow.”¹⁷

¹⁵ “250 New Beds on Campus-But No New Residence Halls,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:2, (Spring 1991): 2.

¹⁶ William F. Railing, “Gettysburg College Faculty minutes” (September 5, 1991) 4.

¹⁷ “Gettysburg College Announces a New Campaign: Sharing a Distinctive Vision,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3 (Autumn 1991): 10.

The college initiated a \$75 million plan know as the Campaign for Gettysburg to address this.¹⁸ One major part of the campus update was the expansion of the college network. When Musselman Library opened in 1981, there was a single computer in it. By 1991, plans were being made to link the entire campus through a network. By the winter of 1990, most administrative buildings were wired, by the fall of 1991 the remaining administrative buildings and several residence halls were linked, and by the fall of 1992, the entire campus was linked.¹⁹ Major changes were also made to the curriculum, but these changes were not “changed for the sake of change. A course of study is intended to meet the needs of the time and the college curricula changes by necessity as society itself undergoes transformation.”²⁰ For example, the college developed a program know as interdisciplinary studies.²¹ The point of this program was to “help students learn the important technique of combining intellectual tools from various disciplines to analyze and solve today's multi-dimensional problems.”²² The program is seemingly successful as it is still a required piece of the curriculum. The social structure of the campus was also evolving. The office of student life changed to the office of college life and moved to the CUB. The office wanted to be more then social coordinators; they wanted to make a strong

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jeanne Kostishack, “Technology Transforms Teaching and Communications on the Gettysburg Campus,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3 (Autumn 1991): 18.

²⁰ “Interdisciplinary Studies Promises to Transform Gettysburg Curriculum,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3, ed. Jerold Wikoff (Autumn 1991): 15.

²¹ Another, slightly unrelated, but interesting addition to the curriculum was peer education made possible by grants, such as the Pew grant, which provided stipends to advanced students to lead small cooperative group discussions. For example 2 students from the college’s Honor Code commission came into a History 300 class to discuss plagiarism using the example of Stephen Oates book, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Example drawn from: “A Trial in Progress,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 82:1, (Winter 1992): 7.

²² “Interdisciplinary Studies Promises to Transform Gettysburg Curriculum,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3 (Autumn 1991): 15.

connection between everyday life and the classroom. As the then interim dean of the college, Julie Ramsey, stated, “We intend to affect significant change in the dominant undergraduate culture at this institution, helping students achieve an interaction and balance of their academics with other aspects of their lives.”²³ An example of this ideology can be seen with the creation of the Center for Public Service (CPS). The center was created to “coordinate and promote service oriented programs.... Such programs will defiantly help to strengthen each graduate’s resolve to address the problems that confront large segments of out society.”²⁴ In this way students can connect their learning and skills to the “real” world around them and they can in turn relate these experiences back to their classroom learning.

So what does the fountain represent? Does it contribute any meaning to the campus? No, it has no epic story behind it and it does not commemorate any superhero. But at the same time yes, the fountain is an important symbol of the college’s “coming of age.” It represents all of the changes that the college went through to bring it into the next millennium. How appropriate then, that it is a water feature, constantly moving, fluid, and dynamic, just like the campus and the world around it. It is also a good example of how an object, one that is “hidden in plain sight” can open one’s eyes to a whole new world of information. Just when you think all leads are dead, there is one (in this case the date of installation) that leads us to a place that we may or may not have expected to end up.

²³ “The Evolution of College Life,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 82:1 (Winter 1992): 3.

²⁴ “Lending a Hand is Becoming an Integral Part of Every Gettysburg Students’ Education,” *Gettysburg College Bulletin: Alumni Issue*, 81:3 (Autumn 1991): 21.