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The History of Glatfelter Hall

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The History of Glatfelter Hall

Abstract

A history of one of the oldest buildings on the Gettysburg College Campus, Glatfelter Hall. The paper covers the time period from the construction of the building in 1888 to after its first major renovation in 1929.

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Glatfelter, college history

Disciplines

Anthropology | Cultural History | History | Social and Cultural Anthropology | Social History | United States History

Comments

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The History of Glatfelter Hall

This paper is about the history of Glatfelter Hall, a building on the Gettysburg College Campus. Gettysburg College is a four-year institute of higher learning located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Construction for this building started in 1888 and the building is still in use today, as well as being one of the center points on campus. The college has kept careful records of the construction of the building as well as the 1929 renovation. This paper is focused on the construction, 1929 renovation and the time in between the two due to the abundance of material for this time period. Questions I address in this paper: why was Glatfelter Hall built? What was the building used for? Why was it renovated? How did it get its name? And how has the interior and exterior of the building changed since it has been created. The sources that will be examined are a Proposal for Renovations for the 1929 renovation, a program from the 100th year anniversary and photographs of the building through the years, as well as newspaper articles and photographs.

There is a program from the Centennial Anniversary Celebration of Glatfelter Hall that took place on Homecoming Weekend; October 15, 1988. The program can be found in Gettysburg College Special Collections and is part of the vertical file for Glatfelter Hall (Centennial). The program has a picture of the hall along with a date and title on the front page. On the inside cover there is a brief, but informative, history of Glatfelter Hall but is very informative. Opposite is the list of what took place during the program itself and on the back is a list of people to thank and people who put the celebration together (Centennial). The most informative item from this source was the history of the building because it makes sure to cover all of the important points of the early history of the college.

There are many photos of Glatfelter Hall in Special Collections at Gettysburg College. One photo is on a piece of thick paper with no information to why it was taken or what it was used for. However it is dated so that I know it is from right after the completion of the building in 1889 from the front of the building. There is no information as to who the photographer might have been or the exact date of the

photo but the year is on the back of the picture. The picture can also be found online on the Special Collections Website. The view of the building is directly from the front with a few sparsely scattered trees around the front (Front view).

There is also a picture of the exterior of Glatfelter Hall from the middle of the renovations in 1929. The picture is taken from north side of the building and is printed on regular paper. In the picture you can see the old-fashioned cars as well as the interior of the building being completely gutted (*Gettysburgian*). Although the inside looks empty the outside looks exactly the same. The photographer is unknown, however the photo was used in an issue of *The Gettysburgian* in 1929. It can be found online in *The Gettysburgian* archives at the Gettysburg College Library website or it can be found in the Glatfelter Hall vertical file in Special Collections. None of the workers in the photo are identified either but the building is definitely Glatfelter Hall.

There are also some photos of Glatfelter Hall's interior in Gettysburg Collection Special Collections. They are in the building photo files, categorized by Gettysburg College, "Old Pictures". One unique one is a photo of the grand staircase in the entryway when it was completely wooden. It is the same style as today but now it is almost completely marble (Staircase). There is also photos of the two literary society halls in the building. They were large rooms with huge windows and extremely high ceilings with grandiose wooden beams across the top (Dance Hall). Another unique photo is from the museum that was on the third floor of the building after it was created (Museum). A feature I found that surprised me was the wood floors in the museum. There are no dates on any of the photos but I can be sure they are between 1889 and 1925. This is because in the file that they are located in all of the photos are from before the year 1925. That means the photos are from the time period before the renovation of the building.

The Gettysburgian is a newspaper that runs in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It can be found online in the Gettysburg College GettDigital Database. One article from September of 1929 discusses how Glatfelter Hall will not be reopening along with the rest of the school for fall semester due to the interior renovations being incomplete (*Gettysburgian*). The newspaper can be found online or in the Gettysburg College Special Collections. The *Gettysburgian* is very similar to the Pennsylvania College Monthly but was started after the other newspaper ended. Also this paper was produced more often than the Pennsylvania College Monthly.

In the year 1868 there were only 6 buildings on the Gettysburg College Campus and it was beginning to become obvious to many that more buildings were needed. However the 1870's were a time of financial crisis in the United States and not only did Gettysburg lose a lot of funds, but they also suffered huge attendance losses. In the 20 years between 1868 and 1888 only 4 small additions were added to campus: a skating pond, gymnasium, observatory, and tennis courts (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 244). For 40 years there was no new academic buildings on campus and many people were starting to realize there was definitely a need (Hefelbower 258). In the early 1880's a major push for a large new building began. The reason for a new building at first was not attendance, numbers still were catching up to the numbers before the financial crisis, but contributed to the final push (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 250). The board had decided to add a new building but were waiting on the right time; in 1887 attendance had increased enough to show need for a new building (Hefelbower 260). At the time the College Edifice Building, now Pennsylvania Hall, housed all of the students and held most of the classrooms. This meant that everyday masses of fires were lit in the timeworn building making it a massive fire hazard. If the building was to burn down, there would be no place for students to go, even temporarily and the school would most likely have to shut down (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 244). But as the idea progressed into something that was actually going to happen the reasons why developed as well. "The major reason for advocating new building was the conviction that the times require more adequate facilities than the existing on

campus building, could provide for larger class-rooms, better-equipped libraries, and a more appropriately appointed chapel" (Glatfelter 251).

In 1884 Harvey W. McKnight was elected President of the College with the idea that he would be in charge of collecting funds for the erection of a new building (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 252). He face a significant challenge because the last time the college looked for large donors for a college project was over 40 years ago and many of the previous investors had died. McKnight had to find new investors and convince them to donate with basically no starting point (Hefelbower 258). At the time the board had \$27,000 set aside for a new building and had in mind a building with a budget of about \$50,000 to build. However, John E. Graeff led the board into raising their proposed budget to \$100,000 even though at the time they still only had \$27,000 set aside. On June 27, 1887 the Board of Trustees put together a committee for the development and construction of a new building. The board consisted of Harvey W. Mcknight, Edward McPherson, Frederick W. Conrad, Milton Valentine and board officers and they began their work immediately (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 252).

Almost immediately the committee called on James A. Dempwolf to draw up plans for the new building. He then presented those plans in September of 1887. The plans were approved under the stipulation that he make some adjustments. As soon as the plan was approved the college relieved the President of the College of all duties on campus so that he could dedicate all of his time to fundraising money for the completion of the building (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 253). This period of time at the college revolved around the new building and all other plans were put on hold. Dempwolf's plans called for a building that would be 162 feet long and 69 feet in depth with the tower to be 143 feet tall. He also included plans for chapel to be built on a Western extension of the building that was supposed to sit 400 people but this was deemed too expensive and dismissed. The land on which the building was too be built was already bought and chosen in 1885. The building was also to be constructed with 1,200,000 bricks with a Hummelstown brownstone trim (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 253). Five contractors submitted bids to

construct the building and William A. Slagle was chosen. He had previously constructed buildings in neighboring towns and cities. Then ground was broken for the new building on March 1, 1888 by Philip M. Bickle (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 253). They then spent the spring excavating the ground. During the commencement ceremonies, the corner stone was laid for Glatfelter Hall (Centennial).

The summer of 1888 was especially long for Gettysburg College students because it was extended to provide more time for construction. The spring semester ended three weeks earlier than usual and the fall semester started 2 weeks later. During commencement week on June 27, 1888 the cornerstone for the building was laid down and from then on construction for the building was in full swing. "By fall they has reached the top of the third story windows and by December the roof was in place. The work on the interior still remained to be done" (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 254). However by December, when they completed the exterior, they no longer had any money left. At this point they decided to have a board meeting to discuss how to proceed. On January 22, 1889 the board gathered; President McKnight presented the problem and recommended that construction be stopped until sufficient funds were gathered. Nevertheless, the Board decided the building was a priority and that it was necessary to borrow funds in order to finish the building. However they also decided that they had to start to change some of the other buildings because they now had this new academic building. They made plans to move things to different locations as well as make the interior of Penn Hall suitable for more dorms. When the New Building was complete and they heled the dedication they committed themselves to raising the remaining \$20,000 they needed. It started with Charles A. Glatfelter donating 5,000 more and then the donations started pouring in. By the end of the dedication they had met their goal of \$20,000 to finish paying off the building.

The interior of the building was meant to hold many different things; it was floor floors and each floor was unique. The basement was originally used to hold a physics lab but overtime it became mostly used for storage. The first floor consisted of 4 classrooms, the president's office, and a reception area.

The President's office was directly to the left of the entrance while the reception area was directly to the right. Also on the first floor was the campus library although the exact location on the floor was never specified and it was not completed until 1890. The second floor also held four classrooms along with a large hall at the north end for examinations (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 256). This room was nicknamed the "sweat box" and was used as a chapel and as the location for the school year from 1889-1890. The third floor only had one classroom making the total number of classrooms in the building nine. The third floor also held the museum, previously in Linnaean Hall, and that was located in the center of the floor. The center of the floor also had a space available for an infirmary in case it was ever needed. Also on the third floor was large spaces for the literary society meetings; the Philo had the North Wing and the Phrena had the south wing. Both of the literary society halls were not open until 1890 as well (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 257).

The literary societies were very popular not only at Gettysburg College but in the whole country towards the end of the 1800's and the early 1900's but by around 1922 the societies disbanded and their rooms were given over to the college (Glatfelter Vol. 1, 260). There is one photo of each of the literary society halls in Gettysburg College, Special Collections. Philo Hall had intricate wooden beams stretching across the top of the high ceilings. Then it had one grandiose chair at the far end of the room with a decorated desk on top of a slightly raised platform. To one side there was also a grand piano and to the other side was another chair with a larger desk, but these were both on the regular level. In the center of the rooms was rows of chairs, split with an aisle down the middle. There was also very beautiful curtains on the large windows and an elaborate chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The Philo room was set up so the President's chair was against the narrow wall on the far side of the room and everyone else would be directly facing them (Philo Photograph). On the other hand Phrena set up their hall so the President's chair was against the long wall right in front of a large window. The chairs of the other members were then set up in a semi-circle so they were all facing the detailed chair. Phrena Hall

also did not have beams in the ceiling, instead their ceiling was lower and was painted in a striped design. The paneling on the walls also followed the same color-blocking striped pattern. There was also an extremely elaborate chandelier in the Phrena Hall (Phrena Photograph).

Another two photos from the years previous to the renovations in 1929 are a photograph of the museum that was in the center of the third floor of Glatfelter Hall and of the grand staircase on the first floor. The museum is photographed as having many glass cases along the walls and lined up in the middle of the room to display items. There is also some dressers on the sides of the room to hold excess materials and display items on the top of them. Another feature of the room is a large table most likely used for demonstrations or research (Museum Photo). The staircase was made of a dark wood and was intricately designed to showcase amazing details in the wood. The designs follow the elaborate Romanesque design that the exterior was modeled after. However, the dark wood was another fire hazard and did not prevent any noise from traveling through the building (Staircase Photo).

The building was strange because it went without a name for so long. Mr. Glatfelter suggested on September 11, 1889 that the building be named McKnight Hall (Centennial). President McKnight had spent much of his time searching for funds and overseeing the construction and creation of the building so it seemed appropriate that the building be named after him. However when McKnight learned about this suggestion he quickly refused (Hefelbower 263). He did not want the building to be named after him. At first it was simply referred to as the "New Building". Then as time went on it became the "Recitation Hall" or the "New Recitation Hall" (Hefelbower 263). In the year 1912 the building was finally formally named; it was then called Glatfelter Hall because of the generous contributions of Philip H Glatfelter and his family. Philip H. Glatfelter was a Board member from 1888- to his death in 1907 and was President of the Board from 1900-1904 (Centennial). He also donated \$15,000 to the construction of the hall which most likely would not have been completed without him.

The building did not sustain any major repairs for 40 years, only an addition of some classes and an extension of the library (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 523). Also with the termination of the Philo and Phrena literary societies their large halls on the third floor were given over to the college. In 1924 the Philo Hall became a reading room of the library (Hefelbower 310). The building was used every day and the wear-and tear was beginning to show. In the 1926-1927 school year a UCLA survey team surveyed the school and were horrified with the condition of Glatfelter. They determined that the center stairs and the steam engine in the basement were major fire hazards and that the building was a tremendous misuse of space (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 523). In the entire building only two of the 26 rooms had the same dimensions. The Survey Team recommended that the College raze the building and rebuild a new structure in its place. The college recognized the need to change Glatfelter Hall but decided not to rebuild; instead they started planning for a complete interior renovation (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 523). The Glatfelter family wanted the building to be kept in top shape so Philip Glatfelter's son, William L. Glatfelter, donated \$25,000 to the renovation of the building. Later on he and his sister's raised the amount to \$100,000.

The letter in Gettysburg College Special Collections from J.A. Dempwolf to the President at the time, President Hanson, with the proposal for renovations in the college effectively describes the changes that the Board are planning to implement. One of the most important notes that I took from the letter is that the main goal of the renovations was to maintain the Romanesque design of the building. One of the ways that they plan to do this is to not change the exterior of the building at all but to completely gut the interior and rebuild the inside (Proposal 1). However they did run into problems economically again. The proposed plan was way over the budget, so once again the Glatfelter Family raised their contribution to make sure the building was completed as well as possible. Another goal from the renovation was to give the hall better circulation as well as make it more light and airy.

However, for safety reasons everything had to become fireproofed so many initial plans were change in order to make the building safer (Proposal 1).

Construction on the building started immediately after commencement in the year 1929 with the hopes that the building would be completed by the start of the next school year. However it soon become evident that this was not going to happen and President Hanson sent letters to all the students asking for patience when they returned. The construction crews were working 3 shifts a day to try and complete the building. While it was still under construction classes were held in the Chapel, Science Building, Weidensall (which was then a YMCA), gymnasium, and fraternity houses. Classes were finally able to start again in the building starting December 2, 1929 and administrative offices moved back into the building during the winter break of that year (Glatfelter Vol. 2, 525).

In Special Collections at the Gettysburg College library there is a Proposal for Renovations from the 1929 renovations that was written by J.A. Dempwolf to the college president at the time Dr. Hanson. The letter is very detailed and provides information about both the interior of the building before and after the renovations as well as the budget for the proposed renovations (Dempwolf 1). It is only available at Gettysburg College Special Collections and is not online at this time. The letter is typed by what appears to be a typewriter and is in a normal letter format. It begins with an explanation of the budget issues. With the renovations that he has in mind to really exemplify all of the space in the building, he needs to go over budget. The letter then goes on to explain, in detail, the renovations that will take place on each floor, little by little. Then at the end of the letter he makes it clear to Dr. Hanson that these are just proposals and if there is anything he would specifically like to change than he can work that into the plans as well (Dempwolf 2). However, Dempwolf did not actually construct the building; that job was given to John B. Hamme, a registered architect, and his men.

At the time of the renovation the entry way and main stairway were made entirely of wood, a massive fire hazard, so steps were taken to completely redo them. Marble, instead of wood, was going to become the main material for the interior of the building. The stairs were recreated with green marble and anti-slip bronze on the steps to eliminate noise and possible injuries (Proposal 2). The Wood finishes were all stained with a light, antique gray to help lighten the area and sealed with a fire-protectant. The plan was that the green marble and new finishes would reflect light instead of absorb it therefore brightening the entire entry way and hopefully spreading the light down the corridors. The two windows on the first floor stair platform were enlarged to let more light in and more windows were added on the second and third floor platforms to also add more light (Proposal 2). There was originally much debate over whether the additional windows could be added without weakening the structure, but the windows were put in and evidently the structure was fine. They also wanted to be careful that the additional windows were not going to spoil the exterior appearance. However, the windows fit in flawlessly with the style of the exterior and do not look as though they were new additions.

The Proposal for Renovations also made tentative suggestions as to where various departments could be placed in the building. However, the suggestions were just tentative because the board and President Hanson had yet to approve anything. Dempwolf suggested that the history department be in the north wing of the first floor. He suggested this because the history department could put old pictures and memorabilia on the walls to make for a dramatic entrance into this department (Proposal 4). Since so many people went onto the first floor of Glatfelter to visit the President's office, Provost's office and the office of the Dean of Students, having historical archives decorating the walls of the wing was intended to appeal to visitors. Dempwolf planned to put glazed cases on the walls during construction in order to showcase everything. From the lobby there would be a History Lecture Room and opposite of that would be the museum. Also in the north wing was to be a classroom, offices and a

large storage space for the museum to use. He also included the idea of putting a screen and projector in the history classroom.

Part of the plan to add more space to the building was to remove the part of the tower that was in the building. They added steel reinforcements as well as a large triple window to secure the building. In the space where the tower was removed from the interior the plan was to add it one more classroom and two more offices. Dempwolf did not specify exactly which department they would belong to but continued on with suggestions. He thought the bio department should have an additional advanced laboratory added to along with a research office but should stay in the same place in the building. He then proposed that the north wing on the second floor be either the Latin or English Department and for the North Wing on the third floor to be math (Proposal 6). He never mentioned what the south side of the building was to be used for but it was most likely that he had no direct opinion on which department went there. In the end the renovations would increase the number of classrooms from twenty-six to twenty-eight and add more offices although the exact number was not specified. Dempwolf also stressed that the electric light system be turned off during the construction and then for the building to be rewired to fit the changes from renovation. He also wanted to address the issue of where to add an additional bathroom for males but not for females (Proposal 8).

Since the 1929 renovation various changes have happened to the building such as the addition of an elevator in 1989, the addition of a fourth floor, and the complete renovation of the basement. The only massive renovation of the building of completed in 2013. However due to the abundance of information from the time period of 1888-1930 and the lack of information about the other renovations I chose to only focus on the construction and first renovation. Glatfelter Hall has played a massive role in helping to improve Gettysburg College and is now one of the campuses most well recognized building. It is still a unique building with full functionality. I am sure the building will continue to be around in years to come as it is still in excellent condition.

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