

Behrend continues a tradition of giving

by Craig Altmire
Collegian Staff Writer

Sept. 10, 1813. It was a sunny Friday and the breeze was only three miles an hour, making Lake Erie unusually calm.

In late morning the American naval fleet on Lake Erie was eating dinner. The British fleet was dining also, just out of firing range.

The American fleet, under Master Commander Oliver Hazard Perry, was about to take on the British in one of the most important battles of the War of 1812.

One hundred and seventy years later, we can relive the American victory when we walk through the southeastern quarter of Penn State-Behrend's 525 acre campus.

The residence area, situated on a hill overlooking Lake Erie, is home for 925 students, not quite half of Behrend's student population.

The residence halls, apartments and dining hall are all named after prominent people and ships involved in the Battle of Lake Erie.

The sister ships Lawrence and Niagara, each weighing 260 tons and boasting 20 cannons, led the American fleet which was built by Captain Daniel Dobbins.

The seven other American vessels, which included the 85-ton Caledonia, under the command of Captain Turner, the 63-ton Scorpion, with Captain Stephen Champlin and the Ariel, another 63-ton ship, under Captain Packett, supported the Lawrence and Niagara and fought the smaller British ships.

The fleets moved into range at noon and the guns began their pounding, filling the air with the smell of spent gunpowder and leaving the area engulfed in a suspens-

ed cloud of smoke.

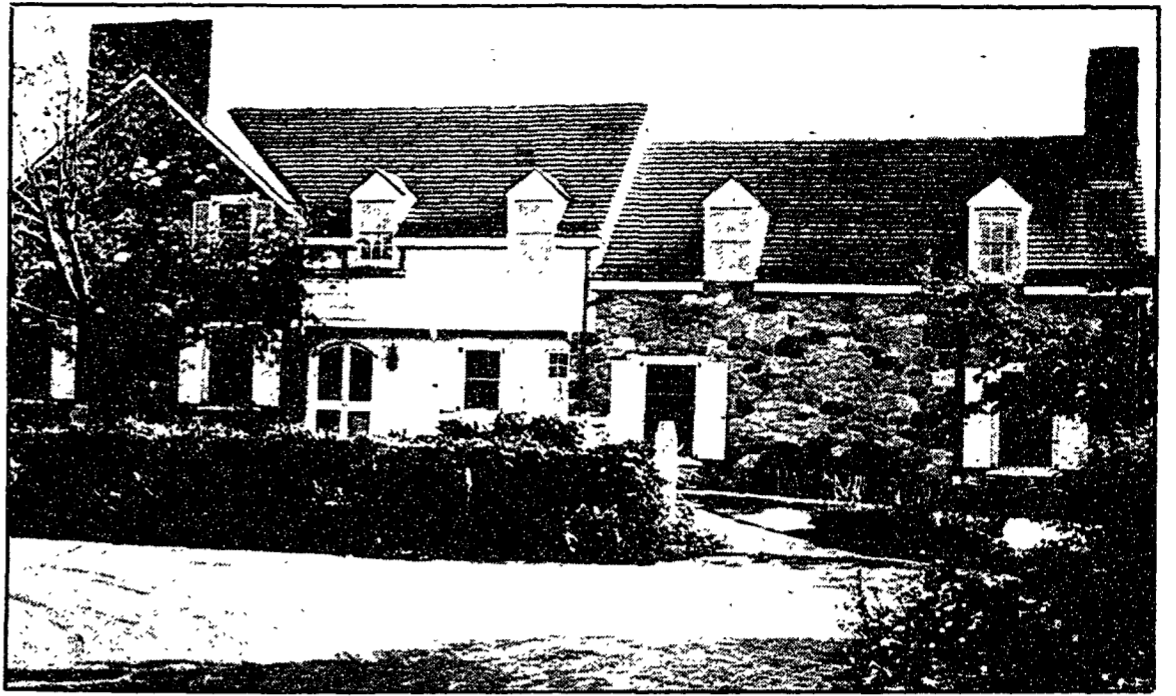
The Niagara stayed out of range during the first part of the battle for unknown reasons. At this time the Lawrence was receiving fire from four of the six British ships at once.

The battle continued until 2 p.m., with the Americans taking a pounding. The Lawrence was practically helpless; when Commander Perry lowered his battle flag, "Don't Give Up The Ship," and took a small boat over to the Niagara.

Perry boarded the Niagara just as the American flag was lowered on the Lawrence and a white flag was waved signalling its surrender.

Perry ordered the Niagara to charge the British line.

The Niagara poured its fire into the three biggest British ships and the Caledonia moved in on the next



The Glennhill Farmhouse, which houses the administrative offices today, was the home of the Behrend family in 1940.

of Lake Erie, two men were sent to the United States by their father in Prussia, to find a site on which to build a paper mill. Their father, Herr Moritz Behrend, owned a company in Prussia named Varziner Papierfabrik. Varziner consisted of three ground wood mills, one sulphite mill and two paper mills. The largest of these was called Hammermuehle.

Mr. Ernst Richard Behrend and his brother Dr. Otto Frederick Behrend, after looking at several sites across the east, picked Erie because of its facilities for rail and water transport and its nearness to Canada's supply of wood. This was the beginning of one of Erie's key industries, the Hammermill Paper Company.

In 1947 a group of individuals gathered to explore the idea of opening a nonsectarian college. Gannon, Villa Maria and Mercyhurst were all Roman-Catholic schools and Edinboro was still

after World War II. This period of time was important for two reasons.

First, the G. I. Bill, coupled with the many returning veterans of the war, provided a huge demand for colleges.

Also, Ernst Behrend died in 1947, leaving his widow, Mary, with the 42-acre estate and unsure of her future plans.

Eventually, Reed and Nick approached Mary Behrend, with whom they had been acquainted through the Hammermill Paper company. They explained their plans to form a nonsectarian college and offered to buy her estate, Glennhill Farm. She replied that she would think about it and contact them later.

The next day, Mary Behrend contacted them and said she would not sell them the estate—she would donate it.

At that time the campus consisted of seven buildings. The Glen-

automobile and maintenance equipment. The North Cottage was used as a dog kennel.

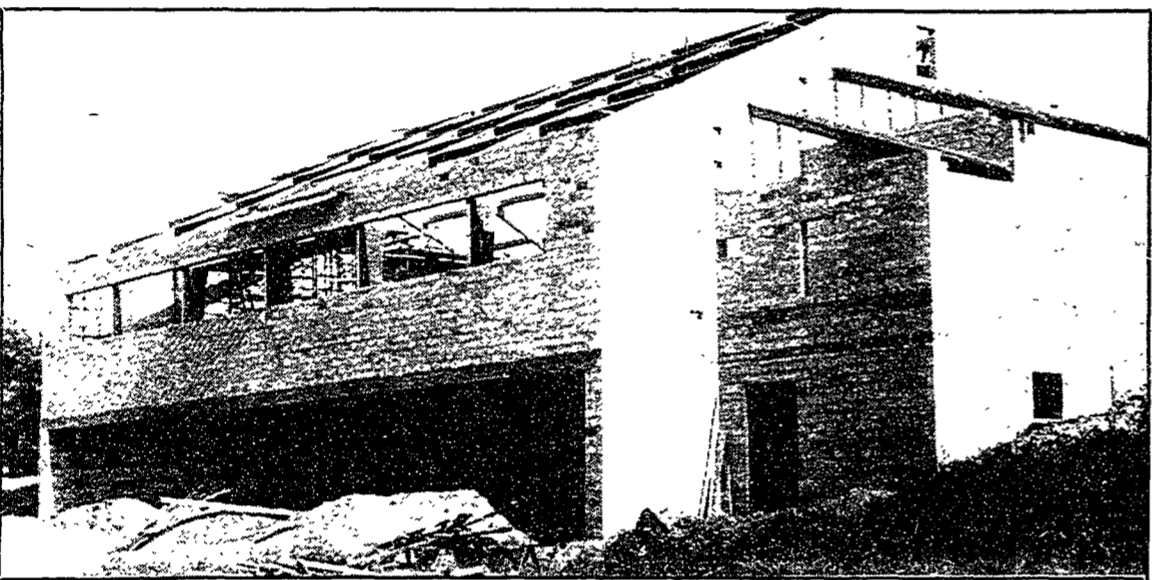
The Wilson Picnic Grove had an open grill surrounded by an apple orchard.

As we walk across the Behrend College campus in 1987, we see several additions to the original Behrend estate.

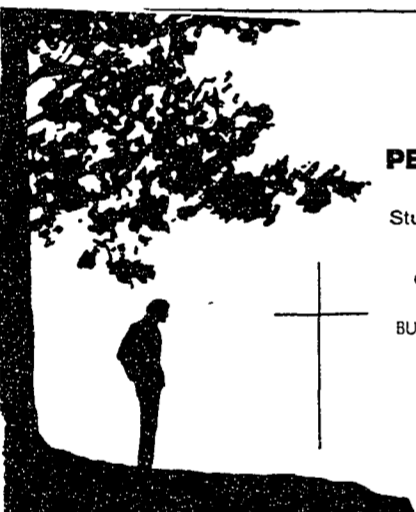
Erie Hall, built in 1952, was constructed entirely with funds donated by the citizens of Erie. This was the first building in the University system built solely with private donations.

The Otto Behrend Building was named in honor of Dr. Otto Behrend, who, upon his death, left his estate to the Behrend community. His estate, worth over \$2 million, was the largest donation at that time to the University by one person.

The Reed and Nick Buildings were named in honor of Elmer Reed and Ed Nick, two of the key



The shell of Erie Hall as it was in 1952 during construction.



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Within 15 minutes the British fleet surrendered.

As the news of this major American victory spread through the country, citizens went wild with enthusiasm. Master Commander Oliver Hazard Perry became a national hero and Erie enjoyed a period in the U. S. history limelight.

If we bring ourselves back to the present, we may want to walk north, down the hill to the center of the campus. Here we can begin to trace the footsteps of another important part of history. Perhaps the significance of the building names down here aren't of national importance, but they certainly are to the Penn State University and the people of Erie.
Eighty four years after the Battle



Perry, Niagara and Lawrence enabled students to live on campus for the first time.

primarily a teacher's college. The committee, consisting of several outstanding Erie citizens, such as Ed Nick and Elmer Reed, needed to gain accreditation and a site on which to build. The search began immediately

at the Glennhill Farmhouse, where the Behrends resided, was built as a copy of a Dutch colonial home Mary behrend had seen on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

Turnbull Hall was a stable in which the Behrends kept their horses. They often enjoyed horseback riding through the Wintergreen Gorge.

The Theatre was used by Mary Behrend as a studio in which she pursued her hobby of painting. The family also used the building for entertaining. At that time the Behrend's garden was located just to the west of the studio and they would open the doors and windows toward the gazebo and garden during the summer months.

The Carriage House, as well as the East and South Cottages, were used as garages for the Behrend

initiators of Penn State-Behrend.

Behrend's newest additions are the Hammermill and Zurn Buildings. These were built with funds donated by the Hammermill Paper Company and Zurn Industries as well as those from much of the Erie community.

Penn State-Behrend, which opened in 1948 with an enrollment of 70 students has grown to over 2,300 students in 1987.

Although Behrend is only 38 years old, a stroll through its over 500 acres can whisk us through almost 175 years of history.

After Turner Hall was named, further research confirmed that the Captain's name was actually Turner, and the building will be renamed in the near future. ed.

Information for this article has been gathered from Erie...A History, by Herbert Reynolds Spencer, 1962. Thanks also to Dr. Benjamin Lane, without whom the history of the Behrend College would be extremely difficult to piece together.

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