



1859 Dinner Music:

Oh, It Was Only a Shanty...

By LOLLI NEUBARTH
It was a bleak day in 1859 when 69 male students climbed out of a hobsled in front of Old Main and were confronted by a partly finished building, without even a kitchen or dining room ready to serve them.

So a long low shanty originally used by the construction crew was hurriedly converted into a dining area, with another shanty serving as a temporary kitchen.

But in spite of efforts to provide the boys with acceptable dining facilities, student reaction was much the same as it is today.

According to the reminiscences of Mrs. Susan Hunter Smith: "when the college was started the food served in the dining room did not suit them, and the boys were very much dissatisfied. They were destructive at times. Dr. Pugh (the first president) was very upset over the spoons being twisted and the general disorder."

The school was without a director of dining facilities until Mrs. Elizabeth Hunter came to supervise the "culinary" department. However, the letters of some early residents were not very appreciative of Mrs. Hunter's efforts.

The only food served, so it seemed to some of them, was doughy, underbaked bread, molasses and rhubarb pies. Others found the menu to be "identical roast beef," day after day, with a change in menu merely a matter of linguistics.

Living quarters in those early days were also a far cry from the new dormitories which have been constructed recently. Both professors and students lived in Old Main.

Accommodations were somewhat primitive. There were no bathrooms in the building, lighting was supplied by lard oil lamps and the boys studied by stearine candles. It was not until 1887 that electric light bulbs were installed.

Hot air heat was supplied to all rooms at first, but by 1872 the furnaces were worn out and there were no funds to fix them. For the next 10 years students paid a coal fee of \$10 and carried coal from the basement to stoves in their own rooms if they wanted heat.

However, the boys did have one

luxury that today's modern dormitories lack—each room was equipped with a spittoon!

Future classes found living accommodations in the growing town around the college or in fraternity and sorority houses. In the 1920's there were no common

dining facilities for men, and they crowded the 15 town restaurants during meal hours. And the halls of Old Main, now solemn with University administrative offices, echoed with the sound of hungry students hurrying to eat lunch in its popular sandwich shop.

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