History of Buildings

Grinnell College

**Alumni Hall (1882-1958):**

Alumni Hall, originally constructed after the tornado of 1882, was a three story brick building. It used to stand where Burling Library now sits and was the site of the College’s Gymnasium, the chapel, and the library (until Goodnow Hall could be constructed). In 1958, Alumni Hall was razed for the construction of Burling Library. However, upon the razing, a memorabilia box from 1882 was discovered, which contained letters and accounts from that year.

**Alumni Recreation Hall (1917-Present):**

Alumni Recreation Hall, or ARH, was constructed in 1917 and still remains today. The three story Tudor-style building was originally construction for general classroom usage for non-laboratory, non-studio classes, which remains largely true even today. The building’s large auditorium was used for college events, theatrical productions, and debates. In 1942, the college radio station (KGRW) was located in the space between ARH and Carnegie library.

**Blair Hall (1886-1961):**

Blair Hall, constructed in 1886, and was eventually razed in 1961 to make room for Burling Library and the proposed Fine Arts Building. The building housed the chapel along with chemistry, biology (zoology/botany), physics, and math. Blair Hall also housed a large natural science museum that attracted both students and the public from the surrounding communities. The department of art moved in to the building after the chapel left with the construction of Herrick Chapel. From 1955 to 1961 the first floor of Blair Hall housed the college bookstore and the college mail service. While the building itself was a great piece of architecture by the 1960s it fell into disrepair so the college elected to have it razed for the construction of Burling Library.

**Burling Library (1959-Present):**

Since its construction in 1959, Burling has been utilized as a library and study space for faculty and students. Previously, the college’s libraries had been housed in various buildings around campus, including Goodnow and Carnegie. Grinnell Room, located in Burling basement, houses material dealing with the history of Grinnell College. In 1982, the library was renovated with the addition of the third and fourth floors to increase study and book space.

**Carnegie Hall (1905-Present):**

Carnegie, built in 1905, was designed to replace Goodnow as the primary library on campus, which had housed the main library collection since 1888. Part of the initial funding for the space came from renowned philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who donated $50,000 for its construction. After the construction of Burling Library, Carnegie undertook renovation to be used as faculty offices, classrooms, the bookstore, and the mail room. Presently, Carnegie stands as a space for classrooms and faculty offices.

**Central College (1873-1982):**

Central College was Grinnell’s third building built in 1873, located between East College (the first building) and West College (the second building). Before the construction of Central College was completed, East College was burned down in 1871. The building housed the College’s natural history museum, which occupied the entire third floor, and covered controversial topics such as the evolution of species. Central college also housed the chemistry, astronomy, and human/physiology departments, along with the library, art classrooms, and a reading room. In 1982, the building, along with West College, was destroyed by a severe tornado.

**Chicago Hall – Later renamed Magoun Hall (1883-1958):**

Chicago Hall, erected in 1883, held the college and academy recitation rooms along with the school’s music conservatory. The building eventually became used for administrative offices and classrooms until it was razed in 1958 to create space for Burling Library.

**College Forum (1965-Present):**

The College Forum, constructed in 1965, was created to primarily give a space for students. It included lounges designed for parties, a coffee house, private dining rooms, and a grille. Outside of student spaces, the College Forum also provided offices for administrative faculty. Currently, the building still holds administrative offices, but also includes student health and information technology services.

**Darby Gymnasium (1942-?):**

Darby Gymnasium was built in 1942 and served as a men’s gymnasium and an all-college auditorium facility. The building could seat an audience well over two thousand people and when it was constructed was considered one of the top gymnasium’s in the Midwest. In the 1960s, the college radio station (KGRW) moved from the ARH to Darby. Along with sporting events, Darby hosted events given by Martin Luther King Jr., Ted Kennedy, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Bruce Springsteen, just to name a few of the notable dignitaries and entertainers.

**East College (1861-1871):**

East College was the first building constructed on Grinnell College’s campus, then known as Iowa College. The building housed all of the departments that existed at the college (chemistry, natural philosophy, and astronomy). The third floor served as a dormitory housing for the male students, at $2.50 per academic semester. The building was destroyed by fire in 1871.

**Goodnow Hall (1885-Present):**

While Goodnow Hall still exists today, it was originally constructed in 1885 to serve as the college’s main library and astronomical observatory. In 1905, the library collections were moved to Carnegie Library, Goodnow was renovated to house astronomy, mathematics, and physics. Over the course of many years, Goodnow provided departmental spaces for psychology and education until becoming the permanent home for the Department of Anthropology, where it remains today.

**Herrick Chapel (1907-Present):**

Since its original construction in 1907, Herrick Chapel has served as a space for religious services and a general purpose of a large auditorium, which can seat over seven hundred people. The chapel erected a memorial in the 19th century of the names of Grinnell Students who died as soldiers in the Union Army during the Civil War.

**Mears Cottage (1888-Present):**

Mears Cottage, built in 1888, initially served as the women’s dormitory for twenty-eight female students. In 1916, Mears Cottage was eventually extended to connect to the six new women’s dormitories enclosed by the loggia, now known as South Campus. The building stopped being used as a dormitory and was eventually renovated to house admissions and financial aid offices in 1986. Today, Mears Cottage holds the Departments of English and History.

**Rand Gymnasium for Women (1897-1938):**

Complimentary to Darby Gym, Rand Gymnasium housed the women’s physical educational program, which was built in 1897. A Miss Carrie Rand, an instructor of social and physical culture for women, petitioned for many years to get a space for women to use adequate facilities and was eventually successful in her fight. While the building lasted for only about forty years, her strong willed legacy lives on in remembering the building.

**The Associations Building – Later Renamed Steiner Hall (1906-Present):**

Steiner, originally known as the Associations Building during its inception in 1906, initially housed the Y.M.C.A and Y.W.C.A., as a space for physical education facilities for both men and women. By the 1990s, Steiner was eventually converted to provide spaces for faculty offices, seminar rooms, and house the departments of Education, Philosophy, and Religious Studies.

**West College (1868-1882):**

West College, built in 1868, was Grinnell College’s second building. West College housed classrooms, the chapel, and the library. The building was eventually destroyed by a tornado and ensuing fire of 1882.