

DOES THE CRUMBLING MARSHALL BUILDING POSE A THREAT TO US?

By Mike DeVine

LAYOUT EDITOR

Kreiling Hall, also known as the Marshall Building here at Suffolk, remains in severe disrepair and may pose a serious risk to students and faculty, despite numerous complaints and reports processed over the past several years citing several specific parts of the building which are in particularly bad shape, and recommendations to either close off the building to the public or demolish it altogether.

The Marshall Building is located adjacent to the Ammerman Building and across from Veterans Plaza here on campus, and is one of the oldest buildings still standing on the site of what was once a tuberculosis clinic dating back to the 1930's. The building's continued existence has apparently been subject to much debate within the administration—when the school originally bought the land in the 1960's, the Marshall Building was scheduled to be demolished, until at the eleventh hour it was decided instead to leave the building intact, rename it Kreiling Hall, and use it to house parts of the school's administration as well as holding classes on the basement level.

Sporting architecture not seen in today's modern buildings, the Marshall Building has maintained a moderate level of traffic while serving as a center for some of the administration of the college, including the Nurse's Office. The building is adorned with weather-worn ornate sculptures and rotted woodwork around its brick-faced frame, reminiscent of old-world New York



The condition of the Marshall Building calls into question the wisdom of SCCC's spending. CARTOON BY SEBASTIEN PAYENMETRE.

City flats, complete with outdoor porches with metal railings.

The two-level concrete platforms located on either side of the building are designated as fire escapes, and the second level of each are used as Safe Havens—specifically selected areas where newborn infants can be left anonymously by parents unable to properly care for them. Campus Public Safety officers are responsible for climbing the stairs to both porches on a regular basis to check for any unexpected deliveries, and they have repeatedly voiced their concerns both for their safety

and the safety of others who use the porches, citing the apparent structural instability of the balconies as indicated by the crumbling cement and exposed rebar—metal bars used inside of large concrete slabs to provide support—which is made more obvious by the ever-growing piles of large cement chunks and paint chips on the floors of the balconies beneath the neglected slabs.

The officers' fears are heightened by the unthinkable scenario that may occur in the event of an emergency, in which the fire escapes may fail to support the weight of the several dozen people who would be using them to exit the building. There is also concern about the metal staircases leading up the sides of the porches, as neglect and poor maintenance has resulted in rust and chipping paint appearing across the entire surface of the handrails as well as on many of the support struts on the staircases' undersides, which once again brings into question the building's structural integrity.

The building also has a basement level, which was once prepared as a fallout shelter during the height of the Cold War—these days, the floor is where classes are held. Main access to the basement level is provided through a staircase in front of the building, which passes under another staircase used to access the main floor. The underside of this top staircase, which has an arch cut out of it for passing through to the basement

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structure, is also in poor condition, with the same disintegrating cement and chipping paint that plagues the fire escapes, as well as large cracks running along the sides of the steps themselves, which likely don't bond well for the archway's safety.

The basement level can also be accessed around the back of the building, where a set of concrete stairs or staircase which is perhaps meant by the name of the building's poor level of upkeep. Consisting of a set of softened and unevenly built steps which chip away at the slightest poke, and a large, crumbling slate of concrete about one foot at its thinnest and about half that where the cement has completely peeled off, it rests on just one concrete pillar which is visibly damaged at first glance looks as though a bite had been taken out of it like an apple—near the top where it meets the slab the pillar is nearly half gone, leaving rusty rebar poking through what's left, and a large crack running along what's left of the topmost portion.

Large chunks of the concrete that once made up the rest of the staircase can be seen strewn across the ground

beneath the structure itself, and what remains in place is segmented by large cracks running along the surface on both the top and bottom—cracks which are deep enough that when it rains, water is able to seep through to the underside of the slabs. Ironically enough, the staircase is supported on one side by a wooden railing that has obviously been recently installed, attached to the side of the diminishing concrete pillar.

The alarming condition of the Marshall Building has not gone unnoticed by everyone, however. Various staff members' complaints echo the sentiments of the Public Safety officers, who have filed report after report detailing the various hazards presented to students and faculty by the building's dilapidated condition. One example suggests for removal of the chips of paint and cement from the floors, to concern about the possibility of lead contamination in the building's 75-year old paint, to recommendations that entire sections of the building be roped off, or the building itself demolished.

Not one of these reports has been taken to task by the administration. The bits and pieces of concrete—and

possibly other materials—remain in large and unsightly piles on the outside porches, the concrete chunks still sit below the deteriorating staircase, and calls for the building's demolition have been met only with red tape and missed messages. Several years ago Edward Bentz, now the Director of Plant Operations here at Suffolk, reportedly told one Public Safety officer that the Marshall Building would be taken down within two to five years, a claim which, like all the others, remains unacted by the administration of the school.

While the question of whether the administration will decide to take action remains to be seen, what's clearly visible already is the blind eye that's been turned to the state of the structure for the past several decades. And the unfortunate reality is that until the problem is dealt with, either by productive action taken by the school or destructive action brought on by a potentially tragic accident, the Marshall Building will remain an eyesore on the campus of this school, and stand in stark contrast to the picturesque, carefully-maintained Veterans Plaza it overlooks.

Clockwise from top left: The cracked and broken concrete steps leading up to the front of the building. Pieces of concrete on the underside of the back staircase are shown. A close-up of the underside of the back staircase and a pillar on the left with bent, rusty rebar poking out of the side. A view of debris and rusted rebar on the floor underneath some over a foot of concrete. A view of a support pillar underneath the back stairs, which has been whittled nearly halfway through by a large crack running around what's left at the base. Photos by Mike DeVine.



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From top to bottom, left to right. The ceiling of one of the Marshall Building's fire escapes; A closer view of the damaged sections of the concrete ceiling, which is several inches deep; A section of the building's wood-timbered roof which has collapsed onto the back side of the building complete with new wooden railing attached to unevenly built steps; rotted wooden overhang, and a curb down to a fine powder; The back staircase's crumpled metal railing. The building's exterior shows a set of concrete steps and large chunks of concrete that have fallen away from the crumbling ceiling; Exposed rebar under the concrete steps, rusted and corroded after being left unprepared for years. Photos by Mike DeVine.