THE “TALLY-HO” 1901
By 1896 OHIO State University had grown "huge," had nearly a thousand students, needed an armory, gymnasium and a place big enough to hold graduation. It was decided to satisfy all these needs with one quite grand building. The trustees selected as architects the firm of Yost and Packard.

It is impossible to say who chose medieval-castle style (hardly Frank Packard) but such was the decision, and the firm did it up brown. Essentially the building was a great, iron-arched shed nearly hidden behind walls, towers and turrets topped with crenelations to protect the archers should it be necessary to defend it. To a generation infatuated with towers and romantic embellishments, it must have seemed a dream about to come true.

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Famous ROTC commandant Col. George L. Converse had his office in the base of the largest tower. "Connie" is remembered for his autocratic rule and his one glittering eye. The other, covered with an eye patch, still had a bullet in it acquired during Indian warfare.

For a long time the trustees refused use of the Armory for boy-girl affairs. But for some years it was the scene of an annual Coed Prom—an all-coed dance with half the girls dressed as boys. (This was before things got so confused in that department.) A terrible fuss was precipitated when one coed sneaked her boy friend in "disguised as a boy."

The Armory came to be despised by many in later generations for its frowning pretensions, though some of us didn't agree.

It suffered at least two fires, the first in 1935. The second and fatal fire struck in the early morning hours, May 16, 1958. It was said to be damaged beyond repair. Arson was suspected but never proved. And it is hard to believe anyone hated it that much. It was razed during the ensuing summer.
In one hundred years, buildings, like students, come and go. The Armory, built in 1897 at a cost of $115,000, served as gymnasium, basketball court, and dance hall for many years. Until graduating classes grew too large, even Commencements were held there. It was razed in 1959 after being damaged by fire and already the University has over 40,000 graduates who never saw the Armory.
The University Café.

(Armory)

F. L. PATRICK, Manager.

Open every day of the University year from 7 A. M. till 9 P. M.
(Sunday, closes at 3 P. M.)

Regular table-board, first quality, at reasonable rates;
seven days in each week

Orders a la carte given special attention at any hour

Lunch counter service, fourteen hours each day
(except Sunday)

Tables reserved (temporarily or permanently)
for Fraternities or special parties

Lunches sent to any building on the campus

Catering for all University events a specialty

Special rates for one or two (regular) meals each day,
or on certain (regular) days

Everything in its season, and everything right

Get your regular table board on the campus

Then

You can work in the Library evenings
You can use the Gymnasium evenings
You can attend the Literary Societies evenings
You can be present at other University events, evenings

Without hurry, without inconvenience

Without loss of time

No more hasty lunches on cold "messes"
No more late and lonesome dinners
No more tardiness at lecture or laboratory
No more exposure to rain and snow, wind and cold

A

Short, sharp, morning walk or "spin" gives appetite for breakfast

Think of

Drill or Gymnasium work, followed by a good bath and a

good dinner—in the same building and without hurry

If you wish breakfast at home

Get lunch or dinner (or both)

On the campus

If there are certain evenings which you wish to spend at

the University

Get a special rate for those days

Whatever you want

Or think you want

Or any of your friends want

Consult the Manager

Patronize the University Café.
A committee of Citizens of Columbus appeared before the Board February 19, 1890, they were interested in having Neil Avenue opened through the University Grounds and presented their views through Ex-Councilman Williams and Col. James Watson.

Mr. Williams was very much interested in North Columbus real estate and was more than zealous in pushing the project although there was no real demand from property owners in this section of the City.

The following afternoon, the Board recessed at three o'clock, when Messrs. Wing, Hayes and Cowgill by direction of the Board, together with President Scott and the Secretary, drove over the grounds north of the proposed extension of Neil Avenue, viewed the same and expressed the opinion that there is no immediate necessity for any action on the part of the Board looking to such extension.

Mr. W. W. Fay at this meeting of the Board presented preliminary sketches and plans for a Drill Hall (Armory, etc.) estimated to cost $40,000. The Board resolved to ask the General Assembly for an appropriation of $40,000.

April 1, 1890 bids were opened for furniture and furnishings for the new Chemistry Building—$7,442.00.

The proposition of the American District Telegraph Co. to put up at the University six fire alarm boxes at $25.00 each for the first year, with additional boxes at $3.00 per month each for the same period and to make the rate $4.00 each per year thereafter, was accepted by the Board.

The appropriation for the boiler and gas holder came through alright.

Mr. Wm. M. Greene representing the Babcock and Wilcox Company manufacturers of Water Tube boilers was on May 7, 1890 given a hearing by the Board relative to the merits of the Babcock and Wilcox Company's Water Tube Boilers.

The appropriation was for $7,500. It was decided to take out the two 50 Horse Power Boilers and the small High Pressure boiler and install two 100 horse Power Boilers in their place which would still leave sufficient funds to install the new gas holder.

At this same meeting of the Board, plans, specifications and estimates for two 100 Horse Power, Water Tube Boilers were presented to the Board in Agreement with recommendation of Professors Robinson, Thomas and Engineer McCracken and the same were accepted by the Board and the Secretary was directed to submit the same to the Governor, Secretary of State and Auditor for approval and when approved by them, then to advertise for bids as provided by Law.
The Ohio State University Monthly

Armory's main turret was draped in black during the mourning period for President William McKinley in 1902.
This picture was taken from the October 24, 1908 Football Program.
From "Sundial" magazine, May 1916

ESTHETICALLY SPEAKING

What one naturally expects in front of the gym.
Intramural athletics, which experts judge to be the most vital form of sports in any University because they give everyone a chance for physical exercise, have reached a premium at Ohio State. Probably no other college in the country and certainly no other school in the middle west has developed these events to so high a degree.

During the war Intramural events were practically paralyzed, but in the spring of 1919, new life was injected into the extensive program of the Intramural Association.

This program was inaugurated by a big indoor festival in the Armory in which almost 1,000 students took part. It was by all means one of the crowning events of the year and one of the most popular to be staged by the University in years. The outdoor inter-class meet also proved to be popular.

Intramural baseball was staged late in the spring on the Tenth Avenue diamonds, Phi Kappa Tau taking the championship.

In the fall of 1920, an Intramural Cross Country run was held, which was a marked innovation. The Civil Engineers copped first place.

Basketball always has been and still is the chief Intramural sport. In the year 1918-19, Kappa Sigma walked away with the title belt, defeating all comers.

This year the sport became so popular among the various fraternities, colleges, boarding clubs, etc., that the schedule had to be greatly enlarged and now stands as one of the biggest intramural basketball schedules in the country. Approximately 800 men have taken part in the games this year, as 32 fraternities, 6 boarding clubs, 14 colleges, 6 church teams, 4 short ag. fives and 4 faculty quintets have been engaged in the sport.

Intramurals are certainly coming into their own at Ohio State, meaning fun for all and everybody in the game.
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OSCAR L. THOMAS, Director of Programs, LOUIS J. KRAKOFF, Assistant Editor

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER: Darrel Metzandl

ARTISTS: Charles Oehlerling, Ervin Nodland, Carl Butts, Lawrence Grace

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NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

Football Publications, Inc., 278 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y.
The Armory, resembling a medieval castle

Halftones, Zinc Etchings, Color Plates, Advertising Art, Commercial Photography

THE TERRY ENGRAVING COMPANY
40 S. THIRD, COLUMBUS, OHIO
UNUSUAL AIR VIEW OF THE OLD ARMORY

Its battlements in bold relief, Ohio State's Old Armory building presents a study with a medieval touch in this shot by Scotty Gilmore. Somehow, it seems symbolical of an alumni organization growing ever larger and stronger at a great University. Let's stay in there and pitch!
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes:

Through sound development, residents and corporate managers alike seek to turn this growth toward the betterment of separate communities and entire regions.

"It is therefore recommended that the Board of Trustees authorize the President and his associates to establish a program of research and instruction in city planning, that studies be initiated which may lead to a similar and closely related program in regional development, and that the Engineering Experiment Station be designated as the coordinating agency, for studies, which may be undertaken by the University and interested parties."

Subsequently, Professor Stollman was added to the Faculty of the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and assigned to the development of the program in city planning. Working with representatives of related departments, he has developed a proposed curriculum which calls for two years of study at the graduate level and leads to the degree of Master of City Planning.

The Graduate Council has approved the proposed curriculum and has now requested the formal establishment of the new degree. This request has been endorsed by the Council on Instruction and the Faculty Council and I now recommend that it be approved by the Board of Trustees.

B. Candidates for Graduation

I recommend that degrees be conferred at the Spring Quarter Convocation on June 15, 1958, to those students who complete the requirements and are recommended by the Faculty Council for degrees on that date. The names of these recipients will be included in the minutes of this meeting.

C. Report of the Fire in the Armory

On May 17, 1958, a three alarm fire effected an estimated damage of $250,000 to the interior, roof and west wall of the Armory on the University campus. A complete report of the cause has not yet been received from the State Highway Patrol and the State Fire Marshal who are assisting with the investigation.

The President's Cabinet at a special meeting called to consider the disposition of the Armory recommended that the following action be taken:

a. The Armory should be barricaded and all necessary precautions taken to assure the safety of personnel moving in and around the building.

b. In view of the extensive damage, it is recommended that the Armory be scheduled for demolition.

c. A study of the location or relocation of the ROTC facilities should be undertaken and related to the development of the Master Campus Plan.

d. As a temporary expedient in this emergency, space should be provided for the Naval Science Department in the Men's Gymnasium Library Annex.

e. Vice President Carson was instructed to explore all possibilities of securing funds from the State Emergency Board and Federal sources for the construction of temporary quarters for the ROTC program and for a permanent new building to house the ROTC programs of the University.

II. MISCELLANEOUS—FROM OFFICE OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Demolition of West Wall of the Armory

The President reported that the Council on Business Affairs, with the concurrence of the Cabinet, recommended that as a safety precaution, a portion of the west wall of the Armory including the two large turrets and the roof supporting steel between the west wall and the first main arch girder be demolished immediately. Bids were taken in the usual manner and award made to the low bidder, S. G. Loewendick & Sons, Incorporated, in the amount of $2,800.00.

Upon motion of Mr. Patton, seconded by Mr. Kettering, the Board of Trustees approved and ratified this action.
Post Card
from Columbus
By RICHARD E. BARRETT
the OSU Armory

Ohio State University buildings have been very popular post card subjects, probably because of OSU's many out-of-town students. The second most popular building to be pictured was the armory and gymnasium, shown below. (University Hall was the favorite.)

The armory, as it came to be called after gymnastics were moved elsewhere, was constructed in 1897-1898. It stood near where Mershon Auditorium now stands. Designed by the Columbus firm of Yost & Packard, the armory's architectural style was described as French feudal, with one floor and a basement. It opened on Feb. 21, 1898.

The armory was built as a multipurpose facility for ROTC, physical education, athletics, large social events and commencements. A mezzanine floor was added for an indoor track. There were small men's and women's swimming pools in the basement, too small to be used for interscholastic competition.

When the armory opened, basketball at OSU became an interscholastic sport. The 1898 schedule opened with North High School (OSU won 13-3) and included the Columbus Barracks (Fort Hayes) and the YMCA. Because of the armory's small seating capacity, about 3,000, basketball was moved to the Ohio Fairgrounds Coliseum in 1918.

On May 16, 1958, the armory was severely damaged by fire. It was later razed.

Richard E. Barrett, research engineer and post card collector, lives in Columbus.
Historic building destroyed when armory burned in '58

By MARIE CARTER
Lantern Staff Writer

In May of 1958 a midnight fire almost totally destroyed one of the most unusual and historic buildings this, or any campus has seen — the Armory.

Today there are thousands of Ohio State students and graduates who have never seen or heard of the Armory but those who do remember it recall its fortress-like appearance and its towering majesty.

The idea for an “armory, drill hall and assembly room for public occasions” was hatched in 1890 but only $500 was appropriated that year. And for many years the Armory headed the list of needed buildings. Finally in 1897 it was built at a cost of $15,900, a far cry from the original $40,000 estimate.

The Armory overlooked the Oval east of Hayes Hall. It was of French Feudal architecture, built of flashed brick and trimmed with limestone.

Modeled after an old fortress with turrets and a casletike doorway it only consisted of one floor and a basement. James Pollard, head of the University archives said, “It can’t be proven because after the fire the blueprints were lost, but many say the walls of the building were 4 feet thick.”

Architecturally the Armory was similar to University Hall. That building was of Civil War type architecture borrowed from the French with red brick and stone trimming.

What were the uses for this Armory?

In 1898 a University catalog stated that “each male student be required to perform two years cadet service, one hour daily, as a condition for graduation,” and “women students be held responsible for a course in hygiene and physical training equivalent of cadet service.”

When built the Armory consisted of facilities for men’s and women’s physical education, an indoor basketball court, a military science department, an oval canvas track, and two separate swimming pools, which were later filled with concrete for more floor space.

Commencement was also held there until 1915 when graduating classes became too large.

The Armory along with Hayes Hall were turned over to the exclusive use of the government on May 21, 1917, for preliminary training of men in the Signal Corps. And in 1945 it was taken over by the Naval ROTC.

Pollard, who knew the Armory very well, recalled, “You had to swim the length of the pool twice in order to graduate. My roommate was a senior when he was finally able to complete that requirement.”

The Armory had a long history of fires, for its varnished wooden floors were highly flammable. The first fire in 1935 only did $500 damage to one room and was easily controlled. However the fire of May 1958 damaged it so badly that officials reluctantly decided that it must be razed.

There was an unsuccessful attempt by the Columbus Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to save the building. Just as the battle to save University Hall, it was based on the historic and sentimental value of the building.

Another fire in 1935 sealed the fate of the Armory and in March 1959 razing began. Reportedly, “It slid away from the Oval not toward it.”

Sixty-one years after it was built it was gone. To look at the spot today no one would believe it ever held such a structure.

Campus landmarks such as Mirror Lake and Orton Hall still stand. But there is a saying that, “buildings, like students, come and go.”
Off Campus

ARMORY

In "Buckeye News" Aug.'72

The Armory, with some walls four feet thick, stood like a fortress overlooking the Oval and North College Road.

Built in 1897 at a cost of $115,000, the Armory housed the physical education and ROTC offices.

The main floor served as a gymnasium and basketball court and there were even two swimming pools in the building.

In the 1930's when the "Big Band Era" was in full swing, the Armory was used as a dance hall. Commencement was also held there until graduating classes grew too large.

All the offices for military personnel were in the building until 1942 when the Military Science Building was completed. The field artillery training was moved but the executive offices and the Signal and Engineer Corps units remained in the old Armory.

However, the Armory lost its glory. In 1958 the Armory was damaged by fire and the following year it was torn down.

Even though it is off campus, the Armory remains a cherished memory for many university employees.
By 1896 OHIO State University had grown “huge,” had nearly a thousand students, needed an armory, gymnasium and a place big enough to hold graduation. It was decided to satisfy all these needs with one quite grand building. The trustees selected as architect the firm of Yost and Packard.

It is impossible to say who chose medieval-castle style (hardly Frank Packard) but such was the decision, and the firm did it up brown. Essentially the building was a great, iron-arched shed nearly hidden behind walls, towers and turrets topped with crenelations to protect the archers should it be necessary to defend it. To a generation infatuated with towers and romantic embellishments, it must have seemed a dream about to come true.

Columbus Construction Company got the job on a bid so low that the trustees were worried. The worry was justified for early in 1897 the firm gave up. The trustees then completed the structure. The merest glance at its intricate brickwork must have (and probably did) scare off most contractors. From indications, it cost nearly twice what had been bid.

At ground level was the big, 80-by-150-foot, “drill hall.” Above that was a canvas running track with 750 seats surrounding it. In the basement were athletic facilities including two pools (men’s and women’s). The men’s was 17½ by 30 feet. The women’s was even smaller and was called a “plunge bath.” James Pollard, university historian who helped me with facts, remembers a time when all men had to swim twice the length of the pool to graduate. It must not have had a filtration system; it was drained and filled daily; scrubbed thrice each week. Also in the basement were: “lecture room, bicycle room and cannon room.”

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University landmark stands no more after 1958 fire

By Brian T. Armentrout
Lantern staff writer

Twenty-five years ago today, a fire destroyed one of the most picturesque buildings ever seen on the OSU campus.

The building, never officially named by the Board of Trustees, was called the Armory. Located on the Oval between Hayes Hall and Mershon Auditorium, approximately where Weigel Hall is situated, it was constructed in the style of French Feudal architecture of flashed brick and limestone.

Information obtained from the OSU Archives said the Armory was built in 1897. The cost of construction was $115,000, a far cry from the original estimate of $40,000. It was first occupied in January 1898.

The walls were at least two and a half feet thick — some even say four feet — although the exact thickness can't be proven.

The Armory had many uses through the years. The 1898 University Catalog said "each male student be required to perform two years cadet service, one hour daily, as a condition for graduation" and "women students be held responsible for a course in hygiene and physical education equivalent of cadet service." These requirements were fulfilled in the Armory.

The building contained physical education equipment including an indoor basketball court, a canvas track and two separate swimming pools, one for males and one for females. These were later filled to provide more floor space.

There were also facilities for the military science department.

In addition, the Armory was used for dances, and until 1916 commencements were held there.

On May 17, 1917, the Armory, along with Hayes Hall, were turned over to the government for preliminary training of men in the Signal Corps. In May 1945 it was permanently taken over by Naval ROTC.

Saturday, May 17, 1958 was the fateful day for the Armory. At 12:30 a.m., spontaneous combustion caused the three-alarm fire that required 11 pump companies, four truck companies, two inhaler squads, a fire squad and four battalion chiefs to extinguish it.

Over 1,500 students, some in nightclothes and bare feet, watching the fire made so much noise that the firemen had difficulty hearing instructions from the chiefs, articles stated.

Several NROTC students, along with several firemen, fought the flames to remove the ammunition that had been stored there.

Herman J. Peters, professor emeritus of special services, had an office in the turret of the Armory at the time it burned. The only copies of a manuscript he and a co-worker, Professor Gail Farwell, now a professor at the University of Wisconsin, had written were left in their office that weekend.

On the night that the fire broke out "I got a call that the Armory was on fire," Peters said. "I thought it was a fraternity prank, so I just hung up the phone." When he was called a second time, he rushed to the building.

With a little persuading, Peters "got permission from the chief to go in and get the book," Peters said. Farwell had also gone in, although Farwell didn't know that. The pair was able to save all but three pages of the manuscript.

Frank M. Fletcher, professor emeritus of psychology, once had an office in the Armory, but had moved to another building before the fire struck.

"A lot of people were upset," Fletcher said. "It was a monstrosity of a building — I mean it was huge. It was hard to utilize space, but there was a lot of tradition. A lot of people worshipped the place, sometimes more than University Hall, surprisingly," he said.

It was estimated that the cost of repairing the building would have been about $250,000, and was decided that the building should be torn down.

In January 1859 a workman's torch accidentally caught the condemned building on fire again, and in March of the same year the university began razing the Armory.

The Armory, built in 1897, was a part of OSU's campus until a fire destroyed it in 1958. The building, located between Hayes Hall and Mershon Auditorium, was used for dances, commencement ceremonies, and other social events.
Four OSU graduates, partners of Trott Bean Architects, have been contracted to build the Visual Arts Center, expected to be completed in late 1985. They are (left to right) Richard Trott, Jean Gordon, James Bean (standing) and Jim Baas.
Design captures history; grads to build Arts Center

By Cynthia A. Griffin
Lantern staff writer 7-1-85

College students are known for wanting to leave their mark on their alma mater after graduation. The partners of Trott & Bean Architects, all OSU graduates, are leaving theirs through a building that links sentiments of the past with a vision toward the future.

Trott & Bean is the Columbus-stationed half of the architectural team awarded the contract for building the university's Visual Arts Center, which is expected to be completed sometime in late 1985.

The design presented by Trott & Bean and Eisenman/Robertson Architects, of New York, was chosen by a board of jurors over four other team designs.

"We started by sitting around a table and talking about the project, about OSU, the environment there and the evolution of the campus," Richard Trott explained. "Out of that process emerged certain attitudes toward the project, and those became the foundation of the design," he added.

The jurors who chose the Eisenman/Robertson and Trott & Bean design said it best captured the spirit of the new center's needs.

Trott explained the design had to fit a structure that would someday house art of the 21st century.

"This means it does not have finite boundaries in terms of architectural expression," he said. "The art that will be presented in the gallery is not like that in a traditional art gallery. It's not a repository for static art. There will actually be art being formed."

The center will have rooms where people can come watch artists at work, he explained.

He said the part of the building facing the Oval will replicate the Armory that stood there until it burned in 1958.


Trott, Bean and Gordon went through architectural school together and said they never dreamed they would someday work together under one firm.

The men were students at the university when the Armory burned and initiated the idea for preserving its history through the new building's design. Although they did not want to duplicate the Armory completely, they wanted to include parts of the structure.

The team chose to include the original building's tower portion because it provided a vertical element of design which would complement the entrance to the university, Bean said.

"Our design represents a belief that there ought to be a history of that site. It's not a virgin field. The Armory stood there for over 60 years," Trott said.

The campaign to fund the new arts center is being organized by Andrew Broekema, dean of arts administration. The Board of Trustees, whose next meeting is July 6, must approve any plans, Broekema said.
The legend and lore of the Armory lives on

By Patricia Mroczek

The heart of Ohio State's campus once was guarded by a giant, medieval-looking castle.

Known as the Armory, it stood at 15th Avenue and High Street— the main entrance to the campus.

It stood there for over 60 years until a fire in May 1958 severely damaged it. More than 25 years since its razing, the legend of the Armory lives on. Students on campus still share stories of its stature, popularity, and fate.

The Armory was never officially named by the University. Records refer to it in many ways during the years: Drill Hall, Military Department Building, Gymnasium, Auditorium, and even Gymnasium for Men. But the most popular was, simply, the Armory.

The building, patterned after a French feudal design, was built at a cost of $115,000. Its brick exterior hid a wooden frame and walls that may have been up to four feet thick. Though awesome in its outward appearance, the Armory only contained 39,620 square feet of space.

Rutherford B. Hayes, former U.S. president and then a member of the University Board of Trustees, Commencement was conducted in the Armory until about 1915, when graduating classes got too large.

From the outside, the Armory stood like a huge, forbidding fortress. But on the inside, varnished wood made it a warm and friendly place.

Unfortunately, that varnished wood was highly flammable.

One day in the spring of 1935, screaming fire whistles and billowing clouds of smoke reminded the University of the vulnerability of its wooden buildings. Mattresses at the rifle range located in the basement had caught fire, filling the building with heavy smoke. Columbus firefighters were able to stop the fire, though Charles "Dad" Shelton, the aged and well-known janitor, was overcome by the smoke and had to be helped by students.

That fire, although minor, fore-shadowed doom for Ohio State's majestic castle.

In 1958, Joanne Craft was a clerk-typist in the Air Force ROTC supply room in the basement of the Armory and spent May 17 as a business-as-usual day. She went home for the evening and put her three children to bed. Then the telephone rang.

"I thought the Armory was such a beautiful building," she said. "It was such an unusual building. People who saw it never forgot it."

But Craft was also realistic about the condition of the castle in its final days. Only the outside looked like a castle. By the mid-1960s, the inside was run down, facility justified the very high cost of restoring it.

Carson said the answer was difficult.

"Many of the board members themselves remembered the Armory when it was a key building on campus. It once was the activity center for the entire campus—where commencement, dances, initiations, and extracurricular activities were held. So the heartstrings get pulled when you see something like that disappearing."

Additionally, the decision was complicated by concerns from alumni, architects, and preservationists, who sought to have the building restored.

"The Armory had the best brick masonry job on its exterior for its day," Carson said. "We had to figure out whether we should protect it because of its uniqueness and masonry."

But restoring the interior would have been a major undertaking. The heating system in the building was "terrible," Carson said, there was no central conditioning and the electrical system was outdated.

Carson recommended demolition. And at the December 5 trustees meeting, the board agreed. The Cuyahoga Wrecking Company was hired.

ROTC midshipmen were busy preparing for it by polishing their gun stocks with rags soaked in linseed oil. The rags were stacked in cardboard boxes, next to where firemen and supplies were stored.

During a controlled-laboratory experiment, Kohlski polished the guns, stacked the rags in a cardboard box, and left them untouched, just as the midshipmen had. After a period of time, the rags ignited from spontaneous combustion.

University officials felt sure they knew what caused the blaze, Carson said.

In 1958 OSU Monthly reported the demolition in its June issue, decrying the castle's demise:

"Only the tower nearest the Oval remained to look down on the campus that so long had looked up to it. Only a few students were there to see the wrecker's crane swing savagely at the bricks and mortar that had become a living part of Ohio State. Without warning and without sound, the tower accepted its fate, sliding away from the Oval as if wishing to spare it, even now, from harm."

"Sixty-one years after it was built, the Armory, like a spent candle, had slumped into a mass ofrottng wood."

"In retrospect, I wish we'd have made more of an effort to keep it," Herrick said. "But at the time it was just another building on campus. It was different, of course, but not special."

When Joanne Craft approached the building the next day, she said she couldn't see much visible damage to its brick exterior. Her basement office had suffered water damage, but the fire had not reached it. The stench of smoke made working impossible, however.

"There was a lot of water, but the firemen had covered the desks and files with plastic covers. Uniform bins were covered with tarps."

Carson said the supply room was moved immediately to the basement of what was then the veterinary building, on the corner of Neil and 17th avenues.

"I thought the Armory was such a beautiful building," she said. "It was such an unusual building. People who saw it never forgot it."

But Craft was also realistic about the condition of the castle in its final days. Only the outside looked like a castle. By the mid-1960s, the inside was run down, facility justified the very high cost of restoring it.
She remembers it this way: "A neighbor called to say, ‘Get up, Joanne, your office building is on fire.’ I was floored, shocked. I felt bad about it, but couldn’t get there until the next morning after the kids got off to school."

A large crowd did gather, however, as billowy smoke loomed over the turrets. Danger existed early in the blaze because small-arms ammunition was stored in the building. Firemen, aided by several students, removed it while the fire raged through the roof overhead.

The heat from the blaze expanded the steel arches in the roof, forcing out the west wall. John Horrick, the University emeritus executive director of campus planning, said the arches later receded, leaving the wall extended.

The roof, west wall, and interior were severely damaged by fire. In the large, elegant rooms partitioned off, she said.

The future of the Armory rested with the board. On June 6, 1958, the board agreed to tear down the west wall of the building because it was a safety hazard.

But the question about what to do next wasn’t an easy one. Gordon Carson, now of Midland, Michigan, was the vice president given the responsibility of making a recommendation.

Carson said the decision boiled down to "whether the significant location and limited use of the company would complete the task in March 1959 for about $30,000. But not before the board knew why they were losing their Armory. Fearing that the fire may have been arson, the University asked chemical engineer Joseph Koffolt to investigate.

By reenacting what may have happened in the Armory that fateful day, the board hoped Koffolt (for whom Koffolt Laboratories are now named) could determine if the fire was arson or accidental.

Events that led to the fire began with an impending Navy inspection of residue that no longer would fear the outbreak of fire. But, like a candle, the warmth and brightness of its memory would continue to light the hearts of those who had known it for years to come."

The story of the Armory may never have an ending at Ohio State. Workers unearthed the foundations of the building's swimming pools during construction of Weigel Hall in the 1970s. It took huge amounts of cement to fill the holes before construction could continue.

And in 1986, when alumnus Dick Trott, architect, was preparing for a design meeting for the University's proposed Visual Arts Center, thoughts of the Armory were reborn.

The Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, which will cover part of the original Armory site, will feature a likeness of the Armory tower in its southwest corner.

It will be a fitting reminder of the grandeur of a time gone by.
Armory to live on in Wexner Center

Reflectors

By LEAH WEAVER
Lantern staff writer

There's a saying that buildings, like students, come and go. But in the case of the old Armory — the building that stood guard for so long overlooking the Oval — history may once again repeat itself as a likeness of the OSU landmark is incorporated in the new Wexner Center for the Visual Arts.

However, there are thousands of OSU students and graduates who have never seen or heard of the Armory. Information from the OSU archives describes the legends and lore of the landmark and reveals a study with a medieval touch.

Dubbed as the "castle on the campus," the Armory was the bastion of the Oval with its 4-foot-thick stone walls that comprised a mass of towers and turrets complete with crenellations.

Built in 1897 at a cost of $115,000, the Armory was originally envisioned as a multi-purpose facility which served as a gymnasium and training center for young cadets. The university, considering "huge" at that time with 1,000 students, also used the Armory for commencement exercises and social events.

The building housed the large, 20-by-150-foot drill hall in which many a male student awaited to fulfill his required two years of cadet service — a prerequisite to graduation. Likewise, female students completed required courses in hygiene and physical education there.

Also contained in the building were an indoor basketball court, a canvas track and two separate swimming pools, one for males and a smaller one for females called a "plunge bath."

At one time the university's Department of Military Science was located in the Armory, but on May 31, 1917, the building was turned over to the federal government for the preliminary training of men for the Signal Corps. Then in 1945, the Armory was taken over by the Navy RCIC.

But even with its towering majesty and impenetrable facade, some say the building had a right to fear the one thing that could cause its demise: fire.

The Armory was prone to fires with its varnished wooden floors which were highly flammable.

In 1955, smoke poured from the building when rags in the basement rifle range ignited, but damage was held to $500 by firefighters. However, on May 18, 1960, a fatal early morning fire almost totally destroyed the feudal-like fortress, leaving only the tower nearest the Oval as a type of regal remembrance of its former grandeur. Officially reluctantly decided to tear the building down in 1959.

John Herrick, university emeritus executive director of campus planning, said the large, unprotected steel ceiling arches heated and expanded during the heat, weakening the institute brick structure of the building.

"Later the arches receded, leaving the walls extended," Herrick said. "Repairing the building would have been an extensive, complicated process."

The 1968 OSU Monthly described the sentiments of many who had watched the demise of the 81-year-old campus landmark: "The building that had provided a gymnasium as well as a swimming pool for countless students, that had echoed happily to music of campus dances and had sadly watched so many depart after commencement exercises held within it, started to come down."

For many alumni, the memory of the Armory and its role as a campus landmark stirs fond sentiment.

Frank M. Fletcher, professor emeritus of psychology who once had an office in the Armory before it burned down, said that many people felt an attachment to the intriguing, picturesque building.

"Since the Armory was the site for many social activities, the building carried great sentimental value for people who were at OSU many years ago."

One of those alumni who shares the sentiments of many about the unique building is Richard Trott, of Trott & Bean Architects.

Trott & Bean is the Columbus-based half of the architectural team whose award-winning design for the Wexner Center for the Visual Arts incorporates aspects of the former Armory.

Trott, who was a student here when the Armory burned down in 1969, recalled how the Armory became a treasured landmark that contributed to the history of OSU.

The Armory was a unique, figurative building," Trott said, "its presence became a part of the composition of the Oval, and it was part of our philosophy to design a building that would draw on that history."

"Every site has its own memory of what has been there before," Trott said, "and we want to incorporate those symbolic images."

The new Visual Arts Center will inspire cherished memories for those who knew and loved the Armory. And the past and present will merge once more with a design that not only captures history, but is making history.

This is the first in a ten-week series featuring OSU landmarks.
ARMORY - 1899

Completed in February of 1898, this building once stood where Weigel Hall and the Wexner Center are now located (see map). It burned in May, 1958 and was demolished in 1959.

The above photo and caption were used in a bulletin board display in the Main Library for Winter Quarter, 1994.
ARMORY
BASEMENT PLAN

SCALE - 1" : 24"