

2022

Michaelsen Hall

Central Washington University

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Recommended Citation

Central Washington University, "Michaelsen Hall" (2022). *What is in a Name?*. 18.
https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/what_name/18

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What is in a Name? Michaelson Hall

Helen M. Michaelsen (often misspelled as Michaelson), namesake for CWU's Michaelsen Hall, enjoyed an active life.

Proof of that exists in the collection of home movies from the 1940s containing footage she took from trips to China (in 1940), the Grand Canyon, and the Canadian Rockies. She donated the films to CWU and many can be viewed online at https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/michaelson_movies/.

Michaelsen was an associate professor of home economics at Central Washington State College (now known as CWU) from 1937 until her retirement in 1970. She founded the Home Economics Department and developed a model program in home economics to train public school teachers.

She was also an active in a number of organizations including the First Presbyterian Church in Ellensburg, Delta Kappa Gamma (a professional society for women educators), the Friday Club (a local women's social club), and the Philanthropic Education Organization (PEO).

She also was a strong supporter of public broadcasting, the Salvation Army, the Odessa (Washington) Historic Society and the Scientific Research Society.

Michaelsen was born in Lincoln, Washington, on February 22, 1902. She received her early education in Odessa, Washington, and graduated from Odessa High School in 1920. He attended the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle, earning MA and MS degrees in Home Economics, and went on to do graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley.

Following her graduation from UW, she taught high school classes for several years in Kennewick, Washington, and Ridgefield, Washington. In 1937, she joined the faculty at CWSC. For the next several decades, in addition to her teaching and research, she traveled throughout the US and in other countries.

In 1970, after more than three decades of teaching, Michaelsen retired but continued to reside in Ellensburg until her death from a heart attack on July 24, 1983. She is buried at the Odessa Cemetery.

In 1969, the university embarked on a building spurt that saw an addition built on the old Samuelson Union Building as well as the construction of the connected Michaelsen and Randall halls, Brooklane Apartments and Mitchell Hall.

The pair of buildings (Michaelsen and Randall), were built using brick, glass, and concrete and reflect the transition period between the Mid-Century Modern architectural style and Late Modern style.

The two structures are linked by a one-story catwalk, so they are commonly referred to as Michaelson-Randall Hall. The two sections are two stories, with seven courtyards scattered around the periphery.

Today, Michaelson Hall is home to the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, which include family and consumer science education, fashion and merchandising, and other majors.