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Shaw Smyser Hall

Central Washington University

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What's in a Name? Shaw Smyser Hall

Only 53 years old when he died in April 1952, Reginald Shaw, who taught geography at Central for more than 17 years, was a popular professor who left a lasting legacy. In fact, the school's student newspaper, *The Campus Crier*, devoted nearly an entire page to stories about his passing and career.

"The flag on Central's campus flew at half-mast last Monday in tribute to Dr. Reginald G. Shaw, professor of geography here since 1935. Classes were dismissed during the funeral services and faculty and students gathered to pay respects to their associate, teacher and friend," noted the newspaper.

Shaw, who was as the founder and faculty advisor to the student geography club, was the first scientific geographer to make a source-to-mouth survey of the Columbia River since it had been done in 1811. At the time of his death, he was working on book about his research.

Born in Superior, Wisconsin in 1898, Shaw attended the Superior State Normal School before earning his undergraduate degree and Master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. In 1938, while teaching at Central, he obtained his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin.

In 1963, the university renamed an older campus structure known as the "Classroom Building" after Shaw. The two-story brick building with six classic Greek front pillars, was also renovated that year. Originally built in 1929, it housed administrative offices on the second floor with classrooms for English, history, health education, and psychology on the first.

At the same time Classroom Building was renamed for Shaw, an adjacent two-story brick structure, built in 1925, and known simply as "Library," was also remodeled and renamed for Seldon Smyser, who had taught social sciences from 1916 to 1942.

Smyser was born in Windsor, Illinois in 1870 and attended local public schools and, later, a private academy in Nashville, Tennessee. He earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from DePauw University in 1892, then completed his master's degree in 1901.

Over the following years, he worked on a graduate degree at Cornell and Columbia universities while also serving as principal at high schools in Mattoon, Illinois, Morris, Minnesota, and Yakima, Washington. In 1916, he joined the staff of the Department of Social Services at Washington State Normal School (now known as CWU).

From 1930 to 1931, he served as acting president of the college prior to the hiring of Robert E. McConnell as Central's president. Between 1951 and 1953, he served as a member of Psychology Strategy Board under President Harry S. Truman. He died in 1957 at his home in Ellensburg.

In 1994, the two buildings, Shaw and Smyser, were brought together into the current Shaw-Smyser Hall. During this \$7 million renovation, both structures were gutted and then remodeled and linked together. The hall is now home to CWU's College of Business programs.