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Kennedy Hall

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What's in a Name? Kennedy Hall

Kennedy Hall is not named after a famous Massachusetts political family dynasty. Rather, it was named to honor Ora Leigh Kennedy, who served as a housemother in Kamola Hall from 1921 to 1933.

In that position, Kennedy enforced curfews, dress codes, and regulations for women on campus. She also earned a reputation as a friendly adviser regarding personal and academic problems.

Kennedy was 55 years old when she was hired to supervise the women students living in Kamola and she worked until age 67, when she retired. In 1928, she was elevated to assistant dean of women and, a year later, became dean of women.

Prior to joining the staff at Central, Kennedy served as manager of the Dining Hall at Draper Hall at Amherst College in Massachusetts (1914-1917) and as dean of women and matron of Lewis Hall at the Idaho State Normal School in Lewiston, Idaho (1917-1921).

She trained in dormitory supervision and food service at Simmons College in Boston.

The original Kennedy Hall (now the International Center) was built as a new dormitory for women. It was a one-story frame construction structure, which was cheaper to build than typical brick buildings, and was located on two acres bought for this purpose north of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific railroad tracks. It cost \$150,000.

Built in an Early Modernism architectural style, the building boasted modern pole-like pillars and was constructed with an exterior wall design that was predominately a 'groove rustic' horizontal wood siding with some brick and some board and batten elements, according to historian Lauren Walton. Sometime later, wooden shingles were installed, covering the entire exterior of the building.

In November 1948, when Kennedy Hall was officially named, the Campus Crier student newspaper reported: "Miss Kennedy was closely associated with the personal and social living of all women students at the college during the time was connected with this institution."

The paper also quoted Amanda Hebel, chair of the faculty committee on memorials, who said, "She was a woman of broad interests and possessed those cultural and social qualities which gave her a place of high regard with students and faculty."

Kennedy died on February 21, 1948. At the time, she was living with her niece, Dawn Kennedy, head of the art department at the State College for Women (now the University of Montevallo) in Montevallo, Alabama, and a former art instructor at Central Washington College of Education.

In 1967, the Kennedy name was moved to one of the buildings in Student Village North (Phase I), which were erected that year. The newer Kennedy Hall continues to be in use as a student residence hall.