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## Button Hall

Central Washington University

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## What's in a Name? Button Hall

CWU's Button Hall, the only campus building constructed in a late-period Art Deco Moderne architectural style, was originally known as Button Apartments. It was built in 1947 by a local businessman, Frank Button.

Central acquired the building, which has flush stucco walls and distinctive sidelights of vertically-stacked glass block, in 1958 and converted it into student housing. In 1977-78, the interior of the building was remodeled to convert its apartments into offices. In 1989, an external elevator was added to the south face of the building.

Records also indicate that at one time, the property also contained a house and garage but both have been demolished.

In the late 1990s, university officials considered demolishing Button Hall in order to create more campus parking but those plans were abandoned. In recent years, Button Hall has served as the offices for CWU Student Housing Services.

According to architectural historian Lauren M. Walton, "the architecture of Button Hall exemplifies the distinct characteristics of the Art Deco Moderne style that was popular between 1930 and 1950."

As for Frank Button, Walton described him as a prominent local figure who owned and operated Button's Jewelry in downtown Ellensburg. A 2005 Ellensburg Daily Record article on the closing of the business that year noted that Button and his wife, Evelyn, opened the store in the early 1940s.

Button, who was born Clayton Francis Button in Glasgow, Montana in 1908, was a member of a jewelry-making family. His two brothers owned and operated separate jewelry businesses (in Wenatchee and Coulee City). Following his graduation from a jewelry and watch-making school in Peoria, Illinois, Button joined S.O. Hawkes Jewelry in Yakima, where he worked for several years.

The Buttons relocated to Ellensburg in 1940 and purchased the J.O. Thompson Jewelers on Pearl Street in 1942 (near the site of the current Dakota Café). In addition to operating the store, Button tended the downtown clock once located there.

In 1952, he relocated the business to the northwest corner of Fourth and Pine (where Central Party and Costume is now located) and continued to operate it until his death in 1961. He was buried in the IOOF Cemetery in Ellensburg.

Evelyn Button continued running the business until the late 1960s, when she turned it over to her daughters. At the time Button Jewelers closed, the business had been operated by several generations of the Button family for nearly 65 years.