OLD MAIN

History

On May 19, 1897, the decision to locate a Branch of the State Normal School in Cedar City was announced. The people of Cedar City were ecstatic for this opportunity and when the school first opened it was held in the town Ward Hall. They soon realized that they had to build a building dedicated solely to the university, but at this time they had already spent their allotted appropriation. The town had no money for paying teacher's salaries, buying books and furniture, or even to advertise that the university was now open. Because of this the building was built with materials, money, and labor donated by the 1,500 citizens of Cedar City. Many citizens mortgaged their homes and farms to help build the first building. The laying of the cornerstone for the building took place on March 14, 1898, and the dedication followed on October 28, 1898. Old Main, finished in 1898, an became the first building on campus. SUU was founded in 1897 as the Branch Normal School.

On December 12, 1948, a wintry Sunday morning, Old Main was found on fire. It started in the dry attic and quickly blazed through the building. Students and townspeople rushed to the scene and tried to retrieve anything they could from the building. Only moments before the building collapsed did the people leave to watch helplessly as the building and the remaining treasures were consumed by the fire. It was sad that the building burned down just weeks prior to the 50th anniversary of its dedication. It was even more devastating to the old men that had helped build the building and were part of the lumbering expedition, they saw their legacy diminish. This resulted in a loss of the art department and 80% of the materials from the library. Yet again, the fire brought together the citizens of Cedar City to help rebuild and repair what was left of the building. The two lower floors of the building were spared, but the beloved cast iron bell was beyond repair and was replaced by an electronic carillon bell sound.

In 1977 the building was gutted and they put in an entirely new interior. This was its fourth incarnation, but through all the remodeling and disasters, the original outer walls were preserved and the appearance of the building has stayed the same, keeping a sense of continuity throughout the campus.

Experiences with this building or departments I will use to Personalize My Tour.

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Fun Facts

- Old Main is closed and currently undergoing renovation and will soon house the Beverly Taylor Sorenson College of Education.

- Old Main has been rumored to have a ghost residing inside of it and only on a full moon at midnight can you see her. New Ambassadors should be taught the "ghost" story strictly by word of mouth and instructed on the proper use of it during campus tours.

- The Education Department boasts that over 95% of their graduates get jobs or go on to graduate school.

- The original plans for Old Main had made no provisions for heating the building. It was a basic omission completely forgotten by the architect. The citizens had to develop their own plans and add heating and ventilation into the plans for the building themselves.