

HISTORY OF CONE-BOTTOMS AT OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

My hometown, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, is a very historic place. It has served as the Clark County's seat of government since 1842. It has served as a trading center and farmer's market. A courthouse and jail were built there in 1844. The county courthouse now in use was built in 1899. 1.

Arkadelphia is located on the Ouachita and Caddo Rivers. They are both important waterways. Native Americans lived in this same area centuries ago.

Today, Arkadelphia has two colleges. Those two colleges are Henderson State University (HSU) and Ouachita Baptist University (OBU). HSU and OBU are located just across from each other on US Highway 67. OBU is named after the Ouachita River and the campus extends to its banks. The college first opened on September 2, 1886. 2.

Henderson opened September 3, 1890. HSU today still uses several historic buildings which include Wommack, Mooney, Foster and Arkansas Hall.

Ouachita does not have many historic buildings still in use. There is one significant one. It is named Cone-Bottoms. Someone first hearing the name might think it is a description of the location. After all, it is surrounded by huge pine trees and is near the river banks. But in fact, it is named after two families who helped raise the money needed to build it. 3.

A building nicknamed Cone Castle was first built at that location in 1914 and burned in 1917. That land had been purchased by W. T. Cone of Montrose for \$5,000 and given to OBU. 4.

After Cone Castle burned the Cone family, and the Bottoms family of Texarkana helped the college reach its fundraising goal of \$500,000. 2. The next building built there would be the first women's dormitory. It would be named in their honor. 4.

Before Cone-Bottoms was built, female OBU students had to live in houses in town away from campus. 5.

Cone-Bottoms opened in 1923 with 80 rooms and was made entirely of brick and concrete so that it would be fireproof. It had three stories. Rooms were divided into suites with a bath between every two rooms. There were "offices, parlours, and a dean's apartment." One-hundred fifty young ladies could live there. 6.

One of my teachers, Mrs. Charlotte Jeffers, was an OBU student and lived in Cone-Bottoms in the 1960's. She said that she was excited because she and her suitemates had their own private bathrooms. Most dormitories, even in the 1960's, had one bathroom per floor. This shows just how modern Cone-Bottoms was in the 1920's.

The university stopped using Cone-Bottoms as a residence hall in 1986. When my mother was attending Ouachita in 1990 she thought that the beautiful old building had been abandoned. She said that students would snoop around inside it at night. But work would soon begin on restoring it. By 1994 it had been remodeled and converted for use as an administration building. More than a dozen administrative offices are located in it now.

Today it is also known as the Grant Administration building in memory of James Richard Grant and honor of Daniel Ross Grant. 3. The plaque in the lobby of old Cone-Bottoms states "The combined service of this admired father and son team representing over one third of the first century of Ouachita's life, is of inestimable value in the development of the university."

When people enter campus from downtown, one of the first buildings they will see is Cone-Bottoms with those four white columns still guarding the door as they were originally built. Even though the inside is different, the outside remains the same.

When I went to Cone-Bottoms to begin my research, I talked to Chris Babb who is in charge of OBU Development. He said that the old buildings on campus were mostly built in the 1960's. But his office is in a building that is more than 80 years old.

RESOURCES

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkadelphia,_Arkansas
2. www.obu.edu/about/history.asp
3. Plaque in lobby of Cone-Bottoms
4. Once in a Hundred Years by Michael Arrington and William Downs
5. Research paper by Dean Harwell in special archives of OBU library-no date given
6. Newspaper article in research folder in archives-1936