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New Dorms Honor History

While Looking To Future

By Krista Hovis
Managing Editor

Kent State University in Kent, OH, is a prestigious institution of higher learning with an historic background. Established in 1910, Kent State Normal School was initially a teacher training facility situated on land gifted by the grandson of the city founder. It was later renamed Kent State College when it was authorized to grant bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in addition to bachelor of science in education degrees. The school was the first in the state of Ohio to establish extension centers when, in 1912, it opened 20 locations in the northeast portion of the state.

The name of the school was changed again in 1935 to Kent State University when then-governor Martin L. Davey, a Kent native, signed a bill elevating the school's status. At that time it created a graduate degree program and established the College of Business Administration. In 1947, Dr. Oscar Ritchie joined the Department of Sociology, making Kent State the first state university in Ohio to appoint an African-American to a faculty position. The school's 10th president, Carol A. Cartwright, became the first female president of a state university in Ohio in 1991.

Another important date in Kent State University history—as well as American history—is May 4, 1970. It was on that date that four students were killed and nine more were injured when members of the

Ohio National Guard fired upon demonstrators protesting the U.S.'s invasion of Cambodia during the Vietnam War. Actions leading up to this tragic event took place near Stopher Hall and Johnson Hall—two dormitories originally constructed in 1949 and 1956, respectively.

In the years since those residence halls were originally built, many changes have taken place at the university, in students' expectations of campus living and in general architectural practices. "Many of the new buildings constructed during that era (post-World War II) are seen today as fairly institutional and unfriendly in nature," said Michael Muse, AIA, architect/partner of The Collaborative Inc., Toledo, OH. "This was the case with the original Stopher and Johnson Halls."

Photo by Scott Pease Photography



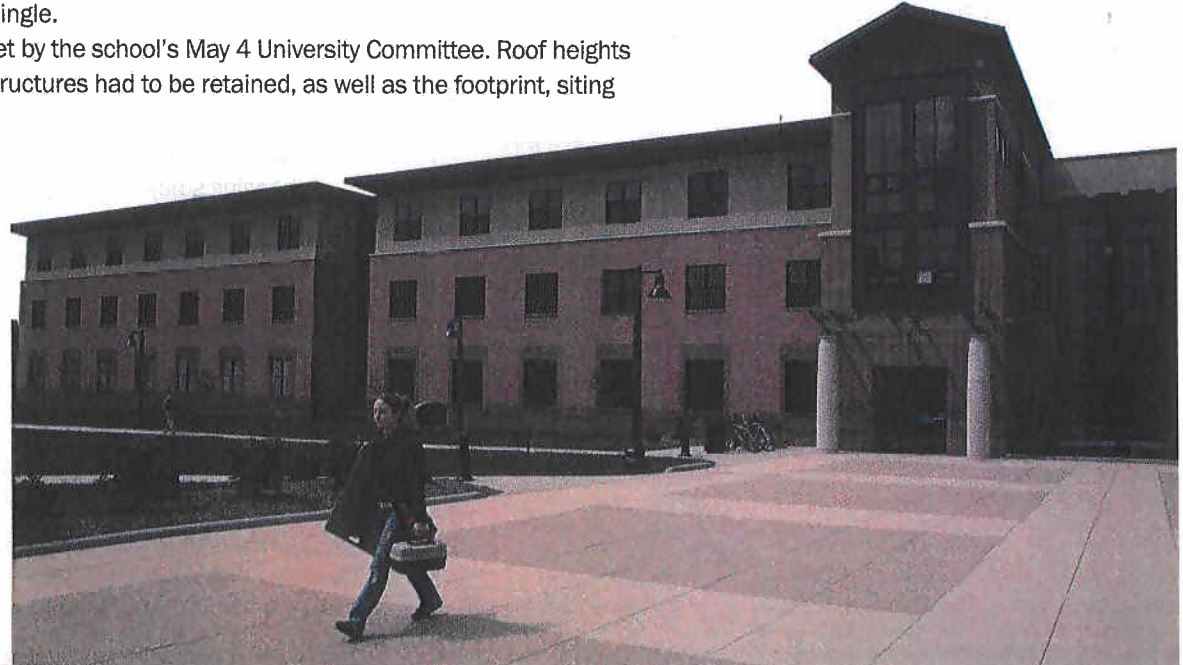
As well as giving an impersonal feel, the structure of the old buildings was not conducive to accepting new technology. Refurbishing the dorms was considered but the configuration of the existing structural and mechanical systems limited the university's vision for the facilities. Larger rooms and private bathrooms could not be accommodated. The cost to renovate would be more than new construction costs.

New dormitories were built as the enrollment grew, further highlighting the limitations of the existing Stopher and Johnson Halls. In 1993, Stopher was closed, followed by Johnson in 2003.

DEVELOPING NEW HALLS WITH HISTORY IN MIND...

The Collaborative Inc. was selected to design the new residence halls based on State of Ohio rules for this type of project requiring a review of request for qualifications from firms, followed by interviews of those firms. The university asked the designers to create halls that had a warm and inviting residential, rather than institutional, feel. More student community space was desired so residents of the two buildings could more easily intermingle.

Many other parameters were set by the school's May 4 University Committee. Roof heights and flat roof lines of the original structures had to be retained, as well as the footprint, siting





and lower level annex that connected the two buildings. The character of the original rear façade of Johnson Hall, which served as a backdrop for the shootings, had to be maintained, and the original brick color and pattern needed to be matched.

With those objectives serving as a basis for the design and a budget of over \$34.6 million, The Collaborative Inc. set out to develop a plan that would meld the flat roof structures with the residential concept. It wanted the division of the two buildings to become blurred and have open social spaces for visual connections between residents of the two halls.

Load-bearing masonry and PC concrete plank were considered for the main framing material during the initial design phase. They were quickly dismissed in favor of light-gauge steel framing, as it was more cost effective and had a higher degree of flexibility. According to Muse, "While each structural system has its strengths, residence halls, like many higher education building types, need to be able to adapt to new technology and changing student needs in order to stay marketable. The use of load-bearing metal studs allows the owner to have relatively easy access to wall cavities and the electrical and technological infrastructure that feeds the building. In addition to easy access, metal framing systems are generally more forgiving when renovations are necessary.

"When we look back at the changing face of student housing over the past 30 years, we see that a major market change has occurred in two major areas—socialization models and technology/power needs," he continued. "It was our opinion that a metal framing

