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Brick by Brick

A COLLECTION



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EDITED BY

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CREATIVE COMMONS

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Introduction

WELCOME HOME

Oxford, Ohio, is a town of red bricks and winding paths, sleepy mornings and bright, buzzing nights. It's a place that, at first, might just seem like a stop along the way—a college town like any other, with historic buildings, coffee shops, and streets lined with old houses. But over time, for those who spend their college years here, Oxford quietly shifts from being just a house in a temporary zip code to something far more personal: a home.

This collection is a celebration of that transformation when a house becomes a home.

Through twenty-five short stories, we open the front door to a place built not only with wood and brick, but with memories, friendships, laughter, heartbreaks, growth, and everyday moments that linger longer than you'd

expect. Each piece belongs to a different “room” of this home, telling its story, reflecting the ways we live, gather, and change during our time at Miami University.

You’ll find stories ranging from the porch to the backyard, from the kitchen table to the living room couch—all parts of a house that, piece by piece, become filled with meaning. And just like the named houses of Oxford, each story carries its own charm, humor, and heart.

We hope you’ll recognize something of your own story here, too—because everyone who’s lived in Oxford knows: it’s not the place alone that stays with you. It’s the life you built inside it.

Welcome in.



the Porch



The Porch

Every home has a starting point, and in Oxford, that starting point is almost always the porch.

Walk up the front steps. Look around. The stairs creak under your footfall. Here's where the first layers of a home begin to show: a hand-painted house name, "Brick by Brick," posted above the door, a string of lights left up long after the last celebration ended.

There's always something on the porch. Maybe it's a sagging couch no one remembers moving in, or a drying rack crammed with a week's worth of laundry. A speaker leans against the siding, scuffed from rain and spontaneous dance parties. A leftover pumpkin from last fall still sits on the windowsill—soft around the edges, but somehow still standing. This is the threshold where you

wait for rides, wave to neighbors, or sit cross-legged with a friend at one in the morning, talking about life.

And the view from the porch is just as important as the porch itself. Across the street, laughter echoes through the open windows of a neighbor's house. Down the block, someone's hosting a party, and students greet each other in the crowded doorway. This is a place for you to rest, to observe, and to feel welcomed.

So, step closer to the front door. You might find a crooked welcome mat, initials scratched into the wood, or a Post-it note taped above the knob that says: *Come in, it's open*. And sometimes, it really is.



The Conrad Gardens

ELIZABETH SMITH

The Arthur F. Conrad Formal Gardens has been a serene staple of pure bliss for many students throughout the years. Located on Miami University's Oxford campus, it was established in 1931. Arthur F. Conrad, the university's groundskeeper, had a passion for enhancing the campus's natural beauty, creating a picturesque and historically significant spot on campus. Over time, the gardens have become a symbol of the university's commitment to incorporating nature into everyday campus life. Serving as a historical landmark, the gardens also play a role in the university's traditions.

Conrad began working at Miami in the 1920s, where he held a vision to create a space that provides a tranquil environment for the university's community. Influenced

by the prominent national City Beautiful movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the movement addressed rapid urbanization and the industrialization of American cities by the action of integrating nature in parks, gardens, and tree-lined streets into urban areas. The dreariness of industrialized cities and urban areas was met with the passion of nature and the goal of uplifting the human spirit. Conrad's passion and dedication to beautifying the campus have resulted in one of the most beloved spots on campus. Sitting near the center of the Oxford campus, the gardens host an array of carefully placed plants, pathways, koi ponds, flower beds, and stone archways. The meticulous planning of the gardens is a testament to Conrad's belief in the importance of nature in university life.

Though the beauty of the Conrad Gardens is a significant aspect of the university, the garden holds important history for the university. The remains of Robert Hamilton Bishop, the first president of Miami University, were moved to the gardens in 1959. Bishop had originally been buried in College Hill, Ohio, at Farmers' College—a precursor to Miami University. However, after the closure of Farmers' College, his remains were relocated to the Conrad Gardens. This was a significant moment in Miami's history as it acknowledged the importance of Bishop's role in founding the early years of the university. In his honor, a monument was placed in the gardens, known as the Bishop Memorial Stones. The Highland Pipes and Drums of Miami University helped bring the stones over from Scotland to the campus, honoring its past and embracing its future.

The site is also home to honoring Miami alumni, faculty, and students who have passed away. The gardens have been home to many memorial services and tributes, marking the spot as a place of celebration and reflection. The tranquil atmosphere of the gardens provides a home for those seeking peace and in seeking the remembrance

of loved ones.

Beyond their commemorative purpose, the gardens host a variety of ornamental flower beds, pathways, annual, and perennial plants. The rose garden is a beautiful feature of the gardens and was donated by the Beta Epsilon Chapter of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority in 1974, in honor of their centennial. The rose garden hosts many events, particularly weddings, due to its beauty and fragrance, which provide a romantic appeal. The donation of the rose garden is another example of the community's enduring support of beautifying the campus. In total, there are around thirty types of annuals, fifty varieties of trees, and a collection of shrubs and other plants. The design invites visitors to stay for a while, enjoy a book, or take a stroll through the gardens. The open areas of the gardens invite group activities and celebrations.

An escape from the hustle and bustle of university life, many students flock for a moment with nature. Students can be seen stacking hammocks in scattered locations around the garden, picnics frequent the open areas, and harmless catch and release activities at the koi pond occur. The beauty of the gardens and their central location on campus give visitors a place to gather; to celebrate important events, share experiences, and create memories. The careful design of the garden ensures everyone has a place to enjoy, without feeling crowded.

The Arthur F. Conrad Formal Gardens are an integral part of the lives of students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Its cherished grounds offer a place of rest and relaxation. From its creation in 1931 to its current state, the gardens continue to reflect the university's commitment to the integration of nature and beauty into everyday life. Whether you're a student seeking a place to de-stress or a couple tying the knot, the gardens are a place for everyone to enjoy and make memories.



Hawks Landing

KAYLA ANGUS

Are you searching for an apartment in Oxford? One of the many options is Hawks Landing, a preferred off-campus apartment complex for Miami University students. Located on Brown Road, the complex is just over a mile away from campus and can be easily accessed by the U4 bus route.

Overview

Constructed in 1994, Hawks Landing provides one-bedroom to four-bedroom housing options for students. Each apartment has granite countertops in the kitchen, a washer and dryer, and a communal living room. Individual bedrooms have a lock, but the central living area is designed to encourage a sense of community while still

respecting privacy. Signing a lease with the complex also includes access to a 24-hour fitness center and printer, swimming pool and hot tub, and basketball and volleyball courts. There is also a central dog park, since apartments allow pets with a small surcharge.

Community Life

Being one of the farther complexes from campus, Hawks Landing provides a rather calm environment because of its seclusion. This creates a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere, with friendly neighbors and few disturbances at night. The complex also occasionally organizes events such as free breakfast or a taco bar, encouraging resident interaction and community.

Location and Accessibility

While Hawks Landing provides ample parking for its residents, it is also within walking distance to all the relevant Oxford amenities such as grocery stores, restaurants, and coffee shops. It is close to everything students need, but still far enough away to feel private. The U4 bus route passes through the area at frequent intervals to enable those without cars to move around town.

Green Space

Central in the complex is a large dog park enclosed by a chain fence. This green space effectively promotes community, as these pet-friendly residences house many dogs. While certainly practical, the park also provides a natural meeting place for the residents and pets alike to socialize and get acquainted with their neighbors.

The general layout of Hawks Landing mirrors the aesthetics of the dog park. There is a large amount of open space between buildings, complemented with winding paths and the occasional bench to sit on.

Resident Perspectives

While it's easy to promote Hawks Landing on paper, its true character can be revealed through the voices of its residents. For instance, according to the Hawks Landing official website, 98.8% of reviewers rate the property five stars in almost every aspect, including parking, noise, construction, grounds, maintenance, and staff. Many residents have specifically praised the staff for their attentiveness, efficiency, and willingness to respond to any maintenance issues, as well as their general approachability. The staff seem genuinely invested in the welfare of the residents.

Reviewers also commend the layout of the complex for fostering community spirit while still providing space. The private units allow for quiet study time or relaxation, while communal areas encourage socialization and interaction.

Hawks Landing Compared

Hawks Landing offers a balance of facilities, a convenient location, and a community environment. It has a more contemporary aesthetic compared to other apartment complexes in Oxford. These other complexes may not provide the same pet-friendly atmosphere or modern convenience that can be found at Hawks Landing.

While some housing options prioritize affordability over amenities, Hawks Landing offers a variety of benefits that justify its pricing. The fitness center, pool, and outdoor spaces, combined with the spacious apartment options, make Hawks Landing more than just a place to sleep. The dog park in particular sets it apart from other student housing, such as Campus Commons or The Verge, which don't have this additional feature.

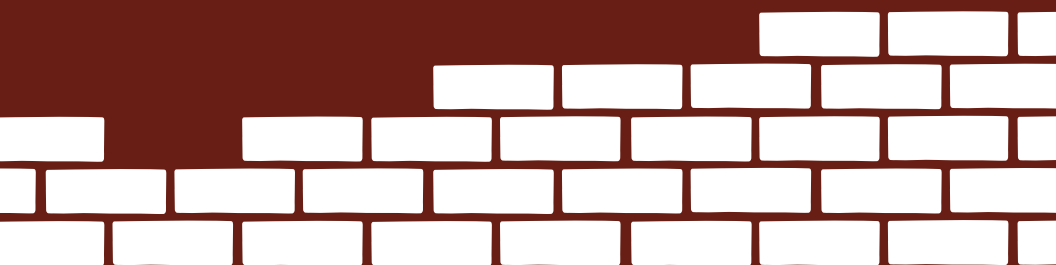
For those who prefer a quieter environment, Hawks Landing provides this luxury as well. While other complexes may be busier, Hawks Landing offers a peaceful alternative.

Final Thoughts

While Hawks Landing may appeal to a large variety of residents, its features make it an especially excellent choice for upperclassmen who want to establish their independence. The complex provides the perfect environment for residents who want to experience independent living away from campus. Residents find everyday comfort through the furnished housing, in-unit laundry, and high-quality kitchen facilities, as well as 24-hour amenities that support an active, healthy, and social lifestyle.

Hawks Landing stands out as an exceptional housing option for pet owners in the area. Pet ownership at the complex is highly encouraged, with each apartment having a two pet maximum. This, combined with the inclusion of the dog park, creates a close-knit community. The vast green spaces and walking paths lend themselves to an extremely pet-friendly lifestyle.

Hawks Landing demonstrates its commitment to community and functionality through its thoughtfully designed facilities. The location provides convenient access to campus, but maintains enough distance for residents to experience independence, privacy, and personal community. The apartment complex provides students with stability during the whirlwind that is college, allowing them to have a welcoming home to return to each night. The combination of its amenities, green spaces, and community-focused design makes Hawks Landing an ideal residential choice. It stands as a complex worth highly considering for those who plan to make Oxford their future home.



the Foyer



The Foyer

The entryway yawns, a shaft of pale light filtering in through the windows on either side of the front door, welcoming visitors—both old and new—with open arms.

The rest of the house stretches beyond the foyer, but a special feeling accompanies the first step inside. A warm comfort eases the door closed behind you. Hang up your coat, or rather, drop it on the light pink ottoman overflowing with handmade quilts.

Look up. A string hangs loosely from the ceiling, frayed into a tuft. When you pull it, a white light brightens the foyer, bouncing off frames of grinning faces and hugging friends clustered on the walls. Clearly, the photos are all different owners: a group of three college girls in Miami shirts, a tall couple with two tall children, two laughing

men hugging their labradoodle. Smile back in greeting, then look down. A maroon runner flows from the entrance, a coffee stain adorning one of its white tassels. The floor is scuffed in beige patterns from when previous owners had been late to class, moving so quickly that they left behind proof.

Every movement made in this house, all of its history and memories, has been recorded and documented. Left behind for those who come next. It is all contained at the beginning, in the foyer, where the others before you had first stepped, too.



The Shriver Center

MIKAYLA CLINGER

Miami University's Shriver Center was opened in 1957 under its original name, the University Center, and was intended to act as the heart of community engagement. The Shriver Center is named after Phillip R. Shriver, who served as Miami University's president from 1965 to 1981. His leadership played a crucial role in shaping the modern identity of the university. Since then, it has undergone two major construction additions and a variety of smaller renovations. The campus population quickly outgrew the space that Shriver provided, prompting the construction of the Armstrong Student Center.

Nowadays, Shriver is a bustling hub of activity, home to the Rinella Learning Center, Brick & Ivy Campus Store, Admissions Office, Miami Catering, Mail and Package

Center, and many multipurpose rooms available for event rental. It is located in a central part of campus, making it a convenient meeting point or spot to cool off on a hot day.

Rinella Learning Center

Focused on academic support, the Rinella Learning Center offers tutoring and other forms of supplemental instruction in order to assist students in achieving their goals. Their staff includes learning specialists and graduate students, ensuring that there is someone available to assist students with most topics. The tutors are even known to act as accountability partners if that's what their pupil finds most useful. The Rinella Learning Center also houses the Testing Center, which may be used by students with registered disabilities. Students who qualify for testing accommodations are encouraged to use the Rinella Testing Center in order to lessen the stress and anxiety that comes with test taking, though there are policies to follow, and students must coordinate with their professors to schedule tests and exams.

Brick & Ivy

As the first and only merchandise store on campus, Brick & Ivy is always teeming with new students and their families at the start of the academic year. Other than Miami swag, they also offer school supplies and act as the only bookstore in Oxford. Textbooks can be purchased through the Brick & Ivy website by entering the titles of the books or by entering the names of your courses. If a professor has submitted their required readings, the texts will be automatically added to your cart.

Brick & Ivy can be accessed from the front of Shriver, through the east-facing door across the street from Armstrong. It can also be accessed from the back by going through the Shriver Center Starbucks—one of three Starbucks locations on campus. Brick & Ivy's wares rotate frequently throughout the year, so every time you enter

the two-story shop, you can expect to discover something new. An interesting thing that was added fall of 2024 is Miami's branded coffee, Miami Grind. It is used by all the dining halls, and now anyone can purchase it to enjoy a taste of Miami at home.

Admissions

Beyond handling prospective student applications, the Admissions Office at Miami University organizes campus tours, schedules recruitment and outreach events, provides statistical information about the institution, and handles student orientation. Student tour guides and SOULs (Student Orientation Undergraduate Leaders) are hired and trained through the Admissions Office. Located on the first floor of Shriver, the Admissions Office is often the first indoor campus location prospective students see. The welcoming environment of the office helps prospective students gain insight into what makes Miami unique.

Package Center

Opened in 2017, the Mail and Package Center serves as a central location for students to send and receive mail. With the increasing reliance on online shopping and shipping services, the Package Center plays a crucial role in ensuring that students have a reliable and efficient system for handling their deliveries. Before this addition to Shriver, students had to wait in long, slow lines to receive their mail. Equipped with secure storage, package lockers, and staffed service counters, it provides convenience and accessibility for students living on campus since the smart lockers are available twenty-four seven.

Catering

Miami's catering service operates mainly out of the kitchen located on the second floor of Shriver. They provide professional catering services for university

events, meetings, and special occasions nearly every day. Whether serving small gatherings or large conferences, Miami Catering offers a diverse menu featuring fresh, high-quality ingredients. From buffet-style meals to plated dinners and grab-and-go options, Catering ensures university events are well-supported with excellent food and service. Miami Catering is a great resource for faculty, student organizations, and external guests looking to host events at Miami University, not to mention it's one of the better-paying student jobs on campus at fourteen dollars per hour.

Conclusion

Miami University's Shriver Center stands as a testament to the university's commitment to student engagement, academic success, and building community. Through its tutoring services, event spaces, bookstore, and admission office, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the Miami experience. Whether as a space for learning, networking, or relaxation, the Shriver Center continues to be a cornerstone of campus life, reflecting Miami's dedication to providing a well-rounded and enriching environment for its students and visitors.



Third Floor Tuesdays: Stories from Bachelor Hall

NICK BERMUDEZ

At a glance, Bachelor Hall might seem like the last place a student would expect to find lasting memories. Situated at the far end of the long-reaching Spring Street, its white-capped bell tower is the first thing many students see on their daily commute to campus. Built in 1978 and named after Harvard University graduate Joseph M. Bachelor, it has served as the home of countless students'—doubtlessly—favorite subjects: English and mathematics. With this in mind, Bachelor Hall may appear to be like any other academic hall on campus: an insignificant building for a class you woke up too early to attend or stayed up too late preparing for. It is nothing

to be paid particular attention to—and since renovations began in 2024, this place of afterthoughts has been stripped to its bones, like an empty insect's shell.

But not to me. The memories I have of this place go beyond any concept of the ordinary, and those wonderful experiences live on in its walls. By the time I graduate, I will not see how it has been transformed. I will probably not walk Bachelor's halls again for a very long time, and if I do, there is no telling how it will have changed. So, I am writing this as a eulogy—to the place I knew, to the people I have met, and to the warmth I have known.

Bachelor Hall, as mentioned, is dedicated to one Joseph M. Bachelor. A Miami undergraduate, he went on to earn a master's and a doctoral degree in English at the prestigious Harvard University, before returning to Miami as an associate professor of English. After seventeen years of innovative teaching (and exceptional enthusiasm regarding a presentation of Shakespeare), Bachelor was promoted to a full professor of English. He retired in 1946 and died a year later, leaving his 400-acre farm to be used by Miami as the Bachelor Preserve—cementing his legacy for years to come. By 1979, Miami University held a dedication ceremony for the late professor and named the new communications building Bachelor Hall in his honor.

Of course, I am sure there is no way that Professor Bachelor could have foreseen his legacy. There ought to be more to tell of a man who seemed so passionate about his craft, but I take comfort in the fact that his hall has left a lasting impression on me. I know it has for me and my friends, at least—so let's go to them now, and dig into the heart of my experiences.

Sophomore year—simply put—was a confusing time. When I came to Miami University, I had fanciful dreams of wearing a white doctor's coat, pressing forward with what I had long believed was my passion. Having wormed my way out of the primordial ooze of Intro to Bio, however, I

then faced my personal twin titans of disaster: chemistry and physics I. I passed them, of course. But if my father was anything to model myself after, it was clear I needed far better than passing grades to get into medical school.

Questions of my true passions swam in my head daily, all as my junior year rapidly approached. With little time to my name and few places to call home, I found the one thing I knew I liked to do: write. I entered the Association of Creative Writers (ACW) as an anxious sophomore and proceeded to spend the rest of my Tuesday and Thursday nights enshrined on the third floor of Bachelor.

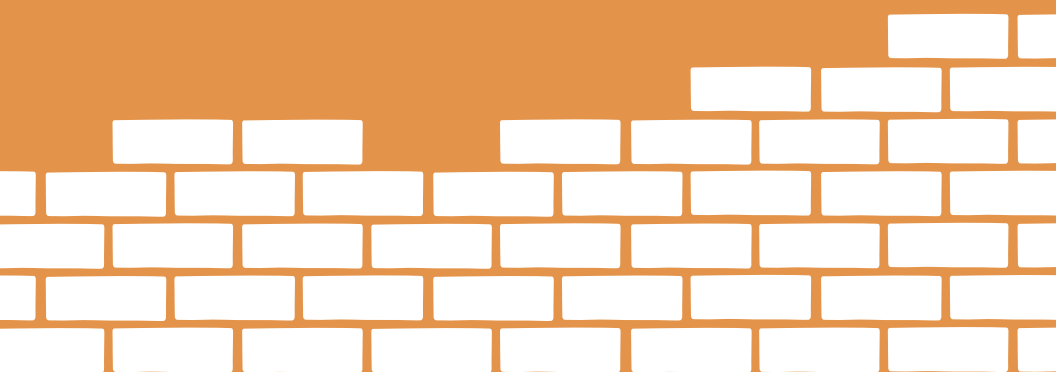
This was my introduction to Bachelor as a place and not just a simple building. I don't think I can ever think of Bachelor Hall without going back to my days in the ACW. All of this, of course, was the precursor to my eventual change in major. I spent far more time in the building as a Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major, frankly, than I had ever asked for. In fact, there was one semester when most of my classes were in Bachelor. I would go down to the stuffy ground-floor classrooms for my morning workshop, then climb to the third floor for Literary Marketplace in the same room I would have my club in.

A strange sensation, to say the least. I don't want to claim that I never fell victim to boredom during class or that I never succumbed to drowsiness after staying up too late writing a paper. There were times when I entered Bachelor Hall and dreaded seeing the white building peeking over the hilly roads of Spring Street, or found the ancient, dust-filled classrooms too uncomfortable to focus in. Despite its charms and the wonderful memories I've made in the ACW, Bachelor Hall is, at the end of the day, still just a hall.

But that doesn't mean it hasn't stuck with me. The frequency with which I visited that place—the mixture of coursework and camaraderie that helped me come out of my shell—has fixed in my mind a unique association.

Any other place at Miami, any other hall or situation, and I might have passed it over as unremarkable. In some ways, Bachelor has grown with me. I came to know it as I progressed as a student, all while discovering the countless wonderful people who made a home there, too. A very dear part of my college experience has taken shape in Bachelor—and, by extension, Bachelor has been an experience in itself.

By the time renovations are complete, I will have graduated from Miami—meaning Bachelor will never be quite the same as it was when I knew it. If you get the chance to walk its renewed halls, there's no telling whether you'll feel the same sense of warmth and belonging that I did. Still, if you're searching for a place to host your club or to find one to join—I cannot recommend this place enough. With any luck, you might just find the members of the ACW still lingering on the third floor, caught in a storm of laughter and pen scribbles. Give them a hello for me. And who knows? You might just find Bachelor to be a whole new home for yourself—just like I did.



the
Office



The Office

Tucked in the front of the house, isolated from the comforts within, is the office. Take your shoes off before entering; begin warming up to the sanctity that comes with returning to a spot that is your own. But before sliding into slippers and exchanging your day clothes for pajamas, open your computer. Do the work that's been itching at your back throughout the day, begging you to be rid of its inconvenience. Free yourself of its burden.

Take a moment to shut the door behind you. As the blue light from your computer illuminates your face, bask in this space for a moment—one reserved for your most contemplative thoughts. This room is often passed over, sacrificed for a cozier spot like the living room corner

or your bedroom's mattress. But appreciate the tools it presents you with: a collection of muddied highlighters, a lamp that flickers because none of the housemates had double-A batteries on hand, the rug whose fuzz now clumps together under the years of use it's endured.

Relish the work you've been able to complete here. Sink further into the chair molded to your body, hugging you after countless sleepless nights spent curled in its crevice. Be grateful that there is still work to be done, that there's still a purpose tethering you to this place.

Embrace the academia that holds you—because even if you move out one day, never to sit within these four walls again, the learning will stay with you.



Ensuring Access in Rural Ohio

ABBY SHOWALTER

What is the OCAC?

The Oxford Community Arts Center (OCAC) is an arts organization serving the Greater Oxford Area, including Butler, Preble, Franklin, and Union counties. According to their website, the OCAC's Mission is "to enrich lives and build community by providing, celebrating, and promoting a diverse array of cultural and arts programming, performances, and exhibits; to carefully preserve the historic Oxford College building and campus as a welcoming environment offering classroom, studio, rehearsal, concert, theater, and meeting spaces; and to ensure the OCAC's ability to serve future generations as a catalyst, connector, and magnet for emerging and established artists, performers, students, visitors, and

arts organizations.”

While the OCAC is small, they are not alone in their aim of reaching out to Oxford residents and ensuring the community is a more lively place. Partnering with over twenty different nonprofit partners in Oxford alone, including Opening Minds Through Art and Oxford Community Theater, many programs fulfill the mission of bolstering community involvement and collaboration, such as an annual gala and a range of art classes. These programs and the collaboration they invite within Oxford and the Greater Cincinnati community cement the OCAC as a cornerstone of Oxford, as well as open a door to the community’s past.

The Beginning: The Oxford Female Institute

After graduating from Yale, John Witherspoon Scott was a Presbyterian minister and professor in mathematics and natural sciences who accepted a teaching position at Miami University in 1828. However, he was fired from Miami University by the university president, George Junkin, in the early 1840s for opposing Junkin’s pro-slavery views. While facing persecution in the Oxford community for his progressive beliefs, John Scott briefly left Oxford to teach at Farmers’ College in Mt. Healthy, Ohio, for five years. It was during this time that his daughter, Caroline Scott, met her husband, a Farmers’ College student and future 23rd president of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, who had been frequenting the family home for math tutoring from his professor, Caroline’s father.

After five years in Mt. Healthy, the Scott family returned to Oxford, with John becoming the first president of the Oxford Female Institute, Caroline enrolling in the Institute, and Benjamin following the family to Oxford to enroll at Miami University. In 1849, John Scott chartered the Oxford Female Institute within a small two-story brick building on the corner of College and High Streets. By 1856, a new

three-story building was constructed south of the original school and joined with the existing structure by a latticed walkway. By the end of the 1800s, the two buildings were fully connected with additions, including a north wing, library, chapel, and other rooms.

National Notoriety: The Impact of Caroline Scott Harrison

Caroline Scott Harrison was born in Oxford on October 1st, 1832, to parents Mary Potts Neal and John Witherspoon Scott. Since Caroline, who went by “Carrie,” aged into college before the American Civil War ended in 1865, Miami had not yet been forced to admit women into the institution due to low enrollment. Thus, Caroline was refused admission, and her father began the Oxford Female Institute. Miami University’s Board of Trustees did eventually approve a resolution to permit the admission of women in 1887, five years before Caroline’s passing in 1892. Within that same year, five women were admitted to Miami as “special students,” with Miami admitting seventeen women in 1891. However, the first woman would not graduate from Miami University until 1900, when three of the sixteen women at Miami were awarded bachelor’s degrees.

During her time at the Oxford Female Institute, Caroline studied languages, music, and drawing, graduating in 1852. After being secretly engaged for a year to Benjamin Harrison, the couple married in Oxford and settled in Indianapolis, Indiana, where Benjamin worked in the legal community and Caroline taught Sunday school, music, and art. Caroline fell ill with tuberculosis in the summer of 1892 and later died the following fall while her husband was still in the presidential office, the second First Lady to do so. As a long-time progressivist, Caroline was an early supporter of Women’s Rights and brought the issue into the mainstream after her husband took office. As an Oxford native, she revolutionized the position of First Lady by going above and beyond her duties to

set the groundwork for those after her.

The Next Chapter: The OCAC Becoming a Part of Miami University

In 1867, the Oxford Female Institute and the Oxford Female College merged and were re-chartered as the Oxford College for Women in 1906. In 1902, the Ohio General Assembly passed a bill by Charles Seese, a representative from Akron, mandating that all Ohio public schools, including Miami University, become co-educational. In that same year, the Ohio legislature also authorized the Ohio State Normal School at Miami, a teaching school which would produce Miami's first black student graduate, Nellie Craig Walker. The Ohio State Normal School would later become Miami's College of Education, Health, and Society. While Miami's Board of Trustees had already approved a resolution to admit women to the university in 1887, after closing the university from 1873 to 1885 due to debt from low enrollment after the Civil War, Seese's bill protected this resolution by law to ensure women's access to education for generations to come.

By 1928, Miami University acquired the Oxford College building and remodeled it through architect Robert Harsh, who unified the different parts of the building with a Gregorian façade to match the rest of Miami's brick buildings, tearing down the signature Victorian turret structure on the corner of Beech and High streets. Miami turned the building into a women's dormitory, known informally for the next sixty years as "Ox College". The ballroom, the final addition to the building, was added by Miami University in 1929 with the help of funds raised by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) in honor of Caroline Scott Harrison. In 1976, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and listed by its original name: the Oxford Female Institute. The building continued to be

used as a women's dormitory until the mid-1980s, when it was converted to graduate student housing. Miami University closed the building in the early 1990s, which sat vacant for several years until members of Oxford's theater community first suggested the idea of a community arts center to the City of Oxford.

The OCAC Today: OMA, Ox Act, and More

Soon after the building's closing in 1998, Oxford residents came together to establish an arts center and begin work on preserving the historic building. In 2001, this group of residents and Miami University signed a fifty-year lease with a twenty-five-year renewal clause. Incorporating the Oxford Community Arts Center (OCAC) in 2001 saved the historic building, repurposing the structure into an arts space for adults, children, families, and seniors living in the greater Butler County area. The original clause was updated in November 2022 for a renewal date of April 30, 2052, making it clear that the OCAC was here to stay. Today, the OCAC is a multi-generational gathering space with over 11,000 participants annually, about half of Oxford's total population. Many organizations find their home in the OCAC, including Opening Minds Through Art (OMA), an intergenerational art program for students at Miami University and people with dementia founded by Dr. Elizabeth Lokon at Miami's Scripps Gerontology Center.

The Oxford Area Community Theatre (OxACT) also finds its home in the OCAC. Beginning in 1980, OxACT had been performing its three-show season at a variety of Oxford venues until finding its home at the OCAC in 2005. As "the itinerant nature of offering productions in so many different spaces while storing props, costumes, lighting equipment, and set pieces elsewhere became increasingly challenging" in the late nineteen nineties, the OxACT board of directors, among whom were founding members of the OCAC, decided to pursue a permanent

home. OxACT began performing in the OCAC at the end of 2004 with their production of *Guys and Dolls* on platforms in the ballroom, with audience members sitting in folding chairs, before the building was sufficiently heated for a winter production. Since the 2005 to 2006 season, all three productions in OxACT's yearly seasons have been presented in the OCAC, with a brief hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. OxACT rests at the heart of the OCAC, as the organization continues to stay true to its founding principles and commitment to the community.

Since 1998, the OCAC has provided the greater Butler County area with a theater, ballroom space, classrooms, with dance and art studios. In fact, the whole third floor of the OCAC is still lined with dormitory doors, only instead of living spaces, the rooms contain artist-in-residence studios for artisans to continue their work. Like a dream world, each door is decorated in the medium of the artist that lies behind it, creating a hallway of color and whimsy that fills one with curiosity and wonder. Further, artists are able to sell their works to the community in the OCAC's artshop and community gallery. There are currently twenty-nine artists, writers, and musicians in Resident Artist Studios, with a year-long waitlist. The OCAC puts no limit on how long residencies last, but limits how many spaces they can offer due to the building's second floor being unrenovated. The second floor—a stark contrast to the bright, welcoming, updated first and third floors—looks like a long-abandoned construction site and storage area, with old computers from the mid-nineties, missing wood panels, and open rafters. While the OCAC has been applying for grants, accepting donations, and slowly reaching towards its goal of remodeling the second floor, this journey has become costly to achieve, given all the other existing costs of supporting the OCAC and its staff.

The Future: Importance of the Arts in Rural Communities

There is a need for the arts to be supported in rural

communities across the United States. In the state of Ohio alone, there is a large public support for funding the arts. According to a statewide survey by the Ohio Arts Council, 83% of Ohioans know their tax dollars are supporting the arts, and 91% believe they should be. Despite these very high numbers and the fact that the funding is present, it is used to pit school districts and creative organizations against each other to compete for the funds.

Access to the arts creates a butterfly effect of opportunity. However, when only major cities are regarded as artistic hubs, people in rural communities are excluded from valuable resources and educational opportunities provided by artistic expression. Not only are one-third of the nation's schools in rural areas, but according to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), "rural areas have slightly higher poverty rates than urban areas... Students attending schools in high-poverty communities have a lot less access—and sometimes no access—to arts education." While there are many obstacles to arts education for rural students, like distance, weather, lack of transportation, educator retention, and funding, one of the greatest barriers to increasing arts access is the lack of economic opportunity.

In rural areas, oftentimes, residents are unable to find creative outlets for self-expression or observation. This is especially true in the United States, where artistic literacy is extremely low in comparison to the rest of the "Western world." From a perspective within the public grade school system, many schools do not offer any form of artistic education, and for those that do, the experience is not well-rounded in the major fields of art. According to the NEA, among all public high schools, 88% of public schools offer at least one art course in any discipline, 12% of public high schools offer no arts instruction, 12% offer only one of the four arts disciplines, and 17% offer all four major arts disciplines. This staggering statistic showcases how limited the artistic experiences of young

people are, not necessarily just producing art, but being able to observe it.

While the economy can be well supported by an emphasis on the arts, it is important to recognize how essential the arts are for the people. Art impacts all ages and people of all backgrounds. In Oxford, with about 43% of the population being college-aged students, this leaves a greater focus on implementing arts exposure for young children and older residents. A 2017 study published in the *Journal of Education and Training Studies* states that exposing children to the arts at a young age increases their ability to socialize appropriately and develop necessary developmental skills. Denying the exposure of art to members of a community also has significant impacts on both mental and physical health and lessens the creation of a more well-rounded community. Especially in mid-size towns like Oxford, “engaging in art, especially forms that promote empathy and understanding, can support meaningful discussions that can promote connectedness and the use of mental health resources,” according to Community Health Equity and Research Policy. Even four years after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the World Health Organization reported a 25% increase in the general public’s anxiety and depression, exposure to art is now more important than ever.

The arts are a larger segment of the nation’s economy than most people realize. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that the nation’s arts and culture sector is an \$878 billion industry that supports 5.1 million jobs. In fact, rural communities are reaping these economic benefits of the arts. In the eighteen states in which 30% or more of the population lives in a rural area, the arts added \$72.8 billion to their economies and employed 636,815 workers. Artistic centers provide economic and cultural benefits to their community. In fact, rural arts organizations draw 31% nonlocal audiences compared to urban arts organizations’ 17%, according to the National

Governors Association.

Small, rural towns depend on arts funding for economic development and impact. According to the NEA, “between 2010 and 2014, when the average population of rural counties was 391 people, those counties that hosted performing arts organizations saw an increase of 2,096 people.” A study done regarding the Greater Cincinnati Area and its arts impact mentions how the “\$751 million capital investments since 2015 have generated an additional \$842 million in indirect economic impact” and “...8% of earnings in the construction industry in the Cincinnati region can be attributed to capital investments made by arts organizations.”

Overall, in America, a high-quality arts or creative curriculum is often limited to privileged communities, especially in middle and high school. In fifteen states, more than half of all schools reside in rural areas. “Adding to What Works in Rural Education: A Look at the Working Paper Leveraging Change” is a new working paper funded by the NEA. This paper adds to what is known to work in rural education, with a specific focus on arts education. Within the working paper, the authors, Lisa Donovan and Maren Brown, note how the arts are being identified as a powerful strategy for revitalizing rural communities.

Moreover, research has shown that all students, regardless of career path, can benefit from arts education. In-school arts programs have been shown to correlate with improved academic performance, increasing students’ odds of graduating from high school and enrolling in college. However, when rural districts can’t afford in-school arts programs, access to the arts falls on the community at large. According to the NEA, among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those who had deep engagement with the arts in school performed better on almost every studied measure than their peers who didn’t.

Funding the arts in a rural community can have

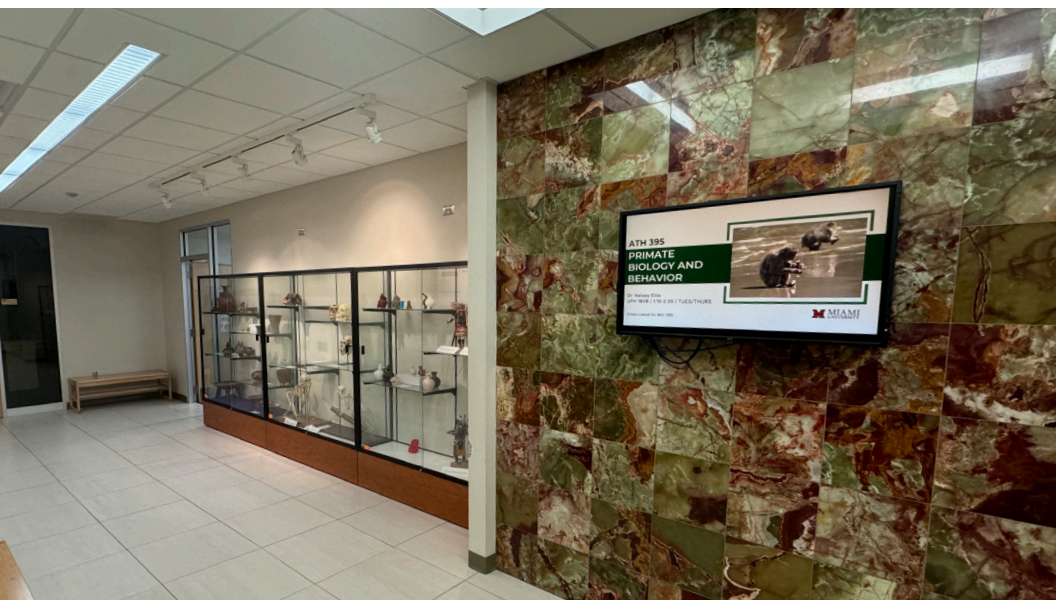
unexpected positive values, as investing in rural educators means improving rural student outcomes. For example, according to the Cultural Center of Henry County, Ohio, residents of arts-rich communities earn incomes up to \$6,000 higher than residents of rural counties that lack performing arts institutions. There is a tremendous opportunity to ensure arts education is part of the solution to create jobs, to address the impacts of poverty, and, according to NEA contributors, to “participate in community networks to build strong communities.” The arts are a cause people can get behind; after all, 72% of Americans believe “the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, and ethnicity.”

What’s more, research by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.) shows that in rural counties, the number of innovation companies rises proportionately to the presence of local performing arts organizations. Especially in small, tight-knit communities, the arts provide valuable talent that businesses need to thrive. According to the same U.S.D.A. report, two-thirds of rural business leaders have reported that not only are the arts vital to attracting employees, but retaining those workers whose talents businesses need in order to prosper.

Consistent with the NEA’s data, technology is key to providing equity and access for students in rural areas, as it offers the resources they might otherwise find impossible to access. Having relevant technology available in a central, public community building has a positive impact on the surrounding rural areas by making computer access available to a large number of residents who may otherwise not have access to the internet, especially for creative use. The arts often suffer from funding and space issues as opposed to other programs, like athletics. This problem is only made worse in rural areas, which often have less funding for community programs than larger, more urban areas. This means that local artists have nowhere to go to create and share their

art with people in the community, and community members have nowhere to go to learn about and experience the importance of the arts.

All in all, the arts act as a fire starter for local economies, a small investment that provides innumerable returns. By providing shared experiences in public places, classrooms, and even at home, the arts can help unify spread-out, rural communities.



Upham Hall 180

KATHRYN KEELEY

Welcome to Upham Hall 180—the center of all anthropology labs. Split into three separate rooms, each space is distinct in subject and practice while seeking to instill a broader perspective in all our students. Each of these spaces—180A, 180B, and 180C—bustles with a sense of life and opportunity entirely unique to the Department of Anthropology.

180A

First, let's explore 180A, the room you encounter after walking into the labs' central space. Here you can find cultural and linguistic anthropological lab sessions, where students discuss various media, such as ethnographies, documentaries, and even forms of popular media

like songs and films. Students and professors engage in collaborative discussion and analysis in order to further comprehension and appreciation of the complex sociocultural intricacies of our world. Developing a holistic perspective and understanding of our environment is an increasingly important skill that can help our students navigate the ever-changing and evolving world.

180B

The second stop is at 180B, the biological anthropology lab. The atmosphere here is immediately different—primate specimens fill the cabinets, line the walls, and can often be seen atop the lab stations. Each week, students in the introductory course learn about primate variation, which then led to human evolution: Following physical differences through primate anatomy reveals much about humanity's past and closest relatives. These specimens speak volumes about human evolution, adaptation, and our interconnectedness with the primate lineage.

This is one of the largest courses in the Department of Anthropology. It fulfills a biology requirement, drawing students from a wide range of majors to take this course in order to avoid the standard courses offered by the Biology Department. Once students arrive, they meet Dr. Kelsey Ellis and the number of academic opportunities she offers. Every semester, she takes on a number of Undergraduate Assistants for this introductory course, allowing previous students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience instructing courses and managing labs. Such experience is extremely valuable, especially for students interested in furthering their education.

Additionally, Dr. Ellis takes a small number of students interested in primatology to the field with her every summer, allowing them to gain field experience in primate observation and study. Students are able to develop their own research project, which they manage entirely independently, and receive guidance from Dr. Ellis. Spending

the summer studying primates in the Amazon Rainforest is an opportunity few undergraduate students will ever get to experience, but here at Miami University, the first step to doing so is just inside this room.

The Miami University Primatology Club also calls 180B home. Members meet biweekly to discuss primatological areas of interest, and the club organizes events such as trips to the Cincinnati Zoo. They also attend the Midwest Primate Interest Group's annual meeting each fall semester and the Academic Association of Biological Anthropologists' annual meeting each spring semester. These conferences are a great opportunity for members to socialize with graduate students and researchers working in their fields of interest. Along with networking, students also have the chance to present any undergraduate research projects of their own.

180C

The third and final room we encounter is 180C, the archaeological lab. Artifacts cover the counters, and students can be seen taking measurements and recording data during class. All of the courses that meet here are taught by Dr. Jeb Card, who keeps courses fun yet engaging. One course you will find here includes the foundational archaeological course, which introduces students to basic methods and practices of archaeology, as well as the study of artifacts.

Another course you'll find is the archaeological practicum, where students gain hands-on experience with excavation as they conduct a dig of their own behind McGuffey Hall. They complete an analysis of the artifacts collected from the site, gaining skills in dating and analyzing artifacts.

The Department of Anthropology has over twelve thousand artifacts within its collection, most of which originate from North and South America. Though a good amount of these artifacts can be found in 180C, the rest

are stored in the lower level of Upham Hall.

Anthropology majors interested in artifacts can join Dr. Card's Anthropological Collections Management group—a small number of students who meet weekly to catalog, restore, and analyze artifacts. Members of the team work with 3D scanners to create 3D images of our artifact collection, which are then made available online. They also use 3D printers to print copies of these artifacts from our own collection or copies from other universities or museums.

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In conclusion, Upham Hall 180 serves as more than just a physical space for learning; it symbolizes the heart and soul of the anthropology experience at Miami University. The diverse activities and specialized instruction offered within rooms 180A, 180B, and 180C equip students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills essential for future academic and professional success. Whether your interests lie in exploring diverse cultures and languages, understanding biological evolution and primatology, or uncovering the hidden stories of past civilizations through archaeology, Upham Hall 180 provides unparalleled opportunities for growth, discovery, and scholarly engagement. We invite you to immerse yourself fully in these labs, embrace their unique offerings, and become part of our vibrant anthropology community at Miami University.



A King Library Detailing

DJAY SHORTER

A Campus Fixture

When talking about Oxford's attractions, one would be remiss not to mention one of the town's most eminent: King Library: named after Edward King, Miami's library director from 1922 to 1956. Open from 7pm to 1am, King Library, colloquially "King" among the students, is host to a bevy of books and media, to suit just about any of the peruser's purposes. Boasting a wide array of tools and resources across three floors, the amenities of King Library are both traditional, and on the cutting edge.

Originally Miami University's dedicated undergraduate library, King Library has a rich history spanning seventy years. But King has much more than its original litany of writing to offer. Refurbished for the modern day,

and actively being improved upon, the King Library has since incorporated fixtures to facilitate the contemporary needs of students.

Acquainting Yourself

Whether you're new to Oxford or making the trip to a part of the campus you've never visited, if you're looking for something, it's helpful to know the layout beforehand. Thousands of materials are available throughout the library, including books, documents, music, films, and other resources across three floors and a basement level. Works that span the breadth of the human tapestry are conveniently organized and easily accessible. The first level has a spacious lobby wherein you can talk to an accommodating staff member for assistance, or use the kiosks preceding the aisles, to scry the library's network.

No Matter Your Needs

Regardless of which college your majors and minors place you in, King Library can easily help you achieve and excel, not just with the variety of academic works available, but in the valuable tools the library offers as well.

King's unique archives include: the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, the Miami University Archives, and the Western College for Women Archives. Not only is King the sole home of these curated academic resources from alumni and incorporated universities, but host to countless other facilities that promote a student's success.

Through King, one can access both the Microsoft Office and Adobe suites of products. For a more specific statistical task, SSPS and Minitab are available through the library as well. If what you're looking for needs to be presented outside of a document, then King Library provides you with audio and visual editing tools. King can also facilitate physical-to-digital conversions, or vice-versa.

The Library Facilities

King Library's contemporary technologies aren't just limited to software. A student can opt to make use of the various tools that the library boasts.

On the first floor, one will be greeted by the spacious Sidley Lounge, and further in, the Center for Information Management (CIM). This computer lab offers you high-end tools that enable your digital productions and help with analog conversions.

You will also find the Howe Writing Center. Operating from the library to serve the campus, here you can broaden your writing horizons with the Center's speakers, projects, and tutors. The writing assistance one can gain from immersing themselves in the HWC is invaluable.

Going up to the third floor, King Library hosts other facilities that help students realize their goals, such as the Center for Digital Scholarship, and MakerSpace. The MakerSpace is an experimental, hands-on laboratory that emphasizes the freedom of the student. With access to the laboratory, you can make use of the available laser cutters, engravers, 3D printers, and textile machines, and more.

Nearby is the audio/visual lab, an environment where use of the aforementioned AV editing tools is most effective. A dedicated podcasting station allows one to record in a sound-tailored space. Working with visuals, a backdrop, camera, and microphones all enable you to create whatever you need to put on the screen.

Whenever a student needs to sequester themselves in a more productive environment, the King Library is home to many study rooms. Students are free to make reservations in person or digitally at their leisure, for any reason that demands the tranquility of King's quietude. And for a break, one can go down to the lowest level, where King Cafe's refreshing coffee always awaits a student, no matter how busy.

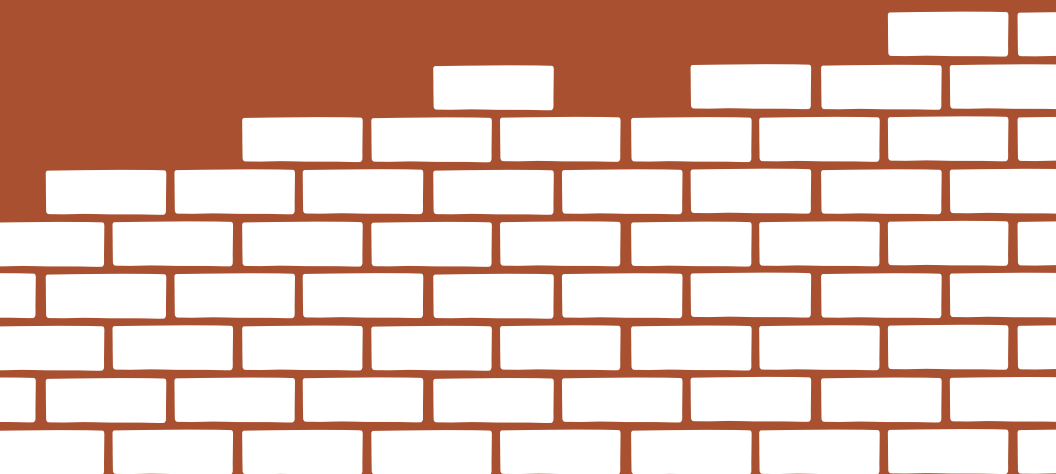
Modern Developments

As an institution dedicated to ensuring the help it can provide is always relevant, King Library continues to iterate with plans for the future. As part of a comprehensive plan, King Library finished the restructuring of its first floor, focusing on the Sidley Lounge.

King Library has since seen additions to the Inez Kamm Electronic Classroom, and the CIM. This floor has also seen the introduction of a new conference area, with a new classroom and breakout room to accompany. Subsequent phases of renovation will continue to facilitate the preferences of modern students, with changes such as freer access to the lounge, and a refitting of the windows.

Make Your Way

King Library is Oxford's treasure trove of knowledge, and familiarizing yourself with the library's resources first-hand is more effective than any alternative. Whether one is a potential visitor to the town, or a Miami attendee, a trip to the library is worthwhile. If you're looking for a great way to realize your endeavors, visit King Library.



the Kitchen



The Kitchen

Step into the kitchen, where the crescendo of clanking pots sets the tempo of your stride. Bubbling concoctions buzz sneakily in your ear, their sweet smells dancing into your nostrils. Feel complete sensory overload take over, allowing your senses to be enraptured by the sea of legumes and fruits. Breathe in the aromas from the spice rack: paprika, turmeric, black pepper, coating your tastebuds with every breath.

Hear the clatter of pans and the camaraderie of friends as you all sweat over the oven, anticipating the late-night treat that has fueled your evening giggles and gossip. The checkered floor, splattered with last night's marinara, marks the threshold of your weekly spaghetti dinner tradition. Continue to scrub and sweep,

only to watch the counters miraculously dirty themselves again in a matter of hours.

Sit at the table, where you've spent countless conversations dissecting the intricacies of your day with the ones you love most. Gather in the spots you've claimed as your own—no nametags or placemats, just the comfort of a room well lived in. Recall stories as you sip wine, accompanied by card games, the earlier chaos of cooking replaced by the intimacy of sharing a meal together. Let the clatter quiet, the wine run out, the oven cool. Realize what remains is the warmth you built here.

You'll forget the recipes but remember the way it felt to be full—with food, with laughter, with love. Here, amid the mess and magic, you've fed more than your hunger: You've nourished a life well shared.



Kofenya

KAI GREEN

Kofenya stands as one of the oldest buildings in Oxford, Ohio. It was constructed sometime in the 1800s and boasted one of Oxford's first businesses: horse stables. In the early 1900s, the building underwent renovations and emerged as a hardware store. It operated as such until it went out of business in the 1970s. The café we know today was bought in 2004, renovated, and officially opened as Kofenya. Its storied history is seen in the photographs that dot the interior walls and through each creak of the old wood flooring, resonating with the sound of memory.

An Afternoon as a Student

Springtime in Oxford is filled with the basic Midwest weather: unpredictable winds, rain, and the occasion-

al sunny, seventy-degree day. Today, Mother Nature has decided on sideways rain and twenty-mile-an-hour winds that threaten to topple you as you hurry down the cement sidewalk. The red and blue OPEN sign beckons you toward it. You duck beneath the overhang, prying the coffee shop's door open to escape the weather.

It's comfortably warm as you enter the café, and the smell of ground coffee, fresh pastries, and old wood permeates your nose as you inhale. There are fewer people here today, which is understandable with the weather outside the way it is. Your eyes scan the room, looking for an empty table to drop your book bag, when you spot one in the front corner of the room. It's a two-person table. One seat for you. One for your bag. You smile to yourself as you weave through the other tables—some filled with people, some not—to get to yours.

Once you've placed your bag down, it's time to head to the counter to order. The menu has changed recently. New spring flavors replace the old winter ones. That's one of your favorite things about this place—there's always something new to try. The barista greets you warmly, and your eyes scan the menu. The options can be a bit overwhelming sometimes, but as your eyes scan the board, you mentally decline a few of them. Brewed coffee? No, you don't need the extra caffeine right now. Cold brew? Same as before. Hot chocolate? Could be yummy, but too sweet for your current mood. Tea? Huh. Tea could work. You browse the tea options, noting the multiple flavors: English breakfast, Earl Grey, peppermint, and green tea. Wait, peppermint might be the one. The barista waits patiently for you to decide until you finally come up with a 16-ounce cup of hot peppermint tea, a chocolate croissant, and a piece of avocado toast. She hands you your croissant, mentioning that you can heat it in the microwave to the right of the counter. Then she rings you up. The machine beeps when you tap your credit card.

"Your order will be out in a few minutes," the barista says, and she turns away to make your drink. You thank her, deciding not to heat your pastry, and move back across the room to your table, the old wood creaking lightly with each step.

Most tables are within viewing distance of the counter, so when your drink is ready, you can see the barista set it out. There's also a sugar and creamer station with all the fixings, straws, and lids. You get back up from your table and grab your tea from the counter. The smell of peppermint is potent, and you set the cup down next to the sugars to grab a packet or two. The café doesn't have the 2% milk set out, but you ask the barista and she grabs it for you. Once your drink is made up, you take it to your table, and as you sit down, your avocado toast is announced. One last trip to the counter, and then you can enjoy your snack.

You arrange your food on the table to make room for your computer and iPad. Scrounging around your bag, you pull out your Apple Pencil and noise-canceling headphones. You'll wait to put them on until you have to do homework, content to listen to the indie and pop music mash-ups on the café's speakers and the buzz of conversations around the room.

Time slows as people enter and exit the café. You watch two women—college students by the look of their stuffed backpacks and Miami University sweatshirts—type ardently at their computers, occasionally giggling at a sparsely interchanged word or joke. They sip at their drinks, and you hear snippets of their conversation about some sorority event they will attend over the weekend. Your focus shifts to an older man who seems to be reading through a stack of papers. A professor, if you had to guess. His hand moves to fix the glasses perched on the edge of his nose before he sips his drink, a coffee with an intricate design on top from one of Kofenya's smaller mugs.

Your stomach grumbles, pulling you from your

people-watching, and you cut up your avocado toast. It crunches beneath the knife, and you get a piece covered in avocado and microgreens. Some sort of seasoning is sprinkled on top of the spread. It adds a bit of zing. You hum, savoring the bite, and reach for your headphones. You might as well organize a playlist or work on something creative while you eat. The café is a haven—a creativity booster—and you always come out of it feeling accomplished, whether you wrote something for your creative hobbies or finished a homework assignment.

Once you finish eating, you put your indie pop study playlist on shuffle, grab your iPad, and review your list of assignments. You could probably finish two or three of them in the next few hours, so you pull up the first one and get started.

Time passes quickly. Your eyes skim the pages of each document as you jot down notes or scribble reminders for yourself. People move in and out of the café. The storm outside worsens. You can hear the thunder rumbling even through your headphones. You take a moment to admire the storm. The rain always brings a fresh start, and the flowers around campus—mostly multicolored tulips—begin to sprout in the spring. With this in mind, you continue to work, keeping an eye on the rain so when it lightens up, you can make a break for your car parked behind the café.

A little while later, the rain lessens. You quickly pack up your supplies, placing your plate and tea mug in the dirty dish bin by the counter, before walking to the door. You brace yourself for the wind and rain, and push the door out to embrace into the spring weather. The café that has become your creative haven bids you farewell until the next time. You promise to return soon.



How to Make the Wall of Fame at Bagel & Deli

OLIVIA VOELKER

Earning a spot on the Wall of Fame at Bagel & Deli, one of Oxford's most famous locations, requires both dedication and appetite. It's not a goal to take lightly. It's a challenge, a journey. A highly delicious test of loyalty, perseverance, and the human stomach. If you're serious about it, I've got some advice—six steps, actually—that might help you on your path to bagel greatness.

First, know where you're going.

To learn as much information as possible about Bagel & Deli—located at 119 East High Street, Oxford, Ohio—you can talk to almost anyone in the small town about this

highly recognizable establishment. Founded in 1975, it quickly gained popularity for transforming a common breakfast food into a dish enjoyed not only for breakfast, but also for lunch, dinner, a late-night snack, or even dessert. However, their menu, which has vastly expanded over the years, can feel intimidating, causing people to retreat into the familiarity of their usual order. To combat this, and to encourage the consumption of some of their less ordered menu items, the Wall of Fame challenge was created.

Second, know what it is.

Bagel & Deli has approximately ninety-six different bagel sandwiches, made from combinations of the different bagels, spreads, meats, cheeses, toppings, and condiments. The step-by-step challenge of trying to conquer every combination that Bagel & Deli has to offer is one few attempt—and even fewer succeed at. At this point, the following question may arise: what is the motivation behind completing such a feat? The answer lies in a coveted Bagel & Deli sweatshirt. Retailing for \$49.95, this piece of clothing can frequently be spotted on Miami University's campus, more likely than not being worn by a sleep-deprived undergraduate. However, if that is not enough motivation, upon the completion of the challenge, a Bagel & Deli employee will snap a picture of the freshly minted bagel all-timer. This picture will join the Wall of Fame, alongside a select group of only twenty-six other participants who have succeeded throughout the company's fifty years of existence.

Third, live where it is.

If you want your picture on the iconic, maximalist Wall of Fame inside one of Oxford's most populated eateries, it helps to live in Oxford, work in Oxford, or—ideally—both. This could include attending or teaching at Miami University, or generally residing in the surrounding area.

Now, this might not seem like a necessity, but if the goal is to consume all ninety-six of the bagels required to earn a spot on the wall, having a residence—as well as family, friends, or colleagues—within these 6.7 square miles of southwest Ohio is preferred.

Fourth, know who to go with.

To eat more than ninety bagels, it's best to bring company. Not only will pride motivate you to continue your quest when you feel as though you can't look at—let alone eat—another bagel, but it will also allow for the strengthening of relationships. It's a well-known phenomenon that the act of sharing a meal can greatly aid in the development of human connection; beyond that, it makes the experience infinitely more enjoyable. Going with different people might inspire a variety of orders, though it's also quite possible that one would hear the same bagel called out again and again. There's a fair chance it'll be the Crunch and Munch—their most popular order—consisting of turkey, cheddar, lettuce, tomato, honey mustard, parmesan peppercorn, and Doritos. Regardless of the orders of family or friends, or any temptation to order the same thing as the last time, it's crucial to stay focused on the mission if one wants their picture to live among other Bagel & Deli legends.

Fifth, have a stable source of income (trust me on this one).

This may seem a bit out of place, but Bagel & Deli—though greatly beloved—is not known for low prices. A plain bagel with nothing on it sells for \$2.50, but with toppings, meat, cheese, and condiments, your total can reach up to \$10.75. Prices will vary depending on the order, but it is reasonable to deduce that these small expenses will add up and could become detrimental to one's finances without a reliable source of income to fund bagel-buying habits.

Sixth, plan out your visits.

It's not my place to police the time of bagel consumption; however, it would be most beneficial to spread the visits out at different times of the day. Bagel & Deli opens at 8:00 a.m. sharp every day and closes after most bars, catering to those seeking a late-night snack. Therefore, it is recommended that if you accept this challenge, the times at which you purchase bagels should vary. This challenge itself encourages people to embrace variety as the spice of life, so why not add even more variation by mixing up the times of day the bagels are consumed? That being said, it can be reasonably inferred that certain bagels are better suited to certain times of the day. When rolling out of bed for the first time at 11 a.m., a Sam's Sunrise might be the best bet (scrambled eggs and American cheese on an egg bagel). If taking a friend from home to lunch, an All-American (ham, American cheese, lettuce, and mayo on a plain bagel) may suit your fancy. If you're craving something sweet, a Cookie Monster (cream cheese, cinnamon, and a chocolate chip cookie on a blueberry bagel) could be the right fit. Whatever time is chosen, it rings true that to make it to the Wall of Fame, it is crucial to keep the flavor of variety alive in the quest.

Good luck out there.

You've got this.



The Training Shift

ASLYNN WETZEL

My first day at Skipper's. It's a chilly afternoon. I never thought I would see the day. Striding in my new employee T-shirt, I approach that renowned red fence. The buzzing glow of the neon sign greets me, promising opportunity and knowledge. The two sun-faded signs that read "NO BAGELS" flank the double doors, like hostile guardians protecting a noble castle. Taking it all in makes me want to cry, but I need to keep it together. Today will be the day I learn the secret to customer happiness. Today, I will learn the Skipper's chipotle ranch recipe.

I pass through two sets of double doors and make it inside. I take a deep breath. The place smells of fryer grease, sticky beer, and bleach towels—the smell of unadulterated success.

Anxious to get started, I head to the back. I'm received by the manager, a man wearing glasses and a red Skipper's-branded polo. He tosses me an apron and tells me how to clock in.

"Welcome, I'm Mark," he says. "Let me show you around, and then I'll leave you with Justin for the rest of the shift. Since it's slow, you'll do prep work until it picks up." He points at a smeared whiteboard on the wall with a list written in shorthand. "Start with the more urgent stuff, and then—"

"Excuse me, but when will I learn how to make chipotle ranch?" I cut in. Mark raises his eyebrows at my interruption but responds anyway.

"You'll learn as you go. We need a couple of tubs portioned this afternoon, so maybe you'll find out today." Reassured, I happily listen to the rest of my training orientation. Mark leads me down to the basement and shows me the stockrooms, walk-in freezer, and beer cooler. It's all pretty standard, but I make careful note of the chipotle ranch in the beer cooler. Filled with little cups of chipotle ranch, the tubs are piled into wobbling towers beside other portioned sauces. I've never seen a Miami student able to resist this special ranch at Skipper's, so I can only assume that the process to make it borders on sacred. I tell myself I must get every step right so I can recreate this wondrous magic. After my tour, Mark brings me back upstairs and introduces me to Justin, who is in the kitchen sending out an order.

"Mark said we need to make chipotle ranch," I tell Justin as soon as the manager is out of earshot. He ignores me and cranes his neck to look at the front patio. I follow his gaze and see a group of people sitting outside eating from those unmistakable foil wrappers: Bagel & Deli. He shakes his head and grabs the overhead microphone.

"The patio is for Skipper's customers only. Unless you're eating a gyro or buying a beer tower, GET. OUT." We watch the group gather their things in shame and sit

down on the steps of The Den next to Bagel & Deli.

"That was overkill," I tell him. "Not everyone has a gated space like you guys."

Justin simply shrugs and turns for the back, saying, "Bagel has their own tables."

I follow him, kind of irritated, and ask, "If no one's at Skipper's, why can't you just let Bagel customers use your tables if there's nowhere else to sit?" Justin approaches a shelf in the back with a couple of empty tubs that look identical to the ones in the basement.

"Think of it this way," he explains, grabbing the tubs and handing them to me. "Say we let a couple of Bagel customers take up a table on the patio. Another group sees them and decides to join. Soon enough, the whole patio is full of bagels, and there are no tables for our customers." I roll my eyes.

"It's not Bagel's fault that it's popular," I say.

Justin pauses and looks at me. "And it's not Skipper's fault that Bagel has a smaller patio. Look, if it really breaks your heart to kick people out, ask someone else to do it. Just don't come crying when someone walks up to you pissed you're letting someone else who didn't pay to be here take up the last table."

I open my mouth to make another snark, but then Justin opens the walk-in fridge and pulls out a large five-gallon bucket, smacking it down on the prepping table.

"What's that?" I ask.

"Chipotle ranch," he responds, like I'm stupid. He pries open the lid and reveals a full tub of that speckled orange sauce. My heart drops in utter disappointment as I stare at it. I feel thwarted.

"Why is it already made?"

"Someone must have made extra yesterday when they portioned," Justin says. "Good for us, we won't have to make any. Go get some portion cups and lids." I slowly turn away, dragging my feet across the kitchen, returning with

what he had asked for. My hands feel cold, almost numb. I try to keep it together. Maybe it's not over yet. Maybe I can still learn the chipotle ranch recipe before the shift is over. Maybe I can get him to tell me. But the doubt continues to grow in my stomach. My sorrow must be evident because when I return, Justin lets me lay out all of the cups in an array.

"Cheer up, this is a gift. Just like the old days, we didn't have to make our own chipotle ranch." I stop and train my eyes on the rows of cups in front of me. *What does he mean?*

"What do you mean?" I repeat carefully.

"I mean, we didn't have to," Justin states simply. "We just collected the stuff in buckets and portioned it out later." Bewildered, I try to press him further without looking desperate. He just shakes his head. "If I tell you, I'm gonna have to kill you. It's ancient Skipper's history. Caused a huge scandal and everything." I nod along and wait to see if he tells me without any further prompting. I find that in most cases, it's more difficult for the person keeping the secret than the person anticipating its juicy, juicy details. All I would have to do is act disinterested, maybe throw in a line of doubt about his credibility—really get him going. But then again, tea tends to taste better after brewing for a few minutes. Perhaps Justin is teasing me, drawing out the wait until I break down and beg for more. Yes, that's it. That is what he is doing. Well then, if that's the case, I will play his game.

"You mean we outsourced the chipotle ranch from someone else? That's no big deal. Mark told me the bosses used to drive all the way to Chicago to pick up the right brand of hot dogs." Justin shakes his head.

He says, "No, no. It's bigger than that." I cross my arms to look unimpressed, though I'm starting to buzz on the inside. To think that the legendary chipotle ranch *changed* over time? I can hardly fathom it.

"Then where would we collect chipotle ranch from?" I

ask, making my eyes flash in annoyance. Justin side eyes me, probably wondering if I'm trustworthy enough to learn this valuable secret. Yes, I'm almost there. Finally, he cracks. He glances around with hesitation before turning to me.

"When the owners opened up shop in Oxford forty or so years ago, they kept having this leak in the basement. It came from the ground in the back next to the freezer. Every time it rained, it got worse. Well, it turns out that the leak came from a massive reservoir of *natural chipotle ranch*. Pure as gold. They hired someone to dig down and install a well." My eyes widen, and I can't contain my awe.

"Well, what happened to it?" I say, racking my brain for any memory of a patched hole or piece of rusty machinery in the basement. Justin leans back and sighs with a twinge of regret.

"Dried up, I'm sure," he says. "The stuff was so popular, they ran out in five years." I shake my head. It's a shame. A damn shame. I wonder what it must have tasted like, pure and unfiltered. "I bet it was magical," Justin echoes my thoughts. I mutter my agreement, lost in an experience I will never have. I mourn, for I will never be able to recreate the original chipotle ranch sensation.

"Y'know," he says, returning my attention to the present. "That reservoir was pretty close to Bagel & Deli. Sometimes I hear the bosses talk about Bagel's owner; he's always complaining about a sticky leak he just can't get rid of in the basement. I wonder if he'll ever figure it out."

Suddenly, I can't take it anymore. I erupt, tearing away the shirt from my chest and revealing a bright blue one beneath. The Grateful Dead bear on my sternum grins wickedly at Justin as his eyes transform from surprise to betrayal to anger. I take out the everything bagel I had crammed in my back pocket for good luck and chuck it at Justin.

"BAGEL ALWAYS FINDS THE HOLE!" I roar as he

gestures rudely to me. Cackling, I beeline for the door. Gary will be pleased with the news. Yes, he will be very pleased indeed.

...

Justin watches the Bagel guy trip over the fence, attempting to jump it just as Mark returns from the office upstairs.

"Did you get it all?" Justin asks. Mark holds up a USB with the camera footage from the afternoon. Justin nods in approval. "This one didn't even try to be subtle. Another day defending the great and noble Skipper's."

Mark nods too.

"Terry and Andy will be so proud."



My Family Legacy at CJ's Bar

SOPHIA DeVILLEZ

I have an extensive family history with Miami University and Oxford as a whole. My grandpa was a professor of zoology and lived in Oxford with my grandma, who earned her associate's degree from Miami. Since then, my uncle, three of my aunts, my parents, two of my cousins, my sister-in-law, my two brothers, and I have all gone to school here. My parents began their collegiate careers at Miami University in 1982. Considering my dad's upbringing, I, too, grew up with a great appreciation for Oxford. While I've heard many stories from my family over the years, one place that has always held my parents' hearts is CJ's Bar.

My dad, Joe DeVillez, started working at CJ's his sophomore year when he was nineteen years old,

serving only beer as the law permitted at the time. For the past few decades, CJ's has been managed by a student, and my dad was the first one, giving him not only more responsibility but also many stories to tell in the years to follow.

One of the most well-known parts of this bar is the full-wall mural of the CJ's logo, and I always find it entertaining that I am one of the very few people who know the true story behind it. At the time, a lot of companies would hand out matchboxes with their logos on them as a form of marketing. CJ's did this as well, and one day, my dad gave one to my mom. He pointed at the logo and told her to paint it on the wall. Today, the famous mural still stands, with students constantly writing their signatures all over it, marking their fun nights. One of the greatest memories I have from my college experience so far was on my twenty-first birthday, when my brother came up to campus to celebrate with me. The two of us went to CJ's and signed our names on the mural, later trying to convince the workers there to give us a discount on a sweatshirt due to our family history (time and time again, we have sadly failed at this). We sent a photo of us and our signatures to our parents, who were thrilled we were together in a place that meant so much to them when they were our age.

The first place my parents wanted to go during this past Family Weekend was CJ's Bar. Something to know about my dad is he's ridiculously outgoing and has absolutely no filter, which is a horrible combination when he, on top of this, wanted to show off his knowledge of the bar to the current staff. So you can imagine the reaction my brothers and I had when the first thing he did was go right up to the bouncer and ask, "Hey, is CJ dead?", hoping they would prompt him with follow-up questions. He and my mom then fell into deep conversation with him, trying to get free shirts out of their visit. When they failed, they bought some anyway. Needless to say, it's always a unique

experience when they come to campus.

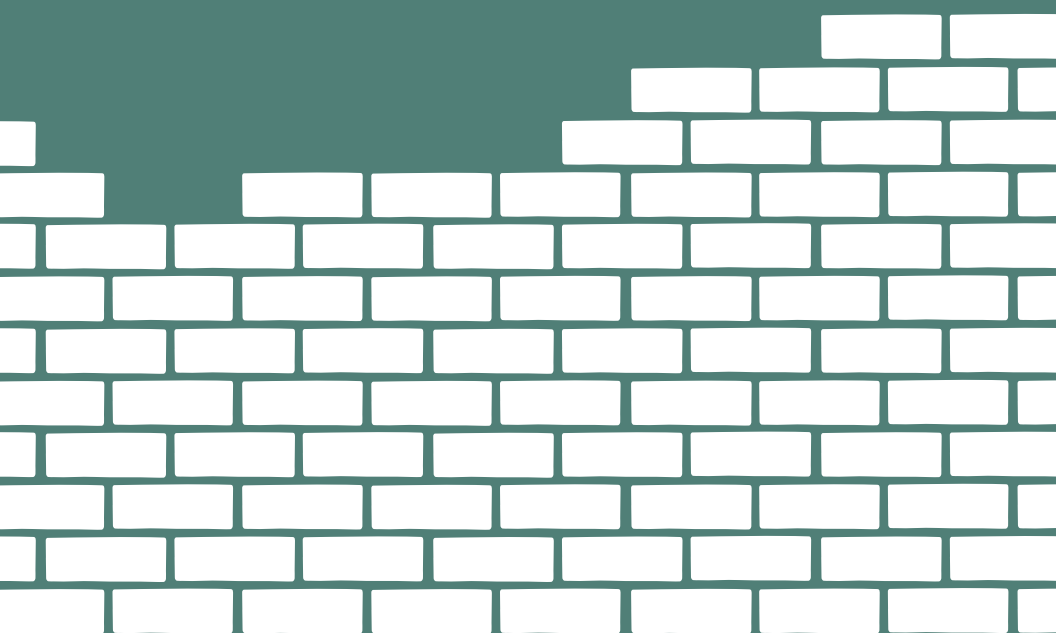
They were even close with CJ, which is unique because I often don't think people process that he is a real person, as I have never heard him referred to as such, only the bar. However, according to my dad, CJ led a very interesting life: He played football for Bo Schembechler, who went on to become arguably the most famous coach in Michigan history after his career at Miami. This caused my dad to often hear about what was happening with Miami's football team, as CJ's was also a popular spot for them.

My mom also had many incredible and memorable experiences, as she would go to CJ's after classes to see my dad every day. In fact, many of her friends also worked there, and when they couldn't make their shifts, she would fill in for them. However, she was never actually paid, only given a pitcher of beer, including the time she painted the mural.

She has so many entertaining stories, as this appears to be where my parents and their friends spent most of their time. Based on the stories they tell me, it seems like they'd make even the smallest moments at this bar fun. One story that was mind-blowing to me was when she told me about the last game ever played at Miami's old football field. Until recently, before the university took it away, the goalpost from that field hung in CJ's for around thirty years. This is because, at the last game ever played there, my mom and many others somehow pulled it down, marched to CJ's with it, and wrote their signatures all over it.

Everywhere I go in Oxford, I am reminded of a story from my parents' experience at Miami. CJ's was by far the most memorable place for them, truly highlighting the most sentimental and lighthearted moments from their time here. Whenever given the opportunity, I mention these stories so others can get a glimpse of Oxford in the 1980s, particularly what my parents' student life was like. They've truly enjoyed the lifelong memories they've made

here, which is something I have kept in mind throughout my time at Miami, as I hope to have done the same.



the Basement



The Basement

Pause at the top of the stairs—there’s always something different about going down, isn’t there? The air thickens. Your voice echoes in ways that don’t feel quite right. The light from above quickly fades away, like even it knows better than to cross the threshold.

The basement doesn’t ask for attention. It waits quietly beneath everything, holding the weight of what the rest of the house can’t bear. It’s colder down here. The ceilings are lower. The floor groans with memory. This is where you store the things you’re not ready to let go of: boxes full of old photos, awkward secrets, museum cases full of teeth and taxidermy. It’s a space for both truth and illusion—where stories press in from all sides, humming just out of reach. Down here, you might discover something ancient.

Or maybe just something you've hidden from yourself. The basement keeps everything—what you've lost, what you've buried, and what you've only just begun to understand.

Still, there's beauty here, too. Stillness. Space. A kind of gravity that pulls you closer to the truth of things. In basements, secrets are safe. Questions echo. Time slows. And sometimes, when the house creaks in the night, it's not the wind—it's the stories shifting below.

So take a breath. Hold the handrail. Bring a flashlight, or don't. Some things are only visible in the dark.

Go on. Step down.



The Bear

EMMA ESTRIDGE

The first thing you noticed was the bear. Of course, the first thing you noticed was the bear because noticing a bear—standing on its back legs, paws raised, and mouth open in a roar—is human 101. If you don't notice a bear like that, you won't be around to notice things much longer. If you didn't know any better, you'd think the bear was about to drop to all fours and chase you down the long Upham hallway. That was if you didn't know any better.

You always wondered how people got into taxidermy. What called someone to that profession? Or was it more of a hobby? And what called someone to a museum of taxidermy—scratch that—a museum of natural history?

You knew what called you at least: a paper. It was

about biodiversity or the importance of local ecosystems or something that sounded sort of like that. You, maybe, were not paying the most attention in class. You'd check the details later. You just needed to get in, copy some information down, and get out. You opened up the notes app on your phone and walked inside.

There were birds chirping somewhere. You wondered if they had live animals in the museum too? You swung your head around, looking for an enclosure of some kind. You glanced at the ceiling to see if a poor bird had flown in and gotten stuck. The bird chirped again, high-pitched and tinny. It didn't sound right. You realized it was a recording, playing from somewhere in the ceiling. You had to shudder. You didn't like the piped-in sounds. It made you feel like you weren't alone.

To your left, you saw a capital I-shaped cabinet with bones lined across the top of the nearest horizontal section. They formed a long vertebrae with slightly curved ribs running along its length. You didn't know enough about anatomy or animals to recognize what you were looking at, but if you had to put money on it, you'd say it was some kind of marine creature. Was it a whale? Dolphin? Shark? Do you sharks even have bones? There was a placard of some kind explaining what creature had a spine the length of your entire body, but you weren't here to learn about marine creatures that probably weren't sharks. It had to be more local.

Hanging above the shelf were half a dozen ducks and geese. Their wings were spread to mimic flight. Three penguins of varying heights, arranged small, medium, and large, stood on top of the vertical section of the cabinet. The smallest penguin and the largest penguin looked blankly forward. The middle-sized penguin looked up at the larger one, like it was waiting for the answer to a question, as if eventually it would find guidance in its larger kin. On the furthest horizontal section, there were some herons or cranes or something. They had long necks

and long beaks and long legs. Those kinds of birds always gave you the creeps. They seemed to know more than they let on. The biggest bird's neck was coiled back, ready to strike into the heart of a fish swimming at its feet. Except, of course, there was no water or fish or thought behind its eyes. You had to look away.

The bear was still in front of you. The sign in front of it said "Kodiak Bear." To its right, to your left, was a slightly smaller bear standing on its back legs. It looked less threatening than the first and more curious instead. To its left, and to your right, was a coyote and something that looked like a coyote but bigger and all white (probably a wolf). You snapped a picture with your phone as a frog croaking noise played from the ceiling. You could write about bears for your paper.

This place was starting to get on your nerves. You had this feeling you were being watched. The noises were seemingly played at random, and each time one broke the silence, you jumped. You expected a frog to jump past your feet or a bird to swoop past your head.

Some big cats lounged on the right side of the museum. They were watching you move around the room, lazily stalking their prey. A peacock stood on a shelf above them. Its tail feathers were closed at its side. You would've arranged them all fanned out and pretty, but maybe that would take up too much space or something. It just seemed like an awful waste to you. You walked away, shaking your head, as if you were some kind of expert on birds.

To the left was a semi-separate room called the Hall of Ungulates, whatever that meant. It was a vaguely circular room with two rams standing proudly in the center. The rest of the wall was lined with the mounted heads of different kinds of deer, antelopes, moose, and elk. You grew up in Ohio, which meant you had seen your fair share of stag heads and antlers hanging from walls. But, you had never before seen a deer displayed with its

head, torso, and two front legs out of the wall, like it was just phasing through. A water bison and a buffalo head hung by themselves on the left, and there was something sad in their sideways glances. There was also a rhino head, not mounted on the wall, but sitting up on the floor. Its head was pointed toward the ceiling; its severed neck was on the ground. Somehow, that was what creeped you out the most. You crept toward it, slightly crouched down. Your fingers were inches from its leathery skin. It opened its beak-like mouth and screamed. It was loud, human, pained.

You bolted from the room, past the bear and the coyote, the geese, the whale bones. You didn't dare to look back to check if the bear was chasing after you.



Into Hall Auditorium

LIZ STEVENS

The pavement beneath my feet was the only thing I was sure was real as I stood in the long, dark shadow stretching several feet behind my head past the sidewalk and into the grass. A shadow that left me cloaked in a darkness I knew I should step out of, should run from, should never look back on. And yet there I was, out in the middle of the night when it was nearly freezing, with nothing but a light jacket and pajama pants on because I couldn't get that feeling out of my head. That beckoning voice I was sure was a sign I was going insane. I needed to get inside, needed to see what lay beyond the walls of Hall Auditorium.

The music students could say it was just a place to perform, nothing but a stage and a few rows of seats

where parents and friends would crowd themselves to listen to the sound of finely tuned performances. But if that were true, if there was really nothing to it beyond pressing the keys of a piano or blowing into the mouth-piece of a flute, then why couldn't I get the place out of my head? Why, since the first day I'd walked past its soaring pillars and worn brick exterior, could I not get the place out of my head?

I let out a heavy sigh as I stopped my incessant pacing, eyes narrowing as I looked to those glass doors with their wooden frames and brass hardware, barely visible in the night. But I knew them, I knew them all too well, just like I knew every brick that built the outside of the place. I ran a hand through my mess of hair, glancing down at the device I'd just pulled from my pocket.

I was typing before I could even understand what was happening, eyes wildly scanning the screen until I found the number I needed. I pressed call without another thought, holding the device to my ear and not letting the building out of my sight the entire time.

"Oxford Police Department, how can I help you?" The voice on the other end was bored, tired, and it reminded me I was making the call after midnight on a Wednesday.

"Hi, I uh, I'm just calling about my phone." My throat tightened, a layer of sweat building on my skin as I buried my nails into my palm on my free hand. "I left it inside one of the academic buildings. Hall Auditorium?"

As the name left my dry mouth, I waited for some sort of sign. An uptick in the officer's voice, a shake as they spoke, tripping over their words, anything at all. Something to tell me I wasn't the only one who knew there was something different about this place.

"You need it tonight?" It was the skeptical question I should have expected, but it still somehow left my insides feeling like they were on fire. Like I was burning from the inside out.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm sorry." I took a moment to catch

my breath. "I need to keep in contact with my family, grandma's in the hospital, and—"

"Yeah, we'll send someone over. Just wait by the door, they'll unlock it for ya."

I thanked the officer, quickly shoving my phone into my pants in an effort to hide the device before help arrived. I'd already concocted another story about borrowing a stranger's cell who was walking by.

I looked down at my feet that felt nearly buried in the cement by that point, but quickly lifted my head, knowing I could not afford to let my eyes leave the building for too long.

By that point, I'd stopped willing myself to think of anything but Hall. All the overdue assignments I had piling up, the papers I wasn't writing, the quizzes I wasn't finishing because there was just something much more important. I didn't care about the laundry I wasn't doing and the showers I wasn't taking because I needed this. I needed to see what was behind those doors. Not in that auditorium, not in that lobby, but beneath the surface. Down that spiraling staircase, far from the Philosophy Department or any concert being put on.

It didn't matter if no one else could feel it—the heat that engulfed my body every time I passed the place. They didn't need to for me to finally understand what was inside.

Heavy footsteps pulled me from thoughts, causing my head to whip over my shoulder. I took in the sight of a man who was raising an eyebrow at me. His eyes dragged over my unkempt figure, jaw moving lazily as he smacked on a piece of chewing gum.

"You the one who called about the phone?" he called from a few feet away, like he couldn't stand the thought of being any closer to me.

I nodded, and he let out a sigh as he approached the door. I watched as he pulled a set of keys from his pocket, flipping through the clanking metal until he finally reached

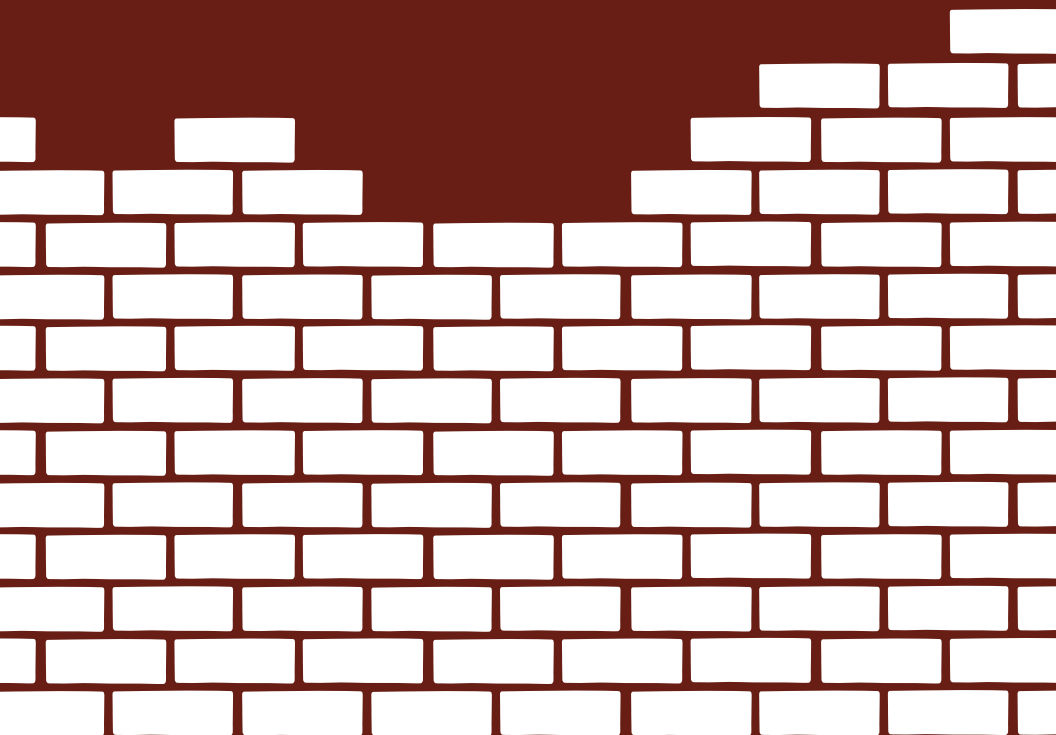
the one that would bring me to the end of my torment. The end of agonizing hours spent wondering why me? Why was I the only one who could sense this dread when no one else could?

I listened to the creak of the door, waiting for him to step inside with me, but he simply nodded ahead. He wanted me to go in, alone.

I drew in a deep breath as my feet dragged roughly against the tile floor, my head nearly spinning as I turned it in all directions. I could hear each beat of my heart as I took in the sight of the cream walls, could feel my lungs emptying and refilling with air as I stared at the unlit light fixtures. I could sense that heat rising up from the surface of the ground below me.

I allowed my feet to guide me without a second thought as to how long I might be gone or if I'd even return at all. Within a minute, I stood at the mouth of a spiraling staircase, looking down into the never-ending abyss of darkness, and willed myself forward.

In this late hour of the night, I would uncover the true purpose of Hall Auditorium.



the Closet



The Closet

The door to the closet isn't easy to spot. At least, not at first. It's tucked behind a crooked support beam, half hidden behind an old, faded flag that some prior tenant tacked up. You have to know it's there, or be curious enough to tug the fabric aside and wrap your fingers around the cold metal knob. It sticks. Of course it does. It always sticks. But the hinges still give, creaking open to something you didn't know you'd been holding back.

The air shifts when you step inside, breaching the quiet stillness of the small space. For a closet, it's surprisingly empty—no coats hang here, no vacuum cleaner shoved into the corner. This isn't that kind of closet. You might come here with something heavy. A question you haven't said

out loud yet. A story you've carried longer than you meant to. This is a room for reckoning, for grief, for truth-telling. The light is dim and unflattering, but it doesn't matter. The walls listen. The shelves don't judge. Whatever you need to bring here, you can.

So close the door behind you and lean your back against the cool cement of the far wall. Let the quiet settle over you, let the hum of the house fade behind you. There's something comforting in the insulation—how the sound of upstairs footsteps is muffled, how the ceiling pipes murmur gently to each other. Time moves differently here. You're allowed to cry in here. Or scream. Or say nothing at all. Some rooms in a house are made for gathering. This one is made for letting go. It's small, sure—but it's sturdy. It has held so many secrets already, and it will hold yours, too. When you're ready to leave, you don't have to explain yourself.

Just know this: the closet will still be here, quiet and unchanged, the next time you need it. It will remember what you've said—and what you haven't. It will keep your secrets safe in the silence, tucked into its corners and walls, until you're able to bring them out into the light.



Upham Hall

CALEB SAEBYUK CHUN

Ah, yes, Upham Hall. A landmark of Oxford. And who could forget its arch? A hallmark of Miami University and, if we're being honest, a symbol of Oxford itself. A place filled with the memories and nostalgia of all who have seen it. A place that can turn a potential student into an attending student. A place where you can take the perfect graduation photo. A place where romance turns to marriage. A place where dreams become reality. There's nothing in Oxford quite like Upham Hall.

At least, that's what the tour guides tell you. However, if you ever attend Miami and go to Upham, perhaps your thoughts will change. But who knows? Instead of conjuring up hypothetical experiences, let me regale my own. Upham Hall is indeed a place at Miami University.

But for me, it's a place of forced conformity, a place that forgets your history, and a place reeking with the stench of performative advocacy.

But if you're anything like me, you're used to it. Don't worry. So what if it's the fourth time a history professor cold-calls your name because you're the *other* in a sea of whiteness? It makes sense, right? I mean, from his point of view, I might as well be a get-out-of-jail-free card; surely, this student must know about The Chinese Exclusion Act—it doesn't matter that they're Korean, they're Asian!

It's alright, calm down. Just answer and go through the model minority charade that's kept you safe your whole life. Relax, he called you Chinese; it is what it is. So what's one more performance? "Ah, of course, professor. Here's some generalized Asian history to spice up the lecture." Take the praise and move on—just another day at Upham Hall.

And look, does any of this really matter? I mean, who cares? Just live your life; look how privileged you are—you're attending a university. Does it really impact you that much that they don't provide any Asian history courses? In the words of one of my *closest, dearest*, and most *amazing* professors, "If you're passionate about it, just do it yourself." What wonderful advice this is. What was I to expect? That Upham Hall, the hub of the humanities at Miami, with its leaky windows and prison walls, would be able to offer me a cosmopolitan selection of history? Perhaps my expectations for higher education were a bit too high.

Then, it'll happen: the masquerade will crack. It's not a matter of if, but when. Who knows what made it happen? Was it the tenth person who asked you where you're from? "Oh, I'm from Atlanta." "Oh, that's cool, but, like, where are you *from*?" Maybe it's the seventh class where there are only two or three other students who are *different*. Or perhaps it's when someone confides to you, "I'm glad that there are finally fewer Chinese students on campus. Do

you remember a few years ago? Oh my god! You get it right; you can speak English!" Bellowing with laughter. But regardless, whichever moment it is, it'll happen.

The series of hairline fractures finally collapses, turning into a chasm. Your practiced facade becomes too heavy to hold, eventually reaching your public service smile. The desire to constantly translate yourself into something that's not *other* is suddenly not worth it. The mask slips, not necessarily dramatically, but in a quiet withdrawal. The cost of the masquerade becomes too high. And their response? "I was just asking a question." "It's not that big of a deal." "Just chill out." And, in the end, nothing will change—it's just another day at Upham Hall.

However, what you won't realize is that, after four years of saying "it's just another day," you'll find that something did change. Unknown to you, calluses have formed, amassed through a cruel jadedness, invisible until needed most. The meritocracy? Promises of inclusion and a commitment to diversity? You realize these were nothing but empty promises, all to bolster the ethos of an institution indifferent to you, with Upham Hall simply acting as a mirage. All in the hopes of securing one more admission, one more plus for the board of trustees.

It may tout its commitment to diversity, but when confronted with lived realities, the response is often a shrug, a dismissal, a demand for silence. While there are great people, inevitably, when faced with adversity, the infrastructure that supports them will crumble. The crack in the masquerade isn't just a personal unraveling; it's a stark exposure of the gap between rhetoric and daily experience.

And in that stark exposure, a strange kind of clarity emerges. The disillusionment turns into a pragmatic understanding. Upham Hall, and perhaps Miami University, is no longer viewed through the idealistic lens of the dream it sold you, but as it truly is: a series of spaces not built for you, a place that touts acceptance until the point of action.

In its failure to be what you wanted it to be, Upham Hall became a crucible, forging a resilience you didn't know you possessed. The constant need to perform within its walls, while emotionally taxing, snapped you out of blissful ignorance.

This forced awakening, though jarring, becomes a catalyst. The rose-tinted glasses lose their tint. The energy once spent maintaining the masquerade now redirects, fueling a sharper awareness of your reality. This newfound clarity, born from disappointment, ironically empowers you. The discomfort, while persistent, becomes a teacher. Its lessons are etched in your understanding of the world and your place within it.

Upham Hall, in this sense, did fulfill what it originally promised you. It is a place where potential students become attending students, where perfect graduation photos are captured, and where budding romances turn to marriage. It is undeniably a place where dreams come true. It's just that, you realize, these dreams and memories were never meant for you, and no matter what you do, they never will be.



Oxford Cemetery

LETHA BLAIR

The story of the Oxford Cemetery begins in Ancient Greece with the birth of Lethe. Lethe, the river in Hades that makes the dead forget their past lives, or Lethe, the Greek personification of oblivion and daughter of Eris, the goddess of strife. It is there, in the cradle of the underworld, that the story of the Oxford Cemetery truly begins. I would know best, after all, considering that my name, Letha, is derived from the very same Lethe of Greek myth—a name gifted to me by a dead woman.

In complement to my lethal name, I have always felt a peculiar affection for cemeteries. Perhaps because one of my first memories took place in one or—more accurately—in a line of cars on the street outside one. It was my great-grandmother's funeral, the first funeral

of many I would go on to attend—at least one for every year I’ve spent on Earth. My only memory of my great-grandmother before seeing her in a casket is of her limbs and fingers, gnarled like old trees by decades of physical labor, barreling down a flight of stairs. Seeing the blood ooze from a wound on her forehead, blood pooling under the paper-thin, wrinkled skin of her knobby legs, sadness blooming on her face—a once vigorous farmer and moonshine smuggler laid low by a measly staircase and the looming specter of death.

I also remember being very perplexed by the idea of death while waiting in the car to attend the funeral. My parents, being atheists, further complicated the whole affair. What is a person supposed to do with death when there is no spiritual explanation for what happens to the soul when the body expires? I imagined my great-grandma’s consciousness eternally trapped in the darkness of a wooden box, buried under endless inches of soil, unable to move her limbs, frozen inside her mind for all eternity. I did requisition God—who I pictured as Zeus from Disney’s *Hercules* at the time—to watch over her and ease her pain if there was such a thing as an afterlife. I was still not very convinced, but it was this first brush with death that would begin my love story with cemeteries.

After that first encounter with a cemetery, I remember driving past others and imagining oily, tentacle-like shapes reaching up from the graves to the sky, beckoning to me. Instead of being afraid, I felt a strange melancholy, as if I was supposed to be among the number of the dead, resting in a coffin in the dirt.

As I got older, though, the cemeteries began to take on a less fantastical quality. Touring cemeteries became a thing with my little sister. Whenever things started to get bad at our house—and they often did—we would walk to the cemetery and spend hours moseying around, taking turns adding songs to the queue on my phone, before taking a preliminary pass by our house to make sure one

of our parents' cars was gone. If they were both still at home, we would go back and walk a couple more laps on the cemetery path until the coast was clear.

So there were a lot of memorable cemeteries for me, and memories in them, and a general fascination with the concept of a cemetery, but what about *the* cemetery—Oxford Cemetery?

I might have exaggerated a bit when I said that its story began in Ancient Greece.

The story of Oxford Cemetery, for me, actually began rather inconspicuously in the cab of a black 2015 GMC Canyon parked in Miami University's Ditmer Parking Lot. Ditmer was a commuter student parking lot at the time, and I was a commuter student. Class was just concluding over Zoom, and I was asked to stay after by my professor, who wanted to ask if I was okay. It wasn't something I had really considered before—my okayness.

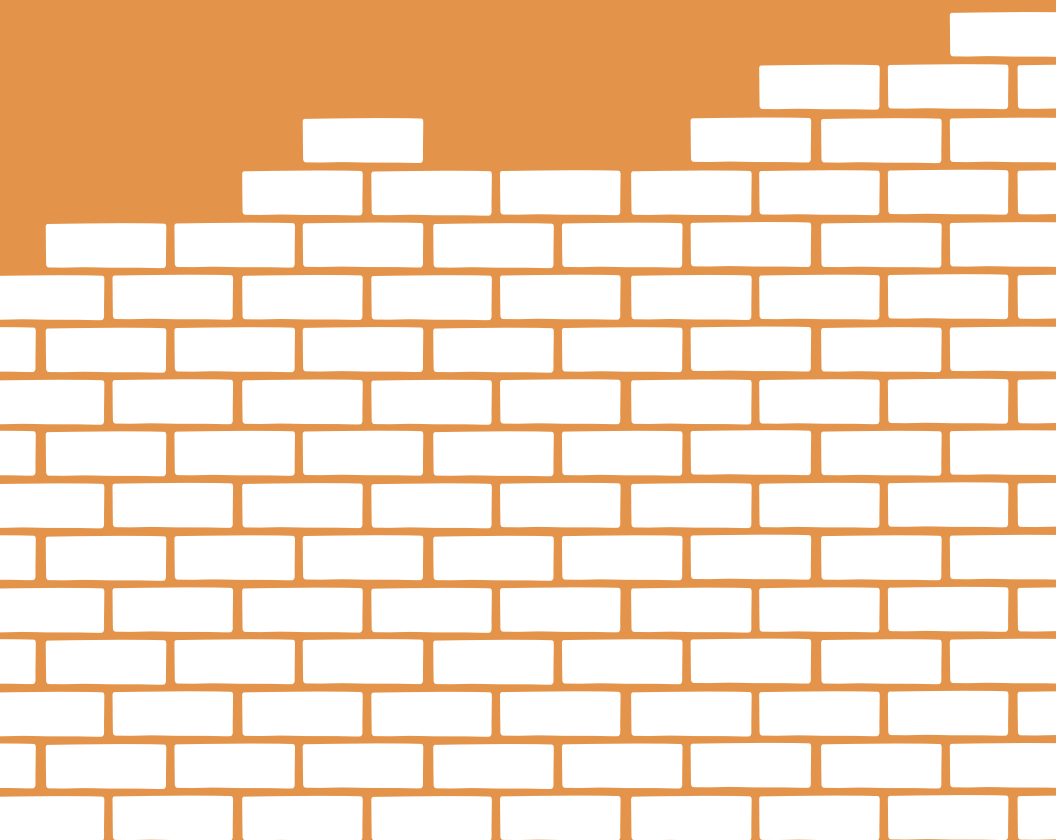
I was living a particularly unmiraculous life: an hour drive to the university and an hour drive back home each night, soundtracked by The Smiths' album *Strangeways, Here We Come*. Work every Tuesday and Thursday morning before class, closing shifts Friday and Saturday, open to close on Sundays. Homework on my lunch breaks. It seemed as though I was living the most okay life to ever take place—yet, when asked if I was, I began to hysterically sob. As it was happening, I thought it was funny—to be crying in my car while a person miles away watched me sob on a computer screen.

But it was there, on a Zoom call in a university parking lot, that my life was ended by a Miami University English Department faculty member with one sentence: "What you're experiencing sounds like domestic violence." And I did the only sensible thing you can do when a life has ended: I went to a cemetery—the closest one being Oxford Cemetery.

Now, you would think that being told you might be a victim of domestic violence by one of your professors

would be the really life-changing part of that chain of events, but it wasn't. It wasn't until I had walked through the black metal gates of the cemetery and past the plaque reading "Oxford Cemetery Est. 1855," that the gravity of the situation really struck me. It was on the paved path of Oxford Cemetery—barely wide enough to fit my truck—amidst the tall spires of the ornate gravestones that I ceased to be a normal person and became a person adjacent to being a victim of domestic violence. I still struggle with calling myself a victim of domestic violence or thinking about myself in that way, because what I experienced doesn't feel real enough to be worthy of such a title. Still, the framework within which I had been living my life had been completely obliterated, and, as I had been prone to do since I was a child, I turned to the cemetery for solace.

Over the following year, as I moved out of my domestic-violence-adjacent situation, I began to visit Oxford Cemetery with increasing frequency—perhaps with even more frequency than any of my other favorite cemeteries. Every time that I began to feel insane or like the circumstances of my life were too intense to bear, I would drive to Pepper Park, park my car, and walk up the hill to Oxford Cemetery. No matter the level of bone-reverberating emotional distress I was experiencing, walking through the gates of Oxford Cemetery and feeling the air would almost instantly balance my mind and settle my soul. And despite being in the company of the dead, I found that being alive was just a little bit more bearable.



the Living Room



The Living Room

Despite the darkest memories—those deepest places tucked away in corners, away from prying eyes and open ears—there’s a place just above, through the ceiling spackling, insulation, and creaking floorboards that brings the comforting warmth of community.

Step from that darkness and close the closet door behind you. Take the stairs back to the first floor, back to where light streams through windows and under the cracks of closed doors. The things you felt in the hidden alcove of the basement shouldn’t be forgotten. After all, they’re a part of this house. But take the chance to step into the living room, filled with dancing motes of dust in the beams of daylight, and discover that you are not alone.

Invite yourself in. Invite others in. Breathe in the smell

of centuries—the remnants of lives filled with yellow-paged books, metallic keyboards, late night tears, and early morning yawns. Sounds will accompany these fragrances in the air. A symphony of voices and music and laughter from wall-to-wall. They linger there in the paint, layered with different colors, and travel the ridges of the brushstrokes left again and again over time.

Take a seat on the worn-in couch cushions, or better yet, plop down on the shaggy carpet floor. Sit around the coffee table with friends, with strangers, with people yet to become friends who eventually will. As you chat, play board games, or cozy up for a movie night shoulder-to-shoulder with woolly blanket cocoons, think of the small stain in the carpet fibers, half-covered by a carefully placed end table. Think of the small dents in the wall from furniture moved here-and-there, and back again, always a puzzle to make this space a home.

Memories hold up the house, melding with the very structure. Add your own reinforcements—another layer of paint in your own personal hue.



Kumler Chapel

EMMA HENDERSON

My walk to Western Campus begins at the bottom of a hill. A swinging, rickety bridge takes me from the manicured lawns of the main Miami University campus over a creek and into the pond-ridden, tree-filled woods of Western. Ahead of me lies a climb—almost straight uphill and miserable no matter the season.

As I trudge up the slope, I see the first sign that the journey is nearly done: the stone crossing tower of Kumler Chapel rising over the hillside. Perched precariously at the top of the hill, the side of the chapel is obscured by trees. The windows poke out like little eyes between their trunks.

Built between 1917 and 1918 by architect Thomas Hastings for the Western College for Women, Kumler Chapel, with its Transitional Gothic style, has become

an aesthetic fixture of Western Campus. It was originally dedicated on November 10th, 1916, by sisters Anna Kumler Wright and Ella Kumler McKelvy, alumnae of the Western College for Women. The chapel was built to honor their parents, Reverend Jeremiah Prophet Elias Kumler and Abbie Goulding Kumler. The chapel replaced an older chapel on Western Campus. Construction on the building began in 1917, but met an abrupt halt at 4:20 p.m. on February 26th, 1918, when the building's iconic tower suddenly crumbled and collapsed.

The tower was rebuilt, and construction resumed in June of that year. The chapel was finally finished in September of 1918. Kumler Chapel's Dedication Day was celebrated on November 28th, 1918. After over a year of work and significant struggles, a piece of ivy from nearby Peabody Hall was fixed to the east side of the chapel, and the building was officially declared complete. At the time, the chapel was used for church services, baccalaureates, and convocation for the Western College for Women.

Hastings's inspiration for the chapel's design came from a church called Église-Saint-Pierre in Bazoches-au-Houlme, Orne, Normandy in France. Kumler Chapel looks nearly identical to this church, which dates back to the ninth century.

The exterior of Kumler was built with gray fieldstone, a naturally occurring stone collected from the surface of fields. It was laid in a fishbone pattern similar to Église-Saint-Pierre. From a bird's-eye view, the chapel is in the shape of a Latin cross. It has a steep slate roof. Surrounded by the trees and greenery of Western Campus and coupled with the close proximity of the serene Freedom Summer '64 memorial amphitheater, Kumler becomes a perfect, picturesque space for students to congregate at.

There are several dark, wooden doors set into the sides of the building, begging passing college students to go in and explore. In contrast to the cold gray exterior of the building, the inside whispers warmth. The building

is only one story, but there is a balcony that overlooks the interior of the chapel.

The balcony is my favorite vantage point to view the chapel in its entirety, though the journey up to it isn't the most desirable. The stairs are hidden in the shadows just inside the front door. There are no lights, and the steps are barely deep enough for a foot. I try not to think about how many spiders hide in the corners.

When I go to Kumler, I like to stand on the balcony. To look up, to look down. There is wood everywhere in the chapel. Between the doors and the front of the church are rows of bare wooden pews—enough to seat 235 people. The floorboards creak underfoot with each step when I walk across them. From the balcony, I get a good view of the ceiling, too: dark wood constructed into soaring arches with heavy beams, chandeliers hanging intermittently along it with lights that look like burning candles. The ceiling always reminds me of the belly of a Viking ship, flipped over and sat on top of the church, enclosed under the sloping roof.

The pulpit and choir seating are nestled into the rounded end of the chapel, and to the left is the grand organ. The original organ was built in 1918, but after a steam leak and subsequent damage, nothing was played on it for thirty years. Some of the original pipework remains, allowing the new organ to occasionally incorporate some of the vintage sounds. On the wall behind the choir, five stained glass windows are set into the wall, perhaps the greatest beauty of the entire chapel.

The windows of Kumler are done in a Romanesque style, featuring Gothic pointed arches and a lack of tracery (a stabilizing stonework pattern often seen supporting stained glass windows). Three of the five windows behind the choir depict Biblical symbols, focusing on women of the Bible.

The center window depicts Jesus Christ with Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene below him. It also features

an inscription that reads "But His teaching Christ brought the meaning of true womanhood to every nation and every home." This window was dedicated by the Kumler sisters to their father. The western window illustrates the Old Testament, showing Deborah, a prophetess and judge. This window was dedicated to the sisters' grandfather, Elias Kumler. The eastern window symbolizes the New Testament and shows love expressed through Jesus Christ. This one was dedicated to their mother.

The other two windows focus on the women of the Western College, depicting the arts and sciences.

Opposite the organ, the Tillinghast Window is situated in the west transept. Previously a fixture in the library of the old Alumnae Hall, it won a gold medal in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Additional memorial windows line the sides of the chapel, looking over the pews.

Today, Kumler Chapel is used as a venue for various events such as weddings, special church services, and concerts. Ceremonies for Miami's student organizations and Greek life are held there as well.

Though inside, the fuse box is filled with cobwebs and the piano sits unplayed most days, outside, people roam around the grounds in every season. In the spring, girls in white dresses swirl around the outside of the building, heels dipping into the wet, muddy grass. In the summer, students of Miami's summer courses take up residence on the grassy hill, soaking up the sun before their next class. In the fall, the spirit of Halloween fills the chapel, spooky stories told from the pulpit echoing from wall to wall. And in the winter, Kumler is a place for choir concerts—for the dim glow of candlelight and the hum of choral music as the snow starts to fall outside.



More Than Books: The Heart of Oxford's Lane Library

ANNABEL HOWE

As a child, one of my favorite activities was going to the library. I would beg my parents to take me to the old brick building near our house, where I'd spend an hour browsing the stacks and walk out carefully because the pile of books in my arms obstructed my vision. It wasn't until I got older that I realized this magical place of endless free books was so much more than a haven of literature. Libraries provide books and media free of charge, but they also offer services, programs, and events that help support citizens and bring together communities. They are more vital than many people realize, acting as a center for care and connection in areas all across the country, and

Oxford is no exception.

The local Oxford Lane Library—affectionately known as Lane Library—is located off South Locust Street, in the square across from Kroger and T.J. Maxx. Built in 2015, the two-story building is modern and inviting, full of natural light and cozy nooks. The first floor contains the front desk, the children and teen sections, DVDs, and new releases. The second floor contains both adult fiction and nonfiction, as well as study spaces and event rooms. There are many shelves to explore and books to flip through—if, like me, library browsing was one of your favorite childhood pastimes, you'll be satisfied. The associated locations in Hamilton and Fairfield offer access to even more books available upon request. However, there is much more to gain from the library than just books, as wonderful as they are.

The library offers free Wi-Fi, printing and copying services, meeting and study rooms, access to online databases, and research support. Patrons can use and check out not just books, but also audiobooks, e-books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs—as well as more unexpected items like sewing machines, instruments, puzzles, board games, and even seeds for starting a garden! The library staff organizes a wide variety of events throughout the year for all ages. There's weekly storytime for kids, tutoring for teens, and recurring book clubs for adults. Creative classes and workshops are offered regularly, alongside special events like author visits, educational lectures, and (my favorite) a monthly used book sale. I've never visited the library when there hasn't been some sort of programming going on—there are always new interactive exhibits or topical book displays to explore. It's clear that a great deal of time, energy, and care go into making the library a place for education and community.

In a history class I took my sophomore year, I was lucky enough to visit the Smith Library of Regional History located on the library's second floor. The Smith Library

houses an archive of Oxford and the surrounding area's local history, with everything from books and records on the area's development to the personal collections of local families. In my class, I worked on a research project that gave me the chance to comb through some of these collections containing photographs, newspaper clippings, personal writings, family genealogies, and more. Learning about Oxford's history and working with the tangible evidence of that history was an incredible experience. The Smith Library is a vital piece of Oxford, representing centuries of living and loving. The archives contained within the walls of the Oxford Lane Library solidify its importance in the community as a hub of learning, culture, and connection. It is available to anyone who may be interested in the archives—the staff are friendly, incredibly knowledgeable, and excited to share all they know about Oxford's history. It is also an excellent resource for students to use in research projects or class assignments, offering a chance for local and regional archival exploration.

The Oxford Lane Library is a hidden gem. Many Miami students don't realize that they are eligible for its services. Yet anyone with an Oxford address (even a temporary one) can get a library card, and even without a card students can visit the library to study or attend an event. The King Library on campus is wonderful, but Lane Library has an entirely different vibe and is more community-oriented. The second floor is an excellent study space, featuring plenty of tables and chairs, desktop computers, study rooms, and a beautiful ceiling skylight. One of my favorite things about being in Lane Library is sharing the space with Oxford locals—parents bringing their young kids to peruse the children's section, young adults typing away at their laptops, and elderly folks reading newspapers. It's easy to feel trapped within Miami's campus bubble; going out and exploring the Oxford area can be a much-needed break from school and stress. Supporting the library is also a great way for students to

give back to the community that so generously receives them. I have always felt welcome and appreciated there—it is truly a place for all.

Libraries are more than just books, and they are more than just spaces. Lane Library provides services at a free or reduced cost that people may not be able to afford elsewhere. It offers educational and social programming for all demographics, bringing people together and fostering connection and learning. And it preserves local history through the Smith Library, ensuring that Oxford's legacy is not forgotten. The library's doors are open to everyone. It is a space where people can feel safe, comfortable, and cared for. In a time when library funding across the country is in question, it is more important than ever to show support for our local library and advocate for its preservation. Whether you are visiting Oxford or looking to make a home here, consider stopping by to explore, talk with the staff, or attend an event. The Oxford Lane Library has been a community hub for years, and it continues to serve Oxford with love and appreciation.



Goggin Ice Center

KYLIE MULLIS

The Goggin Ice Center, affectionately known as "Goggin," opened its doors in 2006 as a state-of-the-art replacement for the original Goggin Ice Arena. Located on the Recreational Quad of Miami University's campus, the facility honors Lloyd Goggin, a former school vice president who helped build the original arena. Today, Goggin is not just a home for the university's nationally recognized ice hockey and synchronized skating teams—it's also a space where students, athletes, and community members come together in moments of camaraderie and competition.

Main Attractions

When you walk into Goggin, especially on game days,

the energy is impossible to ignore. Students and locals crowd the lobby, dressed in red and white, ready to cheer on the RedHawks in the Steve “Coach” Cady Arena, also known as “A Pad.” Named for the founding coach of the hockey program, Cady was instrumental in the creation of this newer building. The arena seats up to four thousand people, with a student section, general admission spots, club-level seats, opera suites, and private boxes. There’s even a dining area, known as the Club Lounge, for fans who want dinner with a view of the ice.

But not every day at Goggin is game day. On a typical afternoon, skaters from the Miami Ice Skating Club and the Varsity Synchronized Skating program take to “B Pad”—the second rink in the building, dedicated primarily to figure skating. These two groups represent four teams: the Intercollegiate Freestyle Team, the Open Collegiate Synchronized Skating Team, the Miami University Synchronized Skating Senior Team, and the Collegiate Team. These athletes train year-round and compete at the highest levels, making the figure skating program one of the most decorated in Miami University’s history.

The senior synchronized team has represented Team USA in international competitions for over two decades, winning medals at events like the ISU World Championships and the Leon Lurje Trophy. The collegiate team has claimed more national titles—twenty-three total—than any other team in the country. The Open Collegiate team is the three-time and reigning Midwestern Sectional Champion. The freestyle team is equally impressive, sending skaters to the National Intercollegiate Finals each year and balancing academics with high-level training.

Outside of varsity and club-level skating, Goggin also offers a Learn to Skate program for all ages, serving as the starting point for many lifelong skaters and future competitors. Skating lessons run year-round and are open to students, faculty, and Oxford community members. The

university also offers an Introduction to Ice Skating class, often taught by Goggin's own Skating Director, David Goodman. Additionally, ice shows and holiday exhibitions bring in families and alumni from all over the country.

Recreational Offerings

One of the coolest things about Goggin (no pun intended) is how many people it brings together. Over five hundred intramural teams sign up every year, with more than eight thousand students participating in hockey and broomball. The leagues are divided by skill—Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, and Elite—so whether you've played your whole life or can barely skate, there's a space for you. The same goes for broomball, which is a Miami University favorite and just as competitive as any varsity sport.

If you haven't heard of broomball, here's the lowdown: it's like hockey, but instead of skates, players wear tennis shoes, and instead of a puck, they use a ball. The game is fast, fun, and surprisingly intense, with teams sliding and scrambling across the ice to score goals. It doesn't use the entire rink; instead, a divider is lowered to make the "arena" easier to navigate.

Goggin is also home to the Jr. RedHawks youth program, Talawanda High School's varsity team, and a number of summer camps and clinics. In March of 2013, it even hosted the USA Broomball National Championships, where Miami won the collegiate division and a Minneapolis team called Furious beat Barrie's Tavern of Syracuse 3-2 in double overtime.

Legacy & Architecture

Goggin was designed by 360 Architecture and GBBN Architecture and took over one hundred weeks and forty-one thousand man-hours to complete, making it the most labor-intensive project in Miami history. The center

was constructed alongside a five-hundred-car parking garage that ensured the facility would be one of the most accessible and spacious venues on campus.

When you step inside the lobby of the building, you're immediately surrounded by Miami hockey history. Thirty-eight jerseys line the walls, each one honoring an alumnus who made it to the NHL. Nearby, large printed photos pay tribute to the six former RedHawks who went on to hoist the Stanley Cup. But centered amongst the red-and-white pride is a fun little secret—on one wall, a massive RedHawk logo proudly faces left. It's the only RedHawk on campus that does.

At the end of each academic year, Goggin undergoes a transformation that adds yet another layer to its legacy. Both sheets of ice are melted to make way for the graduation ceremonies of several colleges, including the College of Creative Arts, the College of Engineering and Computing, and the College of Liberal Arts and Applied Science. This is particularly special for students from the hockey and skating teams, many of whom belong to these colleges. For them, graduating in the same space where they spent countless hours training and competing adds a profound sense of closure and pride to their accomplishments.

Conclusion

The Goggin Ice Center is more than just a venue—it's a tradition. From the excitement of cheering on the RedHawks to the thrill of skating with friends or trying broomball for the first time, Goggin embodies the heart of Miami University's spirit and community.

It represents the long practices, the early mornings, the thrill of making it to nationals, and the simple joy of skating under bright lights on a cold winter evening. It represents a championship-winning team and a local youth program. It represents everything listed here and more, cementing the facility as a symbol of excellence, passion, and pride.

As the site of countless moments, big and small, Goggin is truly a cornerstone of campus life. It brings together not just the Miami community but also the school's core values of "Love and Honor," with a touch of slapshot action and a whole lot of heart.



Sesquicentennial Chapel: Bar Shoe Worship

BECCA BLANCO

On any given Sunday afternoon, muddied bar shoes kick absentmindedly on the formidable white pews of Miami University's central chapel. Hear the creak, creak, creak, of the moment, feel the wobbly elegance embodied in this loyal beacon of hope, or religion, or something?

Built in 1959, Sesquicentennial Chapel was constructed as a non-denominational gathering space to celebrate an array of spiritual events on campus. The donors wanted a constant reminder of the importance of religion in rounding out an individual and instilling morals.

Many pass the structure and admire its architectural

beauty—others avoid its haunting religious gaze. Located directly across from the student center, it reminds passersby of sweltering afternoons spent plunked in the pew of their own neighborhood's church/mosque/synagogue. Its religious anonymity allows it to chide students from all walks of life. They may even begin to count on their fingers the weeks it has been since they last attended a service. Like a reproachful mother, it stands unwavering through the seasons and the times, chiding the viewer without saying a single word.

Fewer and fewer students report practicing any kind of religion in the year 2025, yet the chapel remains in frequent use. Its gracious donors of good intention would likely be annoyed by how casually it is rented out, and for what ceremonies it tends to be the vessel for.

Sesquicentennial? What Kind of Name is That?

The second, if not first, eye-catching aspect of the chapel is its sixteen-letter long namesake. Sit on its stone steps for long enough, and one will overhear a passing student's garbled attempt at pronouncing it. *Sesquintis-sential? Sesquintennial?* Then a couple of laughs and the shrug of a shoulder.

Miami University was founded in 1809. The United States of America was only thirty-two years old at that point—not even old enough for a midlife crisis. Consisting of only seventeen states, it is safe to say that the university was born of a young and ambitious nation.

To celebrate Miami surviving the test of time, Sesquicentennial Chapel's completion in 1959 served to honor its whopping 150 years as a place to provide prestigious higher education. So, "sesqui-," meaning "one-and-a-half," coupled with "-centennial," meaning "of 100 years," solidifies the building's importance and place in history.

Ballroom dancers, singers, and sorority members alike refer to the building affectionately as "Ses Chapel,"

as though it is a friend's house or an ideal hangout spot. Or maybe they aren't sure how to pronounce the name, and they'd like to go the safe route. Regardless, for those looking for a shortcut, "Ses" is a succinct alternative.

New Wave Gospel

Two weeks before writing this, the chapel's wooden altar was adorned with pizza, cookies, and different kinds of flavored beverages. It was seemingly a new era of peace offerings to some sort of god, and I couldn't help but laugh at the irony of the altar's dinner table capabilities. Though some might consider it sacrilegious, I think I may call it biblical. Did Jesus not offer himself up at a dinner table, inspiring Catholics everywhere to construct ornate altars for celebration? For the breaking of bread and fast together?

To open the pseudo-ceremony, we students gave signs of peace, greeting one another in the only way that undergraduates know how.

College students, often primed by the ice-breakers and get-to-know-yous from classes, may find themselves lacking in the conversation-starter department. Luckily, one commanding phrase always holds true and gets the job done right: *"Okay, so like, everyone go around and say your name, major, year, and where you're from."*

Following this sign of peace, wherein each attendee anxiously awaited their turn, college students broke bread (pizza), and I counted myself among them. The congregation consisted of singers—half from Miami, and half from Vanderbilt University—who all came together to share their love of music and a cappella arrangements of whatever's on the radio. We sat and got to know each other, chatting on and on about altos and baritones and beatboxing skills.

We then sang, worshiping the music itself and bringing the reunion to a close. Harmonies echoed off the dome (surely the acoustics were considered in the architectural

plans of this sacred place), and we led our mischievous procession outside, bar-bound.

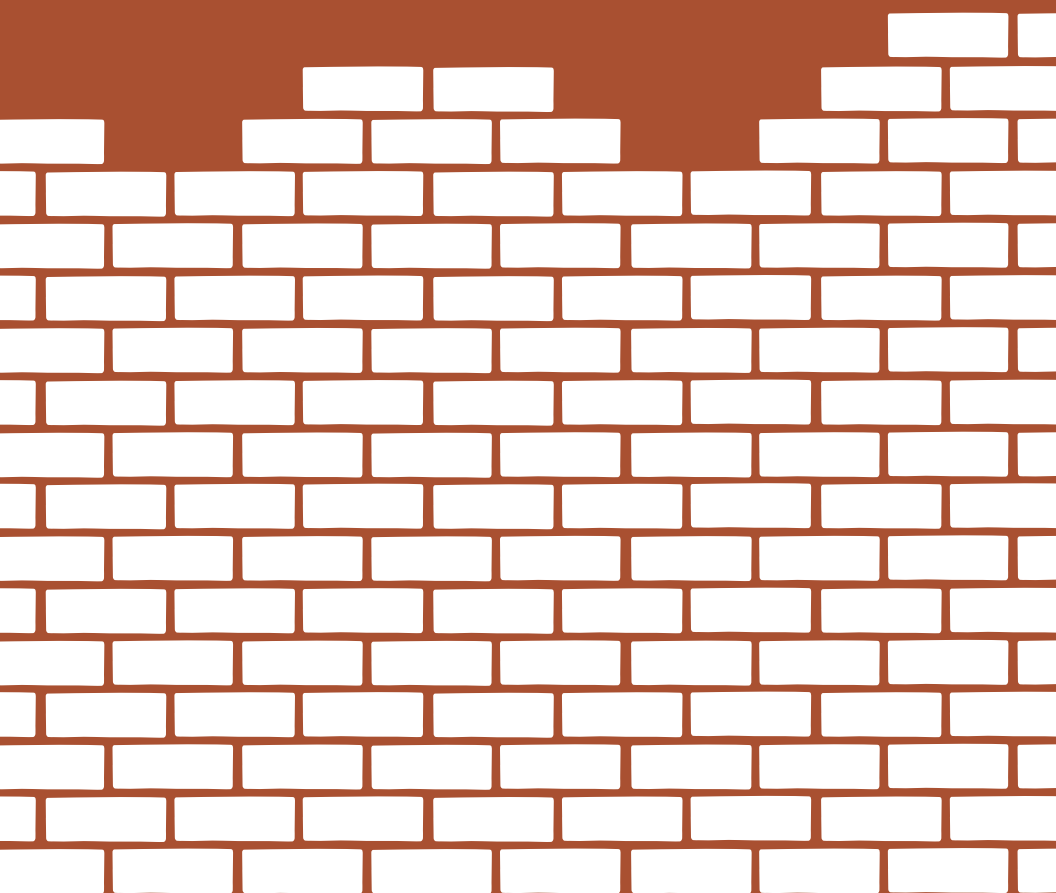
Sandals & Bar Shoes

One might argue that the concept of bar shoes (shoes reserved only for patronizing the stickier-floored establishments of Oxford, Ohio) is a staple of the modern college experience. Consumerism begs fresh faces of the economy to purchase a certain something for everything, but bar shoes can be the perfect excuse to finally embody the slogan on those blue bins seen in many classrooms. Transform *class shoes*, formerly *walking shoes*, into *bar shoes*, and one day you will find them in the most random of places. Sticky floors, slippery tiles, even Sesquicentennial Chapel's plush red pulpit.

Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus and his disciples donned their strapped sandals in countless temples, their feet regularly caked with such grime that before Jesus passed, he took it upon himself to clean those of his closest friends (I'm paraphrasing, but the point will follow).

Places of worship weren't always spotless and pristine. It wasn't irreverent to be there in everyday clothes, to laugh, even. They were places to gather, to celebrate, to praise the forces that have continued to grant human beings life. They were shared spaces for celebration, but the connections forged before, during, and after said ceremonies were just as important as the purpose for gathering itself. People came to be together, to see each other routinely, to love one another, as most religions implore.

Once a place to celebrate the highest of high, the bar shoes of many now chip away at the brittle wood of each pew in Sesquicentennial Chapel. People gather, laugh, sing, and make memories that they will fondly look back on in the years to come. Under this roof, in this house of praise, people come together and celebrate life. I like to think, then, that the chapel is still being put to good use.



the Backyard



The Backyard

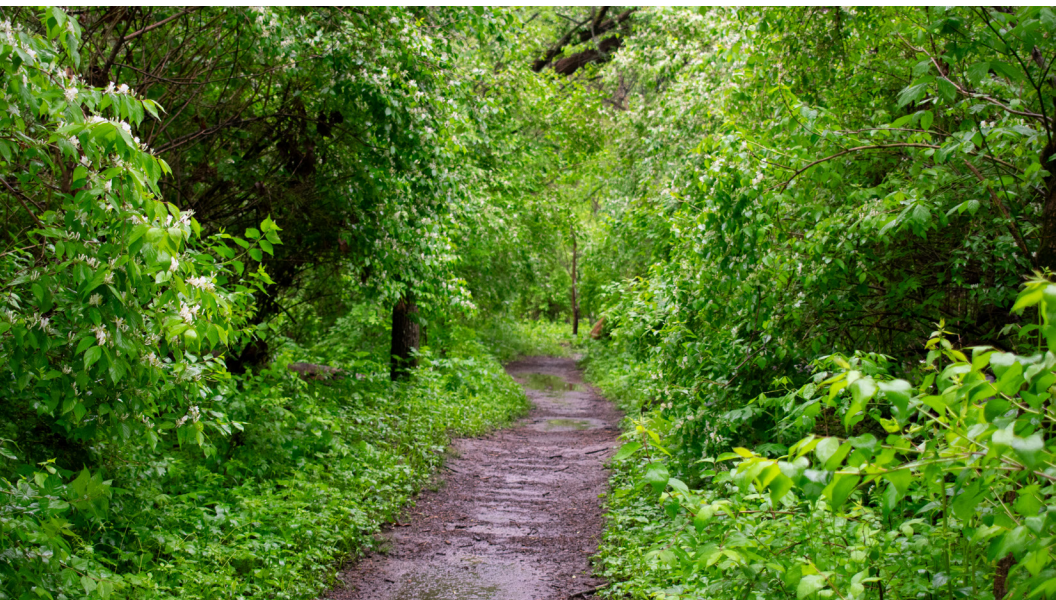
When the noise of the crowd dulls and fades, the rooms of the house are left empty to catch their breath and recuperate from the contained liveliness of community. Step through the screen door to the back porch. The leaves of the trees in the backyard flutter with the breeze, as if waving.

Nature surrounds you and welcomes you to a wide-open liveliness of community. Take the stairs to the grass slowly, breathing in the crisp Ohio air and listening to the gentle sounds of the wild. To your right is a fire pit, a gaggle of mismatched lawn chairs curling in a crescent, their legs sinking into the springy soil. Sit down, watch a few clouds travel in the blue expanse above. The dewy grass still holds impressions of footprints. Another place

to be among friends.

But it's a place to spend time alone, as well. Sit in the quiet of morning and reflect on the nights of fun. Walk in the shade of the trees, or soak in the sun of late afternoon. Sit with a friend, or a few, and explore the quieter truths of living in such a place. Hear the train whistle in the distance, barrelling through the alleys of silly-named houses and red-brick streets.

In a way, this backyard feels like the pause after a long hike. Stretch your legs. Take note of the scrapes and tiredness in your bones. And rest. The sights you experienced along the way and the people you saw them with make the tiredness worth it.



Bachelor Preserve: A Hub for the Outdoorsy

FAYE SMITH

It's late, but you're having too much fun with your new college friends and none of you want to go back to your dorm just yet. What is a group of college students to do? Head on down to their local nature preserve that doesn't have a closing time!

For twenty years, Dr. Joseph M. Bachelor worked at Miami University, all the while purchasing land surrounding the campus. When he died in 1974, he dictated that 416 acres of that land would be given to the university, which turned it into the Bachelor Wildlife and Game Reserve known today. The land hosts around seventeen miles of hiking trails, three of which are

loaded with various terrain and creative bridges, connecting to many of the other nature trails located around campus.

As college students, Bachelor Preserve became the site for my friend group's favorite hobby: night hiking.

The parking lot is easy to miss, past the stables and down a tiny turnoff right after a bridge. We passed it many times before it became a staple of our nighttime adventures. Next to it is a large sports field, perfect for watching a full solar eclipse. Near the entrance to the park is a map of the available trails and occasionally a port-a-potty for those who need it.

The first and easiest trail you'll find is the Bachelor Preserve East Loop, the one my friends and I spend most of our time on. It begins at the first fork in the road: One path continues forward while a second one composed of concrete stepping stones beckons you across the Harkers Run Creek. With a flashlight, the stones are easy to cross in the dark, though it can be a treacherous task after rain or snow. It's the last jump to land that is the most difficult—after rain, the creek swells and the gap becomes much larger than before. Once, after a rainy weekend, my friends and I discovered that the water was too high and the gap was too far to attempt a jump. Luckily some logs had become lodged between the stones and the land, so we were able to cross that way, though it was a slippery endeavor.

The trail then leads up a hill dotted with thin trees and past a few fields. Along the way, you'll also pass a few fenced-in patches of woods that are part of a study involving deer and their grazing habits, along with the growth of invasive plants. Here, the hiking trail becomes a light, uphill trek that leads to another fork in the road. To the right is a small looping trail that leads right back to the fork; to the left continues the East Loop.

Unfortunately, in the darkness when you're busy talking with friends, it's easy to take the wrong turn. On many of

our hikes we found ourselves inexplicably in the middle of bushes and undergrowth that towered just above our heads, yet oddly out from under the cover of trees. An unseen generator filled the air with an ominous hum. Every single time this happened, we turned around.

My friends and I were out and about on our last hike before winter hit during the fall semester of 2023. We had just passed the trail divide, heading farther down the East Loop, when three of us heard it—a growl off in the bushes.

It was like a scene from a movie, three of us frozen in our tracks while the fourth kept going on as if he'd heard nothing. We whispered to him to get back—didn't he hear it? *Hear what?* The bobcat of course. Needless to say, we booked it out of the woods that night.

In a less stressful situation, you'll be able to see that halfway down this stretch of trail, the forest around changes significantly. The many maples that fill the rest of the forest start to fade away and it begins to resemble less of a deciduous forest and more of a coniferous one. Moss lines the path, but only for a short time. This natural diversity is what led to my first introduction to the location. Many nature classes take their students there for hands-on learning to see examples of plants in their natural environment.

The East Loop trail peaks at a large body of water, the Bachelor Pond, with the trail continuing around and branching off into multiple other paths to explore. At night, the pond is impossible to see across, but during the day, you can take in the scene before you while resting for a moment on a bench. There's also a shorter trail that connects to a gravel parking lot, providing easier access to the pond. This trail makes for a nice quick hike and an easy place to get photos of the woods.

Oftentimes at night my friends and I would turn back at this point, but in the day, we'd continue forward. The East Loop continues on a quick downward path with a slippery patch beneath a pine tree. The needles make the slope a

falling hazard. Then comes the most dramatic section of the trail.

Where the trail was smooth and mostly consistent before, this section has many ups and downs, along with a few plank bridges to cross. The biggest one comes where the trail crosses back over Harkers Run Creek. A suspension bridge—perfect for scaring your friends on—spans the creek’s width and must be mounted via a steep set of stairs resembling a ladder more than a real stairway. Once on it, feel free to jump at random. Just remember, if you can do it to your friends, they can do it to you.

The last stretch is a pleasant quarter-mile hike back along the creek. The trail connects back to the initial fork and leads you back to the parking lot, where, by now, there’s nothing left to do but head home. Don’t worry, it will be here the next night, and the one after that. Explore the big open field on the other side of the entrance, check out the DeWitt Cabin along the paved path leading in, or navigate the other trails in the woods. No matter what you do, make the most of it, and enjoy the outdoors while you’re at Miami University.



A Travel Guide to Hueston Woods State Park: From a Miami Student

MADDIE LEE

It started with a couple girls at Miami University searching for fun beyond the cornfields—and finding it at Hueston Woods. Before I begin storytelling and revealing the best ways to explore the state park, I want to give a brief description of the land itself.

Hueston Woods State Park is a hilly, beautiful piece of land hidden within the flat fields of Oxford, Ohio. Only about a ten-minute drive from Miami University, the state park covers three thousand acres of wooded area including a shallow man-made lake fit for fishing, boating, and swimming. Within this serene natural area, there are several hiking paths fit for everyone. Those looking for a

workout can hike multiple trails sprawling the steep hills throughout the park, while those looking for a peaceful stroll can enjoy the flat land near the lake.

Visitors can also witness the amazing wildlife that lives within the park. From white-tailed deer to wild turkeys, there are several creatures you can find wandering the hills of Hueston Woods. There is even a nature conservatory where visitors can admire the rescued wildlife native to the park. Bird watchers can spot resident and migratory species, and if you're lucky you might even find a bald eagle.

Along with observing the stunning nature and diverse wildlife, visitors can also experience several manufactured structures within the park. The first is Hueston Woods Lodge. Built in 1968, the lodge is a rustic, wooden building that overlooks Acton Lake. Inside there are cozy rooms, a large indoor pool, spacious conference rooms, and a restaurant. Just down the road from the lodge, there is a small campground packed with camper spots and small cabins.

Besides the various options for overnight stays, you can also find other unique structures within the park. The Hueston Woods Covered Bridge spans 108 feet overlooking Four Mile Creek. It is filled with signatures and messages from past visitors, and connects to one of the hiking paths along the creek. Hueston Woods is the perfect location for those looking to explore the outdoors. There are so many adventures waiting for all visitors, some of which may be hiding in plain sight.

Throughout my four years at Miami University, I have been able to find some of these secret adventures and now I would like to share them with you. As a homesick freshman, I was constantly looking for things to do to take my mind off my worries. As a result, my friends and I frequently explored Oxford and the surrounding areas, allowing us to stumble upon Hueston Woods. We would drive around and take walks on the trails, until one day we

stumbled upon the lodge.

Of course we went inside and began exploring the building. We immediately noticed that the doors to the indoor pool were unlocked and could easily be accessed by individuals who were not actually staying at the lodge. We decided that we would come back the next day and attempt to swim in the pool. Thankfully, we succeeded. We only went to that pool twice overall, but it was a unique experience that we really enjoyed. So if you are ever looking for a pool to hang out at, try Hueston Woods Lodge—but you didn't hear it from me.

On a less risky note, you could also swim in Acton Lake. While I have only done it once, there is a fairly clean beach where visitors can sunbathe or swim in the water. There is sand within shallow areas of the beach, so you would not be navigating much rock. While the residents of Oxford are usually crowding the area, you can typically find a spot to relax and take in the sunshine. I recommend doing this on a hot day at the beginning of fall semester or end of spring semester, so unfortunately swimming in the lake is out of commission for most of the year. On the bright side, there are other fun things to do at Hueston Woods besides swimming.

On the same side of the lake, my friends and I found another interesting adventure: cooking s'mores. At the lakeside park near the beach, there are a few fire pits. As bored sophomores, we decided we could try out these grills and attempt to cook s'mores over the heat. But we didn't know that these grills required firewood, so most of our night was spent searching the park for pieces of kindling and attempting to start the fire. Eventually flames appeared and we cooked delicious s'mores while chatting and taking in the sunset, which illuminated the sky over the lake. My advice is: If you want to attempt grilling out at the Hueston Woods beach, bring a couple pieces of firewood.

Hueston Woods is also a great place for dates. Whether you are taking a long walk in the woods, watching

the sunset over Acton Lake, or even hammocking late at night, the park is well equipped with romantic activities. Over our four years in college, my friends and I were actually successful in these mentioned activities—well, except the hammocking. When my roommate went hammocking in the woods, a car drove up, shined their headlights into the hammock, and pretended to drive into it. While I think that was a self-contained incident, be wary of crazy townies if you go hammocking at Hueston Woods. I'm sure there are other spots throughout the park that would be suitable for dates, but unfortunately, we didn't have time to try them before we graduated.

Although Hueston Woods is not on campus, it is still an exciting place to check out. I hope that after reading this, you will take my advice and try out some of these activities. And if you find even better ways to experience the wonders of Hueston Woods, make sure to spread the joy. When you go to school in a small town, sometimes you have to find interesting ways to have fun during the week. Thankfully, a gorgeous state park is right down the road.



Trails of Oxford and Miami: A Field Guide

ALAINA FITCH

The trail before you holds pools of rainwater in its divots. Budding trees are cast in the reflections, where you see a squirrel scurrying up one of the trunks in a rippling blur. Each of your steps sinks slightly into the worn path while above, the clouds slowly unweave and allow a few threads of sunlight to lighten the world around you. A pileated woodpecker taps on a tree in the distance. It echoes through the woods, melding with the steady sound of the creek to your left. The wind pulls a few loose leaves across your path and into the small patches of grass that are beginning to gain their color back, as if getting over the sickness of the winter. Welcome to Oxford in spring.

American Sycamore*Platanus occidentalis*

Platanaceae

With white, skeletal limbs extended toward the sky, the American sycamore is a symbol of time. As it grows, it sheds parts of its bark, revealing the smooth bones of its trunk. These figures loom over you like watchful beings as you meander the paved path of the Dewitt Pepper trail. The other trees seem to sink into a sea of green, but the sycamores stand as if already faded and worn into floating driftwood.

You came from Pepper Park, where a grassy area and pavilion welcomed you to the trailhead. Before catching your first glimpses of the sycamores, you wandered under a bridge, the traffic of Route 27 rumbling above. With Collins Creek on your right and a mural with a few abstract foxes running across the cement of the bridge wall on your left, you slowly entered a new world. You pass benches, disc golf baskets, and a few groups of people who nod and say, "Hello." Then, the tall sycamores begin to appear, leaning toward you and beckoning you with their zig-zagged twig fingers. The trail turns, following Four Mile Creek upstream. Still, the skeletal beings watch you—here and there, hidden up on the slopes toward Miami's Western Campus, or rooted near the water of the creek. They aren't unsettling, at least not anymore. As you walk, you come to understand them as the pioneer species that they are: welcoming and restoring, guardians and greeters of their home along the trail.

Bur Oak*Quercus macrocarpa*

Fagaceae

You see DeWitt Cabin—old wooden boards and mortar—then the horses in their pasture. Birds flutter between

the trees in the enclosed area of the bird blind to your left. The breeze smells earthy, the rain from a few days before still intermingling with the dirt and the pollen scent of spring. You wave as a cyclist passes you.

The path diverges into other gravel ones, but you follow the paved one back in the direction of Four Mile Creek. A few runners pass you, their headphones covering their ears. As the pattering of their cadence fades in the distance, you hear the chirping of the cardinals and finches resume. A robin hops on the forest floor searching for insects to eat. The trees bend in a gust of wind, branches creaking and cracking as they stretch and dance beside you. Suddenly, a tree fills your vision: from periphery to periphery. A bur oak with a trunk so thick you wonder how many measures of your arm width it would take to wrap the tree in an embrace. You believe it to be wise. It was here before the Bonham DeWitt trail was carved. What did it see of the wild things before we runners and cyclists and walkers arrived?

Common Daffodil

Narcissus pseudonarcissus

Amaryllidaceae

In the damp woodlands above Four Mile Creek, which the spring storms and spiraling winds have been unable to touch, tall stems of green sprout from the ground. Atop them, yellow, orange, and white tubular coronas with a crown of petals. You slip down the muddy hill, momentum carrying you until the roots of a black cherry jerk you back with a halting shudder. As you gather a breath and assess the mud that has been painted up your pant legs, you notice the familiar spots of yellow in the distance.

You saw the fields of daffodils near Conrad Formal Gardens and the Marcum Hotel before your adventure into the woods, but something about the little patches among the shade of the trees along Marcum Loop makes

the flowers even more endearing. When you make it to the bottom of the ravine, crossing a few wooden bridges along the way, you notice another patch of flowers near the water. As you get closer, you see their yellow faces gazing at their reflection in the flowing creek, quite in love with their little slice of Oxford.

Eastern Red Cedar (the Juniper)

Juniperus virginiana

Cupressaceae

You trek up the sloping paved path, where the sun breaks through the trees as it sets in the west. The sound of rushing water fills the air to your right. You follow the curves of the new Pepper Woods trail, evergreens prominent in the nature that encases you. The air is still—it smells sweet and hopeful. A man and his border collie pass you, heading back to the parking lot. You offer a wave. The dog wags its tail and pants, mouth stretched in a playful smile.

After a few more curves of the path, you venture off on one of the unpaved trails that branches back to Collins Creek. There, you spot a juniper—the greenest thing around among the trees still getting their grasp on spring. Little green cones yet to mature are sprinkled in the awl-like needles of the tree. With time, you know that the cones will change and become a dark blue. The light of the day continues to fade into dusk as you wander back in the direction of the parking lot at Pepper Park. You stop at a bench, watching the silhouette of a hawk cross the darkening sky, before continuing with your walk—and your life—just as the evergreen juniper promises.

White Trout Lily

Erythronium albidum

Liliaceae

From the earth grows two-by-six boards in lines. They

tilt upwards in a gradual slope, forming a boardwalk that curves and weaves through the trees toward Four Mile Creek and the marshier bits of the bank. Your shoes clomp along the boards of the Ruder Preserve Boardwalk. Over the edge of the railing, you can see the underbrush of the forest floor beginning to flourish in greens and flower buds. The white trout lily colony catches your eye as you near the creek. Its mottled leaves reach skyward while the stamens in the center of its petals tilt down toward the damp dirt below. A few bees buzz around the petals, bobbing through the leaves and undergrowth. You take a seat on one of the wooden benches to pause on your way to the Black Covered Bridge just north of Yager Stadium. The air becomes warm in the late spring sun, and you find your chin dipping to your chest. Like the lily, you droop in a peaceful slumber among the sounds of nature.

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From dog parks to people parks, bird blinds to boardwalks, paved paths to tumultuous trails, the natural areas that encircle Oxford are meant to be explored.

Meander on a trail, illuminated with summer sun. See the flourishing trees blot out the deep blue sky and the clouds that dot the expanse. Each of your steps will press softly into the Oxford soil, which will stick to your soles in little flecks of earth. You may hear a wood thrush whistle above you. The sound will carry on the warm breeze, blending with the ensemble of birdsong deeper in the trees. The wind will pull a few loose flower petals—left over from the peak of spring—across your path and onto the soft green carpet of grass.

It beckons you to wander, to explore. Welcome to Oxford in summer.



Where the Honeysuckle Once Was

MANDY HOLLIDAY

On December 14th, I walked into the Silvoor Biological Sanctuary wearing a wool sweater and thick-soled boots that had seen better days. The ground was half-frozen, somewhere between crunchy and soggy, littered with dead, ice-laced leaves thawing at the edges. It was the kind of cold that doesn't look particularly threatening but still finds a way into your joints and fingertips, sneaking past every layer you thought was warm enough. A handful of us had shown up for the honeysuckle removal—bundled up, tools in hand, a puff of fog billowing with every breath.

Even in winter, the trail felt alive. I followed it past the

first bend, loppers in hand, where the trees grow close together and the underbrush dips low. There was no snow, just the muted palette of late semester: bare branches, leaf litter, and a few lingering red berries too stubborn to drop. Even in the hush, you could hear the place breathing. The occasional crack of a twig. Bird wings flickering just out of view.

Silvoor is small, only about 2.5 acres, but walking through it never feels brief. Dr. Robert Hefner and his wife, Ilo, spent years transforming what was once Oxford's town dump into a haven for native plant life. With time and care, Silvoor grew from a lot once littered with trash into a trail that brims with quiet beauty. In 1980, the Fitton family added more land to the space, with the promise that it would always remain part of the sanctuary. That area sits just behind a row of campus houses, where backyards descend right into the mouth of the trail. The moment you step down them, it feels like crossing a threshold. The stillness creeps up on you. Just a few steps in, you feel miles away from everything.

That day, we were clearing honeysuckle—specifically, Amur honeysuckle, an invasive shrub that pushes out native species by stealing sunlight and soil. I'd learned in my botany class how relentless it can be. The job is simple: cut it as low to the ground as you can, and try to yank out the roots so it can't grow back. I picked a slope near the edge of the trail, where the branches tangled into each other like wire. Some bushes came free with a tug; others held firm, like they'd decided they belonged there.

There's a kind of meditative rhythm to it: kneel, cut, pull, step back, make room. You start to notice things once the brush is cleared—small trees you hadn't seen, patches of moss softening the ground, prints in the dirt from deer moving through earlier in the morning. The smell of exposed soil. The way the light shifts. It's the kind of work that feels repetitive but not empty. You're removing something not to erase, but to make space. To give

something else a shot at life.

I didn't think much of it at the time beyond the task. But months later, I came back.

It was early spring—late March, maybe—and the same trail had transformed. Daffodils grew in bundles everywhere. They lined the path like a procession, bright and a little unruly. The trees still hadn't fully leafed out, so sunlight poured in freely, catching on every new sprout and petal. And it wasn't just daffodils. The wildflower garden—home to over sixty species—was beginning its show. The springtime special: mayapple, bloodroot, Virginia bluebells. Even Dutchman's breeches, their delicate white buds hanging like tiny laundry strung between stems.

Some of them bloomed in the very places we'd cleared. Places where nothing had grown before—not because it couldn't, but because the honeysuckle had left no room.

There's a lesson there, if you want to find it, about growth and what it really looks like. It's not always about adding more. Sometimes, it's about removing what no longer belongs. Making room. Cutting something down not to destroy it, but to see what might grow in its absence. I think winter makes that easier to understand. It gives you the pause you need to see the scaffolding beneath everything else—the bones of the forest, the architecture of potential.

I don't mean to romanticize the work, though. Cutting honeysuckle is cold, tiring, and repetitive. It leaves your hands raw and your legs scratched. But there's satisfaction in it—the good kind. The kind that makes you feel more like yourself afterward, like you've made something right, even if no one was there to see it.

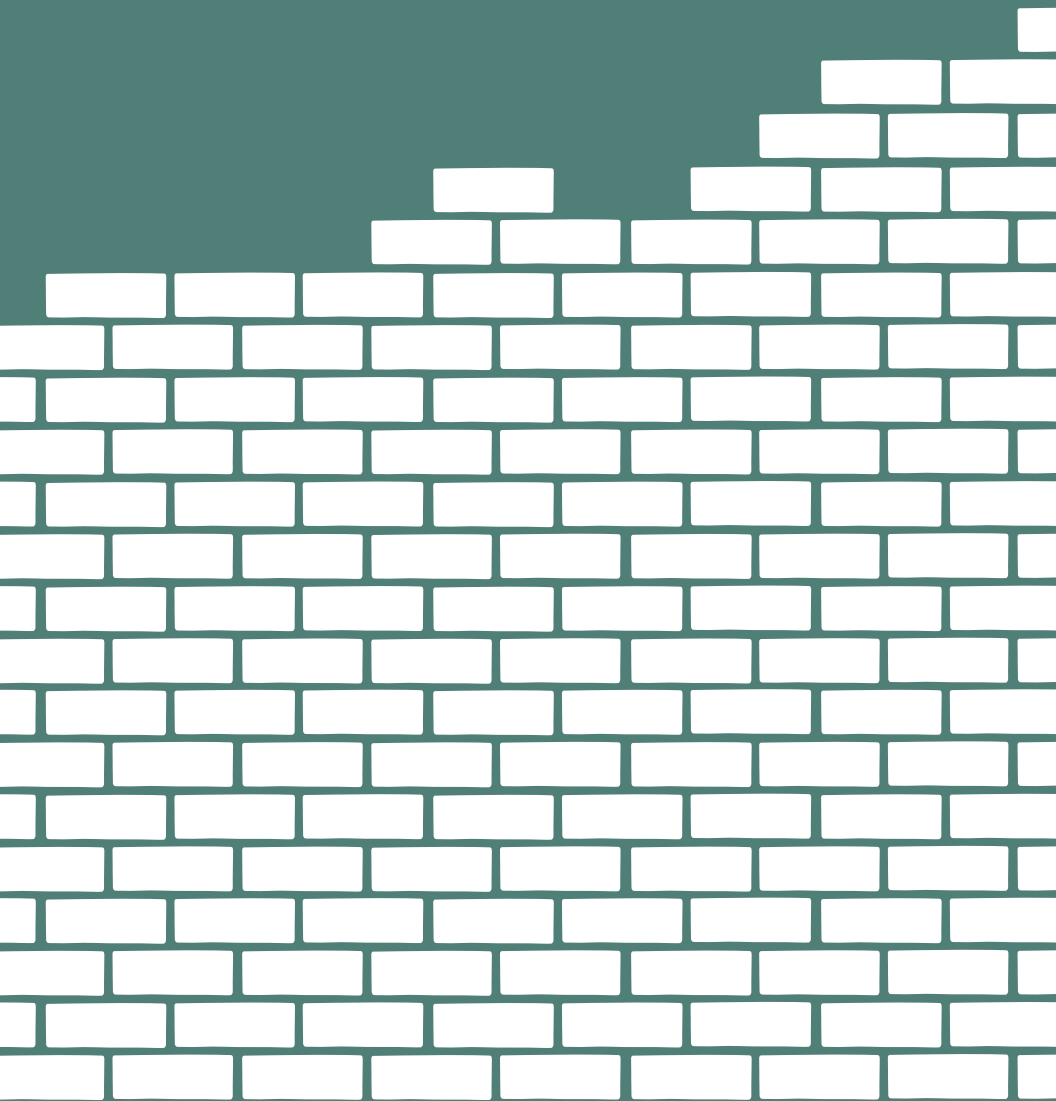
Silvoor isn't dramatic. It's not a national park or a vast, sweeping forest. It's a modest patch of reclaimed land behind a row of tiny homes. But it holds multitudes. You can walk it in twenty minutes and still come away with something new—an unfamiliar bird call, a glimpse of a fox

at dusk, the sound of water moving over smooth rocks just out of sight. A sense of quiet that stays with you. It's the kind of place that doesn't ask for attention but rewards it anyway. And that feels rare.

I don't know what the trail will look like in another ten years. Maybe more daffodils. Maybe different birds. Maybe the honeysuckle finds its way back again, and someone else has to start over. That's the thing about sanctuaries: they aren't static. They're constantly negotiating with time, with weather, with whatever we bring into them.

But for now, I think about the stretch of woods where I kneeled in the frost and cleared space. I think about how it looked then—bare, tired—and how it looked later, blooming and unbothered. I think about how we get attached to what we can see, forgetting sometimes that it's the space in between that does the most work.

We don't always get to witness the outcome. But sometimes we do. And when we do, it looks a lot like wildflowers.



return to
the Foyer



Return to the Foyer

Shuffle your way back towards the entrance, pausing in your favorite spots within the house. The memories will follow you, brushing against your palms and ankles. Breathe in deeply, remember, reflect. Smell the scent of family dinner coming together in the kitchen. Hear the call of friendly birds peeping and chirping in the backyard. See the dim light of a computer shine from the bedroom door, working tirelessly to get that paper in for finals. The foyer awaits, curling around you in a familiar hold. Pull your shoes back on—slowly, to appreciate the shaggy, familiar carpet below your feet once more.

Tug your jacket back over your shoulders, careful not to knock over the pile of other sweatshirts teetering until their owners come back for them. Reach up to turn off the

light before leaving, but first notice the photo on the wall that you hadn't noticed before.

Your own smiling face stares back, the very house you stand in situated in the background, watching over the photo. A strange, comforting glow emerges from its roof, as though the sun itself is emerging from the chimney to light your way. The figures of your friends and family, your professors and TAs, all of those who helped you along your journey; they all stand around you in a semi-circle, looking back at the house—no, at the home. Your home.

And, finally, before you step back outside, into the dim morning light, read the handwritten note at the bottom of the photo: *No matter how far you go, you can always come back home.*



Slow Idaho

TAYLOR MORGAN

To the past, present, and future residents of Slow Idaho,

In Oxford, college homes have names—and with those names come stories. For twenty years now, the yellow house at 115 East Walnut Street has gone by one: Slow Idaho. It has been called home by roughly 140 college students over the years; twenty-odd groups of twenty-somethings who will always have a year of their college lives defined by Slow Idaho. So, I'm writing to let you all know that not much has changed around here; there are little pieces of all of you etched into the walls.

To start, the house is still yellow, and the front door remains a bright fire truck red. On the warm days that live in the first weeks of fall semester and the last weeks

of spring semester, there is almost a 100% guarantee that the front door will be propped open—an invitation to any and all passing by. The front porch continues to be the first place to escape when someone is feeling stressed, in need of some vitamin D and fresh air, or simply wants to enjoy the beloved porch swing: white-painted wood with navy cushions. The swing still hangs sturdy under the weight of endless morning chats and evening homework sessions.

After walking through the red front door, you'll look to your left and see a wall scattered with memories of the current residents: posters that show where each of the eight girls is from—some from Cleveland, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Columbus, just to name a few. Every school year, a new couch, a new television set, a new rug, and new decor are moved into the Slow Idaho living room. And while the room's appearance may change, its purpose stays true: to be a place where people come together. The sentiment of never being alone at college proves to be one of the truest. College students will spend entire summers collecting furniture and decor for their bedrooms, only to spend 90% of their time at home in the living room. A college house's living room hosts weekly movie nights, parents getting to know each other during Miami's Family Weekend, hangouts, and those in-between moments where roommates just get to exist together.

Soon after moving past the living room, you'll be greeted by the one and only pastel pink-painted kitchen. Sometime between Slow Idaho's conception and today, the kitchen was painted an opaque light pink that stops anyone in their tracks—a fitting addition next to the pale yellow exterior, red door, and banana-yellow bathrooms of the home. There is often an addition or edit made to Slow Idaho when each new group of residents moves in. The kitchen was painted pink by one specific group of girls, and it has stayed and become one with the house. The bright orange couch that sits below the balcony

was placed years ago by one group and has remained ever since.

There's a specific essence to college that calls for tradition. Whether the purpose is to create unity, a community, or a sense of belonging for students far from home, it simply boils down to humans being creatures of habit. Tradition lives within Miami University. There are big traditions, like students avoiding the seal at the hub of campus, believing that stepping on it will make them fail their next exam. And there are smaller ones, like "passdowns"—a housing procedure most common in the Greek community, where Oxford homes are passed down year after year to members of the same sorority or fraternity. Slow Idaho became a Phi Mu Beta Eta passdown in 2008, just three years after its naming, and continues to be one today.

With the passing along of a house like Slow Idaho from group to group comes mini traditions and memorabilia. One reference that Slow Idaho is well-known for is the Glass Bottle Wall, a tradition that started when Slow Idaho was first named. Walk through the pastel pink kitchen and you'll find a wall of shelves lined with glass bottles—each one collected and preserved by those who came before. It's a little reminder that even though college is fleeting, what you leave behind can last for generations.

Every resident's impact on Slow Idaho shines just as brightly as the house's impact on you all. Life is funny in the way that people tend to appreciate something more when it's gone, even the simplicity of living in a college home with their best friends. To the past residents of Slow Idaho, I am glad to report that your legacy lives on as a standout Oxford college home. To the current residents: Take as many pictures and make as many memories as humanly possible—living at 115 East Walnut Street is a one-of-a-kind experience. Lastly, to all the future groups of Slow Idaho residents, we ask you to foster the traditions and embrace memorabilia. Thank you for every moment

that made these walls more than wood and paint—for
transforming this house into a home.

From,
Slow Idaho



Acting Sunlight

CASSELL PRESNELL

There is only one building on Miami's campus that sings. Its music lives not just in the air but in the lofty walls, the frequented halls, and the very bones of its foundation. The paneled steps seem to hum with memory, as if every note ever played there had soaked into its stone. Even the edge of the roof reaches like an ear toward the sky, catching whispers of harmony and scattering them like petals across the brick-laden quad. Even in silence, it all pulses with a quiet rhythm—a breath, a heartbeat, a cherished song still being written.

This building stands flat against a cluster of dogwood trees, their arms outstretched like dancers mid-pose, blossoms unfurling in a burst of stark white each spring. The petals glow like snow caught in sunlight, delicate

and defiant. A litter of leaves brushes over the porch, doing gentle flips in the wind, kissing pink cheeks in greeting as they shuffle into the entryway. Beside the shimmering floor-to-ceiling windows stretching across this building's face, a plaque divulges its history: dancers floating gracefully on pointed toes, singers belting rousing melodies, and performers exhaling bouts of passion to bow deep into audience's hearts. A cluster of lives remain immortalized, printed in stone: Governor Celeste, President Shriver, Director Sexton, and Architect Hilmer.

The building ribbon fell in 1971. When its sister, the Art Building, was erected in 1986, her entrance only a few yards away, Miami celebrated fifty-seven years of art. Now, time has known thirty-eight more years of starry eyes and over 250 showtimes, flitting with energetic smiles and soaring elation. Today, we celebrate ninety-five years of art.

The doors are heavier than need be, as though the building is attempting to hold its breath, expectant. Their weight resists like a hush before a crescendo, a held note trembling at the edge of release. Inside, the space vibrates with life, saturated with the echoes of footsteps. Every surface—from the waist-high marble statues to the counters stacked with playbills—hums faintly, like a struck tuning fork, resonating with a life of its own.

Although nobody stands in the mirrored room, framed on all sides by windows that expose the world, several smiling faces loom from a string of vibrant photos on the walls. A group of students in capes, grasping wands, hugging on their knees with their eyes squeezed shut. Two girls in pink and yellow hoop skirts prepare midair to land in the splits. A boy in early twentieth-century overalls sits on his knees, center, and weeps into his hands. The moments are a museum of voices and symphonies, stuck yet fluid in time: a glimpse of the past still in motion.

Sunlight splinters from the arched windows, pouring in with a softness that nearly feels sentient. It doesn't

simply enter the room—it glides, lingers, and plays. It ricochets off the polished wood and brushed metal, tracing long, slow arcs across the floor as the day marches forward. It is not golden—even in the brightest of sunsets—because golden is rich and deep, and this light is something else entirely. This light is pale and tender, like the underside of a petal or the quiet before the refrain of a lullaby. It drapes itself across shoulders, curling around ankles, warming fingertips. It embraces. This type of light brushes visitors in warmth, soaking into their skin and settling into their bones, friendly and insistent. It fills a quiet, home-shaped ache that newcomers often carry, as if it recognizes their longing and knows exactly how to answer it.

To the left, a door stands slightly ajar, as if extending a quiet invitation. Its plate displays Rows K-L-M. Beyond lies the theater, vast in all its glory. Nearly 400 red-cushioned seats, worn from decades of hushed expectations, fan out in arched rows. The light is dim, as if the building is dozing off, awaiting the electric start of a new story. The air is thick with the echo of applause, of whispered lines and held breaths, just distant enough to be unsure whether or not it's truly happening.

Onstage, the great red curtains are parted just enough to reveal a half-built set of giant tree trunks with mossy paint—frozen in anticipation, like a crowd moments before the climax of the show. The space seems to exhale softly. Even without music, even without motion, it all thrums, quietly humming its history into the velvet and wood. Still quivering with talent, both old and new, the building simply awaits someone who will listen.

Far in a back row, a homesick student sits with her hands crossed in her lap, shoulders curled inward like she's trying to take up less space in the grandiose room. Her chest aches with the familiar weight of missing, and suddenly she wishes she were home. She gazes at the empty stage, eyes tracing the outline of the wood panels

lining the floor, watching dust swirl like peaceful storms under the overhead lights. The quiet wraps around her—soft, like a blanket tucked in by an invisible hand.

Then, from somewhere in the hush, the building answers. Not with words, but with presence. With creaking beams and soft groans of wood stretching after a long day, as if the walls themselves are sighing in quiet understanding. A warmth begins to gather, slipping in through the crack of the door, carried on the last rays of the sunset outside. The light seeps slowly across the floor, painting the entryway in gentle hues of amber and rose. The air thickens with the faintest whir, a reminder that, even in silence, the building remembers. It remembers her, and it remembers all who have come before her. In a gentleness that hardly brushes against an ear, the building whispers not to worry, that the student has found home—not the one she left behind, but the one that finds you when you need it most.

The sign at the front entrance reads: Center for Performing Arts.

In the hallway, a familiar voice tenderly sings the opening lyrics of “Once Upon a December,” and from the basement, the first line of dialogue of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* floats through the building wistfully.

Conclusion

WAVING GOODBYE

At some point, the lights dim, the rooms empty, and the keys get turned in. What was once your whole world becomes a place you wave to in the rearview mirror. The porch you sat on, the hallway you danced through, the kitchen where mornings began and nights ended—it all stays. But you carry it with you now, in a different way.

These twenty-five stories have walked through the rooms of a house that, for a time, felt like everything. They've celebrated the way Oxford leaves its mark not just on where we live, but how we grow. A crooked photo frame, a playlist echoing from upstairs, the warmth of roommates-turned-family—these are the details we take with us.

And though we may pack up our boxes and say our

goodbyes, what we built here doesn't vanish. It lingers in the way we tell stories, in the friendships we keep, in the quiet moments when we long for the feeling of belonging.

Eventually, someone else will move in. They'll repaint the walls, hang new photos, give the house a new name. But the spirit of home-making continues. Oxford will do for them what it did for us—transform something temporary into something unforgettable.

So here's to the bricks, the names on the walls, the lights left on a little too late. And here's to you—for making it home.

Thanks for stopping by.



Rows K-L-M

Rows N-O-P-Q

EXIT

Contributors

Porch

Kayla Angus

Kayla Angus is a second-year student at Miami University with a double major in Strategic Communications and Professional Writing and a minor in Creative Writing. She is currently undecided regarding her career, but has an interest in public relations. One fun fact is that she went skydiving last year through the MU Dropouts!

Elizabeth Smith

Elizabeth Smith is majoring in Professional Writing and Journalism. She is pursuing a career in either journalism or publishing. She is also a multi-national and state-winning marksman.

Foyer

Mikayla Clinger

Mikayla Clinger (she/they) is a current English Literature student at Miami University. She adores reading and writing just about every genre from neoclassical fantasy to dystopian horror. When not writing, Mikayla enjoys singing, talking with their family, exercising, and being out with their friends and partner.

Nicholas Bermudez

Nicholas Bermudez is a Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major. In addition to his undergraduate degree, he is pursuing a career in law. His favorite dessert is chocolate chip cookies, and his dream vacation is Milos, Greece.

Office

Abby Showalter

Abby Showalter is a senior Professional Writing and

Economics double major who specializes in design, analytics, and strategy. She plans to work in entertainment as a lawyer and strategist, later moving to legal work and advocacy within actors' unions. In her free time, Abby enjoys cooking, creating, and being outside with her dog, Fred.

Kathryn Keeley

Kathryn Keeley is a senior student studying Anthropology and Professional Writing. After graduation, she plans to spend her summer studying primate vocalizations in the Amazon Rainforest. In her free time, she is a member of the Miami University Equestrian Team, enjoys spending time in nature, and listening to music. Her favorite flavor of ice cream is Moose Tracks.

Djay Shorter

Denton (Djay) Shorter is a junior Professional Writing major and a Creative Writing minor, who plans to enter the workforce as a technical writer. Outside of academics, he is a literature fan, and he loves his pet dog.

Kitchen

Kai Green

Kai Green is a senior Professional Writing major with double minors in Creative Writing and Business Management. In their free time, Kai is one of the Co-Editor in Chiefs for Happy Captive Magazine and a member of Phi Chi Theta, a business fraternity. They enjoy hiking in the woods, rock climbing, and writing fantasy fiction short stories. After graduation, Kai is moving to California to pursue a career in sales management with PepsiCo. A fun fact about them is that they have a cat named Lumi. She's a menace to society.

Olivia Voelker

Olivia Voelker is a junior at Miami studying Creative

Writing and Professional Writing with minors in Political Science and Spanish. She dreams of one day attending law school. Outside of class, she can be found listening to music, reading, and spending time with friends. Her guilty pleasure is watching reality television and yelling at the people on screen as if they care what she has to say.

Aslynn Wetzel

Aslynn Wetzel is a third-year Professional Writing and Creative Writing double major at Miami University. After graduation, she would like to pursue a career in marketing or graphic design. When she isn't staying up too late watching Korean dramas on Netflix, Aslynn enjoys doing everything crafty, from embroidery to book binding.

Sophia DeVillez

Sophia DeVillez is a junior at Miami University, double majoring in Creative Writing and Professional Writing as well as triple majoring in Arts Management, Entrepreneurship, and Literature. She hopes to go into marketing or copyediting out of school, as well as publish her debut novel. She has never had a salad dressing.

Basement

Emma Estridge

Emma Estridge is a second-year Creative Writing and Professional Writing double major and Spanish minor at Miami University. She hopes to, eventually, work as a developmental editor. She is also an avid collector of books, unusual earrings, and erasers shaped like animals.

Liz Stevens

Liz Stevens is a second-year student at Miami University with majors in Creative Writing, Professional Writing, and Spanish. She loves all things language, communication, writing, and anything that allows her to be creative.

Closet

Caleb Chun

Caleb Saebyuk Chun is a current senior at Miami University, majoring in History and Professional Writing with a minor in Anthropology. He is currently planning to pursue a career in technical writing and plays the violin, piano, and flute in his free time.

Letha Blair

Letha Blair is a Professional Writing major with minors in Fashion and English Literature. Their plans after graduation are to take a gap year before attending graduate school for English Literature. A fun fact about them is that they are named after their great-great-grandmother who was accused of witchcraft.

Living Room

Emma Henderson

Emma Henderson is a student at Miami University studying Linguistics and Professional Writing with minors in Creative Writing and English literature. She hopes to edit for a publishing house one day. In her free time, she likes to read and review books.

Annabel Howe

Annabel Howe is a third-year student majoring in Literature with a minor in Rhetoric/Writing. After graduating, Annabel hopes to pursue a career in publishing to share her love of reading and storytelling. Outside of academics, she enjoys bullet journaling, drinking coffee, and spending time with friends.

Kylie Mullis

Kylie Mullis is a senior undergraduate student studying English Literature, Professional Writing, and Creative Writing at Miami University. In her free time, she is President of the Miami Ice Skating Club, reads a variety

of fiction and fantasy novels, and loves writing poetry and short stories. She has also been a consultant at Miami University's Howe Writing Center and the Howe Center for Business Writing for three years.

Becca Blanco

Becca Blanco is a third-year Professional Writing, Creative Writing, and Spanish triple major at Miami University. She spends her free time reading, writing, hiking, rewatching Star Wars, and filling the walls of Sesquicentennial Chapel with her a cappella group's many arrangements. In the future, she hopes to find a fulfilling job in the field of editing.

Backyard

Faye Smith

Faye Smith is a Creative Writing and Professional Writing double major with a Film Studies minor. Upon graduating, they plan to pursue a career in writing in any regard, but ultimately hope to one day become an author. Outside of writing, they enjoy hiking and began to hike the Bachelor Preserve during their sophomore year.

Maddie Lee

Maddie Lee is a Human Capital Management and Leadership major with a minor in English. She plans to pursue a career in Elementary Education upon graduating, and enjoys taking long walks on sunny days.

Alaina Fitch

Alaina Fitch is a senior English Creative Writing and Professional Writing double major with a minor in Communication Design. After graduation, she plans to work in book publishing and develop a career as an editor. Outside of her academics and work, Alaina is an avid hiker, weight lifter, writer, and fine artist with an affinity for all things to do with nature and God.

Mandy Holliday

Mandy Holliday is a senior at Miami University, double majoring in English: Professional Writing and Media & Communications. She works as the Student Communications Associate for the College of Engineering and Computing, where she puts her love for journalism to use. As she prepares to graduate in May 2025, she hopes to pursue a career in the publishing industry as a copywriter or marketer.

Return to the Foyer**Taylor Morgan**

Taylor Morgan is a junior at Miami University studying Strategic Communication and Professional Writing. She is currently a blog editor and layout designer for the publication UP Magazine, as well as the Newsletter Editor for Miami University Dance Theatre.

Cassell Presnell

Cassell Presnell is a junior at Miami University with a Creative Writing and Psychology double major and a minor in Rhetoric/Writing. She writes fiction and poetry, and loves all things fantasy, backstage theater, and true crime. On campus, she's part of the Honors Student Advisory Board, Happy Captive Magazine, and works as a consultant at the Howe Writing Center. After a 2026 graduation, Cassell hopes to pursue law school in her home state of South Carolina.

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