

UNCOVERING OXFORD



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Table of Contents

Evidence Log - Oxford, OH

Introduction	4
Evidence #1: Brochure - Hveston Woods State Park	5
Evidence #2: Blog Post - Bachelor Preserve	8
Journal Entry #1	12
Evidence #3: Diary Entry - Oxford Cemetery	13
Evidence #4: Field Guide - Oxford Areas Trails	16
Journal Entry #2	22
Evidence #5: Newspaper Ad - Hawks Landing	23
Evidence #6: Video Transcript - Komler Chapel	26
Evidence #7: Diary Entry - Silvoor Biological Sanctuary	30
Journal Entry #3	33
Evidence #8: Blog Post - Oxford Lane Library	34
Evidence #9: Article - The Conrad Gardens	39
Evidence #10: Letter - Bachelor Hall	42
Evidence #11: Article - Center for Performing Arts	46
Evidence #12: Article - Groggin Ice Center	49
Evidence #13: Essay Scraps - Oxford Community Arts Center	53
Journal Entry #4	56
Evidence #14: Letter with Postcard - Sesquicentennial Chapel	57
Evidence #15: Newspaper Excerpt - Kofenya	61
Evidence #16: Brochure - Shriver Center	65
Evidence #17: Letter - Upham Hall	68
Evidence #18: Personal Notes - Hefner Museum of Natural History	72
Evidence #19: Flyer - Upham Hall Rooms 180A, B, and C	75
Journal Entry #5	80
Evidence #20: Letter - CJ's Bar	81
Evidence #21: Blog Post - Slow Idaho	84
Evidence #22: Flyer with Instructions - Bagel and Deli	87
Evidence #23: Creative Writing Contest Entry - Skipper's	91
Evidence #24: Promotional Article - King Library	96
Evidence #25: My Final Entry - Hall Auditorium	99
Authors	102
Citations	103
Editor Bios	107

When I packed an extra journal before leaving for my annual trip, I never imagined I would actually need it. However, there are many things I never imagined would happen in the time since I left to be here. On every trip I've been on over the years, conducting my private botanical research has been nothing but mundane. Sure, there is always the thrill of taking down new notes and seeing what has changed in the wildlife since my last visit, but that is as far as the excitement goes.

You have to understand, I am not one to stray from my usual path. I like to maintain consistency and document the changes on specific trails. However, that was no longer an option when that odd smell hit my nose. This strangely spiced yet chemical scent wafted through the air the further I traveled. I couldn't be certain of where it was coming from, but I had a sense it was from somewhere I had never ventured to. Before I knew it, my scientific curiosity was getting the better of me. I was moving one foot in front of the other off of the dirt path and into the overgrown grass, concern for some sort of pollutant plaguing my mind.

The further I went, the more I realized I couldn't recognize a thing around me. It wasn't long until I was stumbling into a clearing, a large body of water to one side of me, and a thick forest of trees to the other. I couldn't remember seeing any sort of lake or even pond on any of the maps I'd collected in the area, but the smell was preventing me from thinking much further. It was getting harder to keep walking, too, and that was when I looked down to find a sticky, yellowed substance caked to the bottom of my hiking boots.

Hueston Woods is the name of this place, I know that now. It is the beginning of my journey through a town I am not sure ever existed. And yet, here I am standing in it. With no outside documentation ever even mentioning the place, I am unsure if I have stumbled across a historic phenomenon or a grave lapse in judgment. Whatever the case may be, I know it is my duty as a researcher to collect all the information I can on this place. In these pages, you will find what little remains of Oxford, Ohio.

Evidence #1: Brochure

Location: Hueston Woods State Park

A TRAVEL GUIDE TO HUESTON WOODS STATE PARK From a Miami student



Introduction to Hueston Woods

Nature and Wildlife

This essay explains how a couple of girls attending Miami University created fun in a town of cornfields, specifically at Hueston Woods State Park. Before I tell you the story—and reveal the best ways one can explore the state park—I want to give a brief overview 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 3,000 acres of wooded area including Acton Lake, a shallow man-made lake fit for fishing, boating, and swimming. Within this serene nature 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. Those exploring the land 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. ← magnificent birds

Architecture

Along with observing the stunning nature and diverse wildlife, visitors can also experience several manufactured structures within the park, one of which 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 is a small campground packed with camper spots and small cabins. Besides the various overnight stay options, you can also find other unique constructions 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.

highly contaminated
→

Personal Travel Guide

* Lodge is overgrown and filled with native species... beware rotting floorboards

Swimming

Throughout my four years at Miami University, I have been able to find some of these secret activities 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 went exploring 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 that pool. Thankfully, we were successful. We only went to that pool twice overall, but it was a unique experience that was extremely enjoyable. 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.

Assuming this is a college kid I am unimpressed.

interesting... still free of contamination?

On a less risky note, you can 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 muck and rocks. While the residents of Oxford are usually crowding the area, you can typically find a spot to relax and take in the sunshine. I would recommend doing this on a hot day at the beginning of fall semester, or the end of spring semester, so unfortunately

swimming in the lake is out of commission for most of the year. Fortunately, there are other fun things to do at Hueston Woods besides swimming.

Food

On the same side of the lake, we 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 wood and attempting to start the fire. Eventually, we got the fire started and cooked delicious s'mores while chatting and taking in the sun setting over the lake. So my advice is: if you want to attempt grilling out at the Hueston Woods beach, bring a couple pieces of firewood.

~~Dating~~ unnecessary.

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 all of the mentioned activities, 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 once-in-a-lifetime event, be wary of crazies if you go hammocking at Hueston Woods. I'm sure there are other spots throughout the park that would be suitable for dates that we will unfortunately not have time to try out before we graduate.

Conclusion

While Hueston Woods is not necessarily 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 (the weekend life is the only thing that keeps us going). Thankfully, a gorgeous state park is right down the road.

how did a state
park just vanish off
the face of the Earth???

Evidence #2: Blog Post

Location: Bachelor Preserve

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 around the campus. When he died in 1974, he dictated that 416 acres of that land would be given to the university, who turned it into the Bachelor Wildlife and Game Reserve we know today. The land hosts around seventeen miles of hiking, including three trails loaded with various terrain types and bridges, while also connecting to many of the other nature trails located around campus. As college students, Bachelor Preserve became the site for my friends and I's favorite hobby: night hiking. dangerous.

must have stumbled
on an old path

The parking lot is easy to miss, past the stables and down a tiny downhill turnoff right after a bridge; we passed it many times until it became a staple of our nighttime adventures. Next to it is a large sports field, perfect for watching a full solar eclipse from. Near the entrance to the park is a map of the available trails, and occasionally a Port-a-Potty nearby for those who need it. ew. found it.

fascinating

The first and easiest trail you'll find is the Bachelor Preserve East Loop, the one my friends and I spent the 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 hikers across the Harker's Run creek. With a flashlight, they're easy to cross in the dark, though they can be treacherous after rain or snow. It's the last jump that is the most difficult to land because after heavy rain the creek swells, and the gap can become much larger than before. Once, after a rainy weekend, my friends and I discovered 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, and we were able to cross that way, though it was a slippery endeavor.

crumbling
but passable

The trail then leads up a hill dotted with thin trees and past a few fields. Along the way, you 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 is 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 dark 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 ended just above our heads, and oddly, out from under the cover of trees an unseen

As
did
I.

generator filled the air with an ominous hum.

It was on our last hike before the winter hit during the fall semester of 2023 that myself and three of my friends were out and about. We had just passed this trail divide, heading further down the East Loop when three of us heard it—a growl off in the bushes. It was like a scene from a movie, the three of us freezing 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.

→ Surprisingly smart
for college kids...

Mixed
forest? →
or edge?

Halfway down this stretch of trail, the forest changes significantly. The maples that fill the rest of the forest start to fade away and appear less like a deciduous forest and more like 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 in a large pool of water, the Bachelor Pond, with the trail continuing all around and branching off into multiple offshooting paths. At night, the pond is impossible to see across, but there is a bench to sit on. There's a shorter trail that connects to a gravel parking lot from which the pond is easier to access, and makes for a nice quick hike and an easy place to get wood photos.



Oftentimes at night we would turn back, but in the day we'd continue forward. The loop continues on a quick downward path with a slippery patch beneath a pine tree, and the needles make the quick downward slope a falling hazard. Then, we arrive at a dramatic section. Where the trail was smooth and mostly consistent before, this section has many ups and downs. There are a few plank bridges to cross, but the biggest one comes where the trail crosses back over Harker's Run. 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, easy hike back along the creek spanning a little over a quarter of a mile. It connects to the initial trail split and leads

back to the parking lot, where surely by now there's nothing left to do but head home. Don't worry, it'll 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 roam 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.

Anonymous User commented: I'm a freshman at Miami, and I was looking for some stuff to do with my friends in the area. We love to hike, so I was looking for some trails and came across your post, and it sounded like exactly what we were looking for. We went to trails, though, and the trailhead was super overgrown. All the trees looked kind of dead and a little oozy. We ended up leaving because it was really gross. I have no clue how it happened. Do you know if Miami gave up the preserve or something?

Faye Smith replied: Hi! I actually graduated a few years ago and haven't been back in a while, but that's weird. They took good care of it when I was there. I haven't heard anything about them abandoning it, and I don't think that happens to any of the trees in the area, so I don't know what happened. Sorry I couldn't be more helpful. Maybe try again in the summer?

Little description?
Oozy how?

Invasive species?
Rot?

What color is it?
Texture?

Is it only affecting
certain plant species?

Too many questions
and too few answers.

Journal Entry #1

Location: Bachelor Preserve

I have spent hours scouring the web in hopes of finding something that will explain this place I have stumbled across. Never in all my years visiting this area have I heard of "Miami University" or "Bachelor Preserve." Unfortunately, it seems all I can find from this odd place is the occasional internet post from supposed former students. I want to say the entire thing is a hoax, but with all those photos... I can't be sure. Stepping into those woods was strange enough, but now there's more? I'm not sure how much is left of this place, but I'll be sure to keep looking. Besides, I'd like to find out about the probable invasive species that has riddled this strange place.



Upon further inspection, I have located a weird substance (indicated in diagram), and have collected a sample for continued study.



Evidence #3: Diary Entry

Location: Oxford Cemetery

4/23

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

In compliment to my lethal name, I have always felt a peculiar affection for cemeteries. One of my first memories takes 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 spend 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, barrelling 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 as a once vigorous farmer and moonshine smuggler is brought low by a measly staircase and the looming spectre of death.

I 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 forever and for all time. I did requisition God—whom 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 the 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 tentacles 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 amongst 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 notion. 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 return 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 cemeteries, and 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. I was parked at Ditmer, which was a commuter student parking lot at the time. 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
- 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, and, yet, when asked if I was, I began to sob hysterically. I thought it was funny to cry in my car while a person miles away watched me break down on a computer screen. But it was there, on a Zoom call in a university parking lot, that a Miami University English Department Faculty member ended my life with one sentence: "What you're

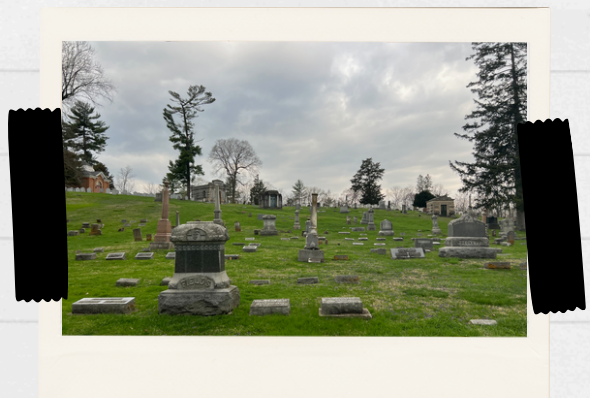
experiencing sounds like domestic violence.”

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 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, as I had been, 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 with which I had been living my life had been completely obliterated, and I, as I had been prone to do since I was a child, 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 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.

Letha



Evidence #4: Field Guide

Location: Oxford Area Trails

Trails of Oxford and Miami: A Student's Field Guide - As yes, a mind similar to my own!

Introduction

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 a trunk in a rippling blur. Each of your steps sinks slightly into the worn path while, above you, 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 left over from autumn 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 winter.

Gray? Black?
Red squirrel?
I wonder...

Dryocopus
pileatus
what a
sight!

Welcome to Oxford in spring.



These pages are so well-written that I'd hate to clutter them with my own scrawl. Credit to the author of this guide.

American Sycamore
Platanus occidentalis
Platanaceae

With white, skeletal limbs extended towards 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 few abstract foxes running across the cement of the bridge wall on your left, you slowly entered a new world. Now, you pass benches, disc golf baskets, and a few groups of people who nod and say, "Hello." Then, the tall sycamores begin to appear,

*vulpes
vulpes*

leaning towards 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 towards Western Campus of Miami, or rooted near the water of the creek. They aren't unsettling, at least 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 around 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 us runners and cyclists and walkers arrived?

An American Robin, also known by its scientific name, *Turdus migratorius*



*The largest bur oak on record in Ohio has a circumference of 7.62 meters.

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 tree 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 Peffer 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 Peffer 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 towards 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 towards 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.

Conclusion

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.

Journal Entry #2

Location: Oxford Area Trails

Finally something I can appreciate during my exploration! The maker of this field guide clearly shares in my appreciation for all things botanical, and I won't say it's not part of my motivation to keep investigating. I have consulted the map I brought with me and confirmed there is no marker for Oxford. However, this place is clearly very real to many people. I have been down countless streets, sidewalks, inside of buildings, but there is no sign of anyone. I thought once I uncovered that letter, I would find someone here. And yet, the only thing I've found is silence.

I know there is some sort of scientific reasoning behind all of this, something to answer all the questions plaguing my mind. I will decipher what this place is, it's just going to take a little more time.

P.S.

Found the cemetery. Spice scent not very strong. Lots of tree decay... Seems to be moving inward.



- Spice scent could be attributed to this ooze
- Not just natural tree decay, but infection

Evidence #5: Newspaper Ad

Location: Hawks Landing

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



Overview

Constructed in 1994, this modern apartment complex provides one to four-bedroom housing for students. Each apartment has a kitchen with granite countertops, a washer and dryer, and a communal living room. Rooms have a lock, but the central living area is designed to encourage a sense of community while still respecting privacy. The lease also includes access to a 24-hour fitness center and printer, swimming pool and hot tub, basketball and volleyball courts, and a central dog park. Tenants are allowed to have pets with a small accommodation upcharge.

Community Life

Being one of the farther complexes from campus, Hawks Landing provides a rather calm, somewhat secluded environment. There are also friendly relations and few disturbances at night. The complex even organizes community events such as free breakfast and taco bars, encouraging resident interaction and comfortability.

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, 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 the town.

Greenspace *Checked for evidence of ooze – Positive*

Central to the complex is a large dog park enclosed by a chain fence. This greenspace promotes community, as this pet-friendly residency houses many dogs. While certainly practical, the park also provides a natural meeting place for residents and pets alike to socialize and get acquainted.

The general layout of Hawks Landing mirrors the atmosphere of the dog park. There is a large amount of open space between buildings, complemented by winding paths and the occasional bench.

Resident Perspectives

While it is easy to promote Hawks Landing on paper, its true character can be found through the voices of its residents. For instance, according to the Hawks Landing official website, 98.8% rate the property five out of five stars in almost every aspect (Parking, Noise, Construction, Grounds, Maintenance, Staff). Many have specifically praised the staff for their attentiveness, efficiency, approachability, and willingness to respond to maintenance issues. The staff seem genuinely invested in the welfare of the residents, only furthering the complex's peaceful nature.

Reviewers also commend the layout of the complex for fostering a community spirit while still providing peace. 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 spirit. It has a more contemporary feel, as compared to other apartment complexes that were built in the years prior, which may not provide the same pet-friendly atmosphere or modern conveniences.

While some housing options prioritize affordability over amenities, Hawks Landing offers a variety of benefits that justify its pricing. The

fitness center, pool, outdoor spaces, and spacious apartments make Hawks Landing more than just a place to sleep. The dog park in particular also sets it apart from other student housing, such as The Commons or The Verge.

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 with an emphasis on community.

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 apartment complex provides the perfect environment for residents who want to experience independent living away from campus, while still enjoying personal peace and quiet. Residents find everyday comfort through the fully furnished housing, in-unit laundry service, 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 allowing up to two pets. This, combined with the inclusion of the dog park, creates a close-knit subcommunity and a convenient outlet for rowdy animals. The vast greenspaces and walking paths lend themselves to an extremely pet-friendly lifestyle as well.

Hawks Landing demonstrates its commitment to community and functionality through its thoughtfully designed facilities and convenient location. The apartment complex provides students with stability during the whirlwind that is college, allowing a welcoming home to return to each night. The combination of its amenities, greenspaces, and community-focused design makes Hawks Landing an ideal residential choice. Hawks Landing is worth considering for those who want to make Oxford their future home.

Notes

→ Contaminated

→ Same ooze as before

↳ Did it spread?

Evidence #6: Video Transcript

Location: Kumler Chapel

[0:00] Emma: 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 campus over a creek and into the pond-ridden woods of Western. As you can see, ahead of me lies a climb, almost straight uphill and miserable no matter the season.

As I trudge up the hill, I see the first sign that the journey is nearly done: the stone crossing tower of Kumler Chapel rising over the hillside. The building is perched precariously at the top of the hill, the side covered by trees.

[0:30] Emma: 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.

But what is the story of Kumler Chapel? Let's get into it.

[Intro music]

Kumler Chapel was originally dedicated on November 10th, 1916 by sisters Anna Kumler Wright and Ella.

[1:00] Emma: Kumler McKelvy, both 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 one on Western campus. Construction on the building began in 1917, but met an abrupt halt at 4:20 PM 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. It was finally finished in September of 1918.

[1:30] Emma: 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 completed. The ivy used to climb up the side of the building, before it became infected with what researchers identified as some kind of fungus. It ate away at the vines, replacing them with a gooey substance that now has to be continually cleaned off the walls.

The chapel was originally used for church services, baccalaureates,

[2:00] Emma: and convocations for the Western College for Women.

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

The exterior of Kumler was built with gray fieldstone, a naturally-occurring stone collected from the surface of fields. It is 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 and has a steep slate roof.

[2:30] Emma: Surrounded by the trees and greenery of Western campus and coupled with the close proximity of the serene Freedom Summer '64 memorial amphitheater, Kumler seems like an idyllic movie set. Right now, of course, it looks like a sci-fi movie set with all of the goo, but, once it's cleaned again, it will be beautiful.

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 inside. The balcony

[3:00] Emma: 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 leading to it are hidden in the shadows just inside the front door. There are no lights, and the steps are barely wide 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. Look at that view! 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

[3:30] Emma: creak underfoot with each step when you walk across them. From the balcony, you 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,

[4:00] Emma: nothing was played on it for 30 years. While there is a new organ, some of the original pipework remains, and the new organ incorporates some of the vintage sounds. [Brief Organ Music] 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

[4:30] Emma: of the Bible.

The one in the center 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

[5:00] Emma: 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.

Other 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

[5:30] Emma: student organizations and Greek life are held there as well. Though the fuse box is filled with cobwebs and a piano sits unplayed most days, waiting patiently in the corner, people swarm 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 fall, the spirit of Halloween fills the halls as spooky stories echo from the pulpit to the walls. And in the winter, it is a place for concerts in the dim glow of candlelight, accompanied by the hum of choral music as the snow starts to fall outside.

Evidence #7: Diary Entry

Location: Silvoor Biological Sanctuary

Where the Honeysuckle Once Was
Silvoor Biological Sanctuary, Oxford, OH

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 its 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 two and a half 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 university 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, and you feel miles away from everything.

That day, we were clearing honeysuckle—specifically, Amur ^{Lonicera maackii} honeysuckle, an invasive shrub that pushes out native species by stealing sunlight and soil. I'd learned in my botany class how relentless that stuff 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. *It is a hard plant to get rid of.*

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,¹ bloodroot,² Virginia bluebells.³ Even Dutchman's breeches,⁴ their delicate white buds hanging like tiny laundry strung between stems.

¹Podophyllum peltatum. ²Sanguinaria. ³Mertensia virginica. ⁴Dicentra cucullaria.

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 the 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.



Journal Entry #3

Location: Silvoor Biological Sanctuary

It's been three days now. Or is it four? Does it matter? Nonetheless, I've started developing my own map of this place. I am delighted by how rich with nature the town is, but the more I explore, the more I find decay. Rotten logs, that sticky glue-like substance caking my shoes, and the smell. That horrible smell keeps getting stronger the further I go. I've run through all the notes I brought with me, but there is no species of plant or animal I know of that produces such a thing. I'm on the brink of a new discovery, I can feel it. Now it's just about finding what. I think if I could find the source, perhaps some of my questions could be answered.

Normal Decay

- moss
- mushrooms
- Insects



Infected Trunk

- ooze
- No insects or other composers
- No plants or fungi



Evidence #8: Blog Post

Location: Oxford Lane Library

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 was obstructing 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 is located off of 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, children's 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. 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, wonderful as they are.

The library offers free Wi-Fi, printing and copying services, meeting and study rooms, and online databases and research support. Patrons can use and check out books, audiobooks, e-books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs, as well as items like sewing machines, instruments, puzzles, board games—even seeds for starting a garden! Additionally, the library staff puts on a multitude of events throughout the year for all types of audiences. They have weekly storytime for kids and tutoring for teens. For adults, there are

multiple recurring book clubs to join. There are all kinds of creative classes and workshops offered, as well as 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 is clear that much time, energy, and care go into making the library a place for education and community.

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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 it 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 important role in the community as a hub of learning, culture, and connection. It is available to anyone who may be interested—the staff is friendly, incredibly knowledgeable, and excited to share all they know about Oxford's history. The archives are 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. 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 the 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, 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 a place for all.

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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 all 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 continues to serve Oxford with love and appreciation.

Notes

→ Checked what records I could find and found nothing about this mysterious ooze.

Evidence #9: Article

Location: The Conrad Gardens

The Conrad Gardens

The History of Miami University's Serene Slice of Heaven



Image captured by Elizabeth Smith, 2022. A peaceful view of the *Conrad Gardens* overlooking the koi pond.

By Elizabeth Smith

OXFORD, Ohio—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 serene, tranquil environment for the university's community. Influenced by the prominent national City Beautiful movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the movement addressed rapid urbanization and the

industrialization of American cities by integrating nature in parks, gardens, and tree-lined streets into urban areas. The dreariness of industrialized cities and urban areas was met with the beauty of nature and the goal of uplifting the human spirit. Conrad's passion and dedication to beautify the campus has 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 of 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 Farmer's College—a precursor to Miami University. However, after the closure of Farmer's College, his remains were relocated to the Conrad Gardens in Oxford. This was a significant moment in Miami's history as it acknowledged the importance of Bishop's role in 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 also honors 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 remembering loved ones.

The gardens host a variety of ornamental flower beds, pathways, and annual and perennial plants. The rose garden is a beautiful feature of the gardens and was donated by the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Gamma Phi Beta 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. With the donation of the rose garden, this 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 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 to the gardens for a moment with nature. Students can be seen stacking hammocks in scattered locations in the trees, picnicking in the open areas, and participating in harmless catch and release activities at the koi pond. The beauty of the gardens and its central location on campus gives visitors a place to gather, celebrate important events, share experiences, and create memories. The careful design of the gardens ensures everyone has a place to enjoy it without feeling crowded.

The Arthur F. Conrad Formal Gardens is an integral part of the lives of students, faculty, staff, and visitors at Miami. 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.

Contaminated
What is the source?

Evidence #10: Letter

Location: Bachelor Hall

A Love-Letter to Bachelor Hall



Bachelor Hall, at a glance, would be the last place a student would expect to find lasting memories. Situated at the very end of the long-reaching Spring Street, its white-capped bell tower is the first thing many students see on their daily commutes to campus. Built in 1978 and named after Harvard University graduate Joseph M. Bachelor, it served as the home of countless students' (doubtlessly) favorite subjects: English and mathematics. With this in mind, Bachelor Hall may very well be like any other academic building on campus: an insignificant place for a class that you woke up too early to attend, or stayed up too late to work for. It is nothing to be paid particular attention to—and since the 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 that I have of this place have gone beyond any concept of 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 will be no telling how it will have changed. So, I am writing this as a eulogy: to the place that I knew, to the people I have met, and to the warmth I have known.

A History In-Depth

Bachelor Hall, as aforementioned, is dedicated to one Joseph M. Bachelor, a Miami undergraduate. He went on to earn an English Master's and Doctorate at the prestigious Harvard University, before returning some time later as an associate professor of English. After seventeen years of innovative teaching (and exceptional enthusiasm about Shakespeare), Bachelor was promoted to a Professor of English. He would retire in 1946 and die a year later, leaving his 400-acre farm to be used by Miami as the Bachelor Preserve, and cementing his legacy for years to come. By the time of 1979, Miami University held a dedication ceremony for the passed professor, and crowned the new communications building "Bachelor Hall" in his honor.

Of course, I am sure there is no feasible way that Professor Bachelor could have seen what would come of his legacy. There ought to be more to tell, for a man who seemed so passionate about his craft, but I take comfort in the fact that his hall is not just a place for students to disregard. I know that my friends do not see it that way, at least—let's go to them now, and dig into the meat of my experiences.

The ACW

Sophomore Year—simply put—was a confusing time. When coming to Miami University, I had in my mind fanciful dreams of wearing a white doctor's coat, pressing on with what I long believed was my passion. Having wormed my way out of the primordial ooze of Intro to Bio, I faced down my personal twin titans of disaster: Chemistry and Physics. I managed to pass them, of course, but if my father was anyone to model myself off of, I needed far better than "passing" to go to medical school.

Questions of my true passions swam in my head daily, all as my Junior year was rapidly approaching, with little time to my name and few places to call home, I found the one thing that I knew I liked to

do: write. I entered the Association of Creative Writers as an anxious sophomore, and proceeded to spend the rest of my Tuesday and Thursday nights enshrined in the third floor of Bachelor.

A Homeroom and Home

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 Association of Creative Writers. All of this, of course, was the precursor to my eventual change in major. I got far more time in the building as a Professional and Creative Writing double major, frankly, than I ever asked for. In fact, there was one semester where most, if not all, of my classes were in Bachelor. I would go down to the stuffy ground-floor classrooms for my morning workshop, climb to the third floor for Literary Marketplace, and wind up in the same room I would have club in a few hours later.

A strange sensation, to say the least. I don't want to claim that I did not fall into flights of boredom in my classes during those times, or succumb to drowsiness from a paper I spent too long writing. There were times when I would enter Bachelor Hall and dread seeing the white buildings peeking over the hilly roads of Spring Street, or find the ancient, stale classrooms too uncomfortable to pay attention in. For all of its charms and the wonderful memories I have had there with my friends in the ACW, Bachelor Hall is, at the end of the day, just a hall.

But that doesn't mean it hasn't stuck with me. The frequency with which I visited that place and the mixture of coursework and camaraderie that helped me come out of my shell have fixed in my mind a unique association. If it were any other place at Miami, any other hall or situation, I might have passed it over as unremarkable. In some ways, Bachelor has grown with me: I have come to know it as I evolved in my own right as a student, and as I came to know the countless wonderful people who made a home there, too. A very dear part of my college experience has been made in Bachelor, and, by extension, Bachelor has been an experience in itself.

Conclusion

Bachelor Hall will never be the same as it was for me. If you get the same chance to walk its halls that I did, there's no telling if you'll feel the same security and warmth that I did. All the same, though—if you're thinking of a place to host your club, or to find one to join, I cannot recommend it enough. With any luck, you might just find the members of the ACW lurking on the third floor, caught in a storm of laughter and pen-scribbles. Give them a hello for me. And, with any luck, you might find Bachelor as a whole new home for yourself: just like I did.

Notes

→ Not as related as I had hoped for my current investigation but evidence of Oxford, Ohio at least.

Evidence #11: Article

Location: Center for Performing Arts



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 panelled steps seem to hum with memory, as if every note ever played there had soaked into the 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.

Cornus florida – contaminated.

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, flipping gently in the wind, kissing the pink cheeks of each person who shuffles through the entryway. A plaque beside the shimmering floor-to-ceiling windows stretching across this building's face divulges its history: dancers floating gracefully on pointed toes, singers belting rousing melodies, and performers inhaling bouts of passion to bow deep into the hearts of audiences. A cluster of lives are immortalized, printed in stone: Governor Celeste, President Shriver, Director Sexton, and architect Hilmer.

The building ribbon fell in 1971. When its sister was erected in 1986, its entrance only a few yards away, Miami celebrated 57 years of art. Now, time has known 38 more years of starry eyes and over 250 showtimes. Today, we celebrate 95 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 exposing 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 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. This light is something else entirely: 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 vast theater, in all its glory. Four hundred 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 seem unreal. Onstage, the great red curtains are parted just enough to reveal a half-built set of giant tree trunks with mossy paint. 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. 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. Her chest aches with the familiar weight of missing, and suddenly, she wishes she were home.

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.

In the hallway, a familiar voice tenderly sings the opening lyrics of “Once Upon A December.” In the basement, a newly-minted Theseus speaks to his Hippolyta, his words floating up through the building. The sign at the front entrance reads: Center For Performing Arts.

It's almost as if I can hear them too... the music, I mean.

Evidence #12: Article

Location: Goggin Ice Center



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 Miami 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 can gather for competition and camaraderie.

Main Attractions

The energy is impossible to ignore when you walk into Goggin, especially on game days. Students and locals crowd the lobby, dressed in red and white, ready to cheer on the RedHawks in 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 4,000 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. Between them, they 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) 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 national collegiate 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 very own Skating Director, David Goodman. Additionally, ice shows and holiday exhibitions bring in families and alumni from all over.

Recreational Offerings

One of the coolest things about Goggin (no pun intended) is how many people it brings together. Over 500 intramural teams sign up every year, with more than 8,000 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 somehow 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

entirety of the 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 several summer camps and clinics. In March 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 three to two in double overtime.

Legacy & Architecture

Goggin was designed by 360 Architecture and GBBN Architecture and took 104 weeks and over 41,000 man-hours to complete, making it the most labor-intensive project in Miami history. The center was constructed alongside a 500-car parking garage, ensuring the facility was one of the most accessible and spacious venues on campus.

When stepping inside the lobby of the building, you’ll be immediately surrounded by Miami hockey history. Thirty-eight jerseys line the walls, each honoring an alum 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 the school's core values of "Love and Honor," with a touch of slapshot action and a whole lot of heart.

Notes

- mostly Concrete
- Little ability for infection/ooze to spread

Evidence #13: Essay Scraps

Location: Oxford Community Arts Center

The 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... PRESERVE the historic Oxford College building and campus...and ENSURE the OCAC's ability to serve future generations..." While the OCAC is small, they are not alone in their aim of reaching out to Oxford residents, ensuring the community is a more lively place. They partner with over twenty different nonprofits in Oxford alone, including Opening Minds Through Art and the Oxford Community Theater, to provide programs such as an annual gala and a range of art classes. The programs and the collaboration they invite within Oxford and the Greater Cincinnati community cement the OCAC as a cornerstone of Oxford, and open a door to the community's past.

The Beginning: The Oxford Female Institute

John Witherspoon Scott, a Presbyterian minister and professor in mathematics and natural sciences, accepted a teaching position at Miami University in 1828 after graduating from Yale. However, John Scott was fired from Miami University by 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 Farmer's College in Mount Healthy, Ohio for five years. It was during this time that his daughter, Caroline Scott, met her husband, a Farmer's College student and future 23rd president of the United States, Benjamin Harrison.

After five years in Mount Healthy, the Scott family returned to Oxford, with John becoming the first president of the Oxford Female Institute, Caroline enrolling at the Female 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 Next Chapter: The OCAC becoming a part of Miami University

In 1867, the Oxford Female Institute and the Oxford Female College merged and were rechartered 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 coeducational. 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 with architect Robert Harsh, who unified the different parts of the building with a Gregorian façade to match the rest of Miami's brick campus 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 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 nineties, which sat vacant for several years until members of Oxford's theatre community first suggested the idea of a community arts center to the City of Oxford.

The OCAC Today: OMA, OxAct, 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. 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 2005–2006 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, and 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,

Journal Entry #4

Location: Oxford Community Arts Center

You'll have to forgive me for the last document. It seems most of it was lost to time, but I gathered as many scraps as I could find and taped them here. It's been harder to sleep these last few days. I've usually been able to find a quiet place to nod off, but lately things feel... warmer. I know it's late October and the Ohio weather should have taken its sharp turn, but the further I get into this town, the hotter it feels. I only brought my soil thermometer, but I was still able to make a puzzling discovery. The decayed soil (of which I have, of course, collected to later test) reports a higher temperature than that of areas that are seemingly intact. There is some sort of geothermal phenomenon occurring, although I am still unsure of what it is exactly. Needless to say, that heat has been creeping in especially strong lately, and, if I do want to sleep the night through, I must travel back to the outer parts of town. I'm just not sure I have the time for that.



Evidence #14: Letter with Postcard

Location: Sesquicentennial Chapel

To future chapel-goers—

On any given Sunday afternoon, muddied bar shoes kick absentmindedly on the formidable white pews of Miami University's central chapel. I 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 the 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 attending 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 of.

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. *Sesquintessential? 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 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.

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-you's 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 of the dome (surely the acoustics were considered in the architectural plans on this sacred place), and we led our mischievous procession outside, bar-bound.

One might argue that the concept of bar shoes (shoes reserved only for patronizing the stickier-floored establishments of Oxford, Ohio) are staples 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 a shared space 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.

Sincerely,
Becca Blanco



I hope you experience
as many laughs and
tears in this chapel as
I have. Treat this place
well, have fun, and
most importantly, be
kind to one another.

551 E Spring St.
Oxford, OH 45056

Evidence #15: Newspaper Excerpt

Location: Kofenya



An Afternoon as a Student

Springtime in Oxford is filled with the basic Midwest weather: unpredictable winds, rain, and the occasional sunny 70° 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, and 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—understandable, considering the weather. Your eyes scan the room, looking for an empty table to drop your book bag, and 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 up to the counter to

order. The menu has changed recently, new spring flavors replacing 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 you take a second to look through 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 menu, 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, and 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, and 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. They also have a sugar and creamer station with all the fixings, straws, and lids. When your tea gets set out, you grab it. 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 your headphones on until you have to do homework, content to listen to the indie and pop music mashups 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 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, and then he sips his drink, one of the smaller mugs with a design on the top of the coffee.

Your stomach grumbles, pulling you from your people-watching, and you cut up your avocado toast. The toast 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 to the whole bite. 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, pull up 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, and 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, and the thunder sounds through your headphones. You take a moment to admire it. 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 do work, keeping an eye on the rain, so when it lightens up, you can make a break for your car parked behind the shop.

A little while later, the rain lessens, and 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 out the door into the spring weather. The café that has become your creative haven bids you farewell until the next time, and you promise to return soon.

Kofenya is a wonderful place to stop by at any time of the day. If you need a pick-me-up or just a place to relax between errands, the café provides a welcoming atmosphere with seating of every type: booths, chairs, sofas, and picnic-style benches. You feel right at home amongst the crowd, and the bar staff are kind and helpful. Whether you are a permanent resident, a student, or a visitor, Kofenya has something for everyone.

Notes

- The last two locations have had little evidence to support my theories regarding the ooze
- To have spread so far it must be airborne or a soil contaminant.
- Additionally, there must be an origin point
- The natural areas are more affected but I can't stifle the feeling that this substance originates closer to campus (maybe even underneath a building)
- Virus???

Evidence #16: Brochure

Location: Shriver Center



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, the building has undergone two major construction additions and a variety of smaller renovations. Campus population quickly outgrew the space Shriver provided, prompting the construction of Armstrong Student Center.

Nowadays, Shriver is a bustling hub of activity, acting as the home to the Rinella Learning Center, Brick & Ivy Campus Store, Admissions Center, Miami Catering, Mail and Package Center, and many multi-purpose 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 methods of supplemental instruction in order to assist students in achieving their goals. Their staff consists of learning specialists and graduate students, ensuring that there is a person able to assist students with most topics. The tutors will even act as accountability partners if that's what their pupil finds most useful. Rinella is also home to the testing center that may be used by students with registered disabilities.

Students who qualify for testing accommodations are encouraged to use Rinella in order to lessen the stress and anxiety that comes with test taking. However, there are still policies and guidelines students must follow, like coordinating 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 beginning of the year. Other than Miami swag, they also offer school supplies and act as one of the only bookstores in Oxford. Textbooks can be easily purchased through the Brick & Ivy website by entering a title you're looking for, or by simply searching the name of a course you're in. If a professor has submitted their required readings to the site, 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, or from the back by entering Shriver's Starbucks location. Brick & Ivy's wares rotate frequently throughout the year, so every time you stop by, you can expect to discover something new. One of the more interesting things that has been added this year is Miami's branded coffee, Miami Grind. It is already used by all the dining halls, and now anyone can purchase it to have a taste of Miami at home, too.

Admissions

Other than handling prospective student applications, the faculty of the Admissions Office at Miami University organize campus tours, schedule recruitment and outreach events, provide statistical information about our institution, and handle student orientation. Student tour guides and

SOUL leaders are hired and trained through the Admissions Office. It is located on the first floor of Shriver, and is often the first indoor location prospective students see on campus. The welcoming environment of the center helps prospective students gain insight into what makes Miami unique.

Package Center

Opening for use in 2017, the Package Center facility serves as a central location for students to receive and send mail and packages. 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. The smart lockers are even available 24/7.

Catering

Miami's catering service operates mainly out of the kitchen located on the second floor of Shriver. They provide almost daily professional catering services for university events, meetings, and special occasions. 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 that events held at the university 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 a well paying job for students at fourteen dollars an hour.

Conclusion

Miami University's Shriver Center stands as a testament to the university's commitment to student engagement, academic success, and community-building. Through its tutoring options, event spaces, bookstore, and admission center, 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.

Notes

- Nearby flowers and trees are contaminated.
- Substance found on old bricks and spreading across buildings.

Evidence #17: Letter

Location: Upham Hall



Ah, yes, Upham Hall. A landmark of Oxford. 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 to 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. 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. What was I to expect? That Upham Hall, the hub of the humanities at Miami, with its leaking windows and prison-like 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 will make it happen? Will it be 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'll be the seventh class where there are only two or three other students who are different. Or perhaps it will be when someone, bellowing with laughter, 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!" But regardless, whichever moment it is, it will happen.

The series of hairline fractures finally collapses 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," something did change. Unknown to you, calluses have formed, amassed through a cruel jadedness and invisible until needed most. The meritocracy? Promises of inclusion? A commitment to diversity? You realize these were nothing but empty promises, all to bolster the ethos of an institution indifferent to you, Upham Hall simply 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 redirects, fueling a sharper awareness of your reality. This newfound clarity, born from disappointment, empowers you. The discomfort, while persistent, becomes a teacher, its lessons 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.

And so, the day draws to a close here in Oxford, the familiar weight of Upham settling in the back of my mind. These thoughts, these frustrations—they find a home on these pages, a silent audience that doesn't offer dismissals or demand performances. Maybe one day I'll look back at these entries and see how this all shaped me, this constant push and pull against the current. For now, though, the pen rests, and another page of this unfolding experience is complete.

—Caleb

Evidence #18: Personal Notes

Location: Hefner Museum of Natural History

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. Some instinctual part of you thought the bear was about to drop to all fours and chase you down the long Upham hallway. You were almost convinced, if you didn't know any better.

hobby? You always wondered how people got into taxidermy. What called someone to that profession? 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 inside. Did they have 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 an I-shaped cabinet with bones lined across the top of the nearest horizontal section. They formed a long spine 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 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.

*NO!!!
Sharks have cartilage!*

Correct order ✓
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 largest penguin looked forward blankly. The middle-sized penguin looked up at the larger one, like it was waiting on the answer to a question, like it would eventually find guidance in its larger kin. On the furthest horizontal section, 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.

Canis latrans
The bear was still in front of you. The sign in front of it said Kodiak Bear. To its right, 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, 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 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 a 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.

Ungulates are hoofed mammals.
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, antelope, 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

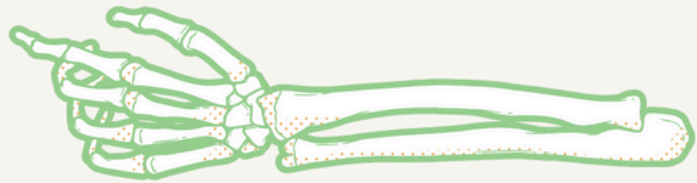
displayed with its head, torso, and two front legs out of the wall, like it was just phasing through. A water bison and a buffalo hung by themselves on the left, and there was something sad in their sideways glances. There was also a rhino head, not mounted on the wall, but sat up on the floor. Its head 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.



Evidence #19: Flyer

Location: Upham Hall Rooms 180A, B, and C



MEET UPHAM'S ANTHROPOLOGY LABS

ROOMS 180A, B, AND C

Celebrate and experience science at Miami



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 students. 180A, 180B, and 180C bustle with life and opportunity entirely unique to the Department of Anthropology.

*the study of human societies and cultures and their development.

180A

Let's explore 180A, the first room you encounter after walking into the labs' central space. Here you can find cultural and linguistic anthropological lab sessions taking place, where students discuss various media, such as ethnographies, documentaries, and even forms of popular media, like songs and films. Students and professors engage in back and forth discussion and analysis in order to further their 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. Seemed like a fantastic learning environment!

180B



Our 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 and 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; since it fulfills a biology requirement, students from a wide range of majors take this course to avoid the standard courses offered by the biology department. Once students arrive, they meet Dr. Kelsey Ellis and learn about the numerous academic opportunities she offers. Every semester, she takes on a number of Undergraduate Associates for this introductory course, allowing previous students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience by 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. This allows students to develop their own research project, which they manage independently, save for the guidance Dr. Ellis offers. 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.

180B is also the home of the Miami University Primatology Club, where members meet biweekly to discuss primatological areas of interest. The club organizes events such as trips to the _____ Zoo and attends 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 great opportunities for members to socialize with graduate students and researchers working in their own fields of interest. Along with networking, students also have the chance to present any undergraduate research projects of their own.

180C

The zoo name seems to be lost... disappointing



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 the courses that meet here are taught by Dr. Jeb Card, who keeps courses fun and engaging. A couple of these courses include the foundational archaeological course, which teaches students the basic methods and practices of archaeology, as well as introduces students to the study of artifacts. Another course would be the Archaeological Practicum, where students gain hands-on experience with excavation as they conduct a dig of their own behind McGuffey Hall. Then, they complete an analysis of the artifacts collected from the site, gaining skills on dating and analyzing artifacts. The Department of Anthropology has over 12,000 artifacts, most of which originate from North and South America, within their collection. 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 that meet weekly to catalog, restore, and analyze artifacts. Additionally, members of the management team work with 3-D scanners to create 3-D images of our artifact collection which are then made available online. Members of the team also work with 3-D printers to print either copies of our own collection or copies of artifacts from other universities or museums.

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.

Journal Entry #5

Location: Upham Hall Rooms 180A, B, and C

I wish I was more consistent with these entries. It's just that it's getting harder and harder to focus since I saw that place. The decay, it's taken over nearly every patch of grass, every tree, every bush. The further in I go, the more rotten things have become. I can hardly walk through that slimy sludge coating the ground, and the smell is so overwhelming I've had to stop breathing through my nose entirely. I thought this was all a matter of an invasive species, perhaps an environmental illness of some sort, but then I saw it.

It was around one of the academic buildings. a place that should have been just as caked in slop and littered with rotting tree trunks, but there wasn't a thing wrong. Of course the place had dulled with age, cracking brick and missing shingles, but somehow it remained free from the decay. I could see where the virus stopped, in a perfect ring around the outskirts of the building. Like there was something keeping the rot from creeping in any further. I tried to get closer, but it was like I was on fire. Around that place, Hall Auditorium, the heat is stronger than ever before. I know it may hold the answers I'm looking for, but for now, I just cannot will myself inside.

Evidence #20: Letter

Location: CJ's Bar



TO FUTURE MIAMI STUDENTS,

I HAVE AN EXTENSIVE FAMILY HISTORY WHEN IT COMES TO MIAMI UNIVERSITY AND OXFORD ITSELF. MY GRANDPA WAS A PROFESSOR OF ZOOLOGY AND LIVED WITH MY GRANDMA, WHO ATTENDED MIAMI FOR HER ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE, IN OXFORD. EVER SINCE, MY UNCLE, THREE OF MY AUNTS, MY PARENTS, TWO OF MY COUSINS, MY SISTER-IN-LAW, MY TWO BROTHERS, AND MYSELF HAVE GONE TO SCHOOL HERE. MY PARENTS STARTED THEIR COLLEGIATE CAREERS AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY IN 1982. BECAUSE OF 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, A PLACE THAT HAS ALWAYS HELD MY PARENTS' HEARTS IS CJ'S BAR.

MY DAD, JOE DEVILLEZ, STARTED WORKING AT CJ'S AS A NINETEEN-YEAR OLD-SOPHOMORE, SERVING ONLY BEER AS THIS WAS THE LAW AT THE TIME. FOR THE PAST FEW DECADES, THE MANAGER OF CJ'S HAS BEEN A CURRENT STUDENT, AND MY DAD WAS THE VERY FIRST. NOT ONLY DID IT GIVE HIM MORE RESPONSIBILITY, BUT MANY STORIES TO TELL FOR YEARS AFTER.

ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PARTS OF THIS BAR IS THE FULL-WALL MURAL OF ITS LOGO, AND I ALWAYS FIND IT VERY ENTERTAINING THAT I AM ONE OF THE VERY FEW TO KNOW THE TRUE STORY BEHIND IT. AT THE TIME, A LOT OF COMPANIES WOULD HAND OUT MATCH BOXES 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. THE FAMOUS MURAL IS STILL THERE TO THIS DAY, WHERE STUDENTS ARE CONSTANTLY WRITING THEIR SIGNATURES ALL OVER IT, MARKING THEIR FUN NIGHTS. ONE OF THE GREATEST MEMORIES I HAVE IN MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE SO FAR WAS ON MY TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY, WHEN MY BROTHER CAME UP TO CELEBRATE. 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 FAMILY HISTORY (TIME AND TIME AGAIN, WE HAVE SADLY FAILED AT THIS). WE SENT THE PHOTO ABOVE TO OUR PARENTS, WHO WERE SO THRILLED WE WERE TOGETHER IN A PLACE THAT MEANT SO MUCH TO THEM AT OUR AGES.

CJ'S HAS ALWAYS BEEN A POPULAR LOCATION IN ITSELF AND IS THEREFORE A GREAT SPOT FOR STUDENTS TO HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS. EVEN THE MERCHANDISE FROM THE BAR CAN BE SEEN ON STUDENTS ALL OVER CAMPUS. MY PARENTS KNOW THIS AS WELL, WHICH IS WHAT CREATED A CORE MEMORY AND EMBARRASSING STORY FOR MY SIBLINGS AND I.

AS SHOWN IN THIS PHOTO, THE FIRST PLACE MY PARENTS WANTED TO GO ON FAMILY WEEKEND WAS CJ'S. SOMETHING TO KNOW ABOUT MY DAD IS HE IS RIDICULOUSLY OUTGOING AND CAN HAVE 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 WORKERS. 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 QUESTIONS. HE AND MY MOM THEN GOT INTO A DEEP CONVERSATION WITH THE WORKERS, TRYING TO GET FREE SHIRTS OUT OF THEIR VISITS. WHEN THEY FAILED, THEY BOUGHT SOME ANYWAY. LONG STORY SHORT, IT'S ALWAYS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY COME TO CAMPUS.

I OFTEN DON'T THINK PEOPLE PROCESS THAT CJ IS A REAL PERSON, AS I HAVE NEVER HEARD HIM REFERRED TO AS SUCH, ONLY THE BAR. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MY DAD, CJ SOUNDS LIKE HE'S HAD A VERY INTERESTING LIFE AS HE PLAYED FOOTBALL FOR BO SCHEMBECHLER, WHO WENT ON TO BE ARGUABLY THE MOST FAMOUS COACH IN MICHIGAN HISTORY AFTER HIS CAREER AT MIAMI. THIS CAUSED MY DAD TO HEAR A LOT 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 CJS AFTER CLASSES TO SEE MY DAD EVERYDAY. IN FACT, MANY OF HER FRIENDS ALSO WORKED THERE, AND WHEN THEY COULD NOT BE THERE,

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, BECAUSE THIS WAS WHERE MY PARENTS AND THEIR FRIENDS SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME. THEY TELL ME HOW 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 PREVIOUS FIELD'S GOAL POST HUNG IN CJS FOR AROUND THIRTY YEARS. THIS IS BECAUSE, AT THE LAST GAME EVER PLAYED THERE, MY MOM AND MANY OTHERS SOMEHOW PULLED THE GOAL POST DOWN, MARCHED TO CJS WITH IT, AND PUT THEIR SIGNATURES ALL OVER IT.

EVERYWHERE I GO IN OXFORD, I AM REMINDED OF A STORY FROM MY PARENT'S EXPERIENCE AT MIAMI. BUT 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 PARENT'S STUDENT-LIFE WAS LIKE. I'VE NEVER HEARD THEM SAY ANYTHING NEGATIVE. THEY TRULY ENJOYED THE LIFELONG MEMORIES THEY MADE, AND I HOPE TO HAVE DONE THE SAME.

SINCERELY,
SOPHIA DEVILLEZ

It has to be a virus.
The ground is covered
in this substance.

Evidence #21: Blog Post

Location: Slow Idaho

Slow Idaho

Taylor Morgan

In the bubble of Oxford, Ohio, thousands of students live in houses and apartments scattered throughout uptown and its various neighboring streets. These houses—or rather homes—entertain some of Miami University’s richest traditions and student body cultures. One aspect that makes the college houses of Oxford stand out from other universities is the unique plaque and name attached to the front of each house. Throwing addresses out the window, the name of a home and the four walls holding it up seep into one. These names stand as an ode to the group of college students who first christened the house. In this case, each time the name “Slow Idaho” is yelled through an alley or stands as the answer to the question “where do you live?,” it represents so much more than the current group it houses.

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

It has been twenty years since the house at 115 East Walnut Street was bought, painted a pale yellow, and named Slow Idaho. With some quick



math, this means it has been called home by around 140 college students throughout the years; twenty odd groups of twenty-somethings who will always have a year of their college lives defined by Slow Idaho. I’m writing to let them know that not much has changed around here; there are little pieces of all of you etched into the walls.

The Porch

To start, the house is still yellow, and the front door remains a bright, firetruck 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 percent guarantee that the front door will be propped open, an invitation to any and all passing by. The front porch continues to exist as the first place of getaway when a house resident 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 porch swing is still hanging sturdy under the weight of endless morning chats and evening homework sessions.

The Living Room

After walking through the red front door, you'll look to your left and see a wall scattered with memories of the current residents, including posters that indicate where each of the eight girls who currently live there are from: Cleveland, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Columbus, 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. While the room's appearance may change, its purpose stays true as a place to come together.

You are never alone at college. College students will spend entire summers collecting furniture and decor for their bedrooms, just to spend ninety percent of their time at home in the living room. The living room of a college house is a host to weekly movie nights, parents getting to know each other on Miami's Family Weekend, and the in-between moments where roommates get to simply exist together.

The Pink Kitchen

Soon after moving past the living room, you'll be greeted by the one and only pastel pink painted kitchen. In some instance, between Slow Idaho's conception and the current date, the single kitchen of this college home was painted an opaque light pink that stops anybody in its 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 calls it home. The kitchen was painted pink by one specific group of girls, and it has stayed and become one with the house, and the bright orange couch that sits below the balcony was placed years ago by another group, then left to forever live in Slow Idaho.

The Glass Bottle Wall

There is a specific essence to college that calls for tradition. Maybe it's to create unity, a community, a place of belonging for students far from home, or maybe it simply boils down to humans being creatures of habit. Tradition lives within Miami University. There are big ones, like how each and every student avoids stepping on the seal at the hub of campus, believing that if you step on it, you will fail your next exam. Traditions also run deep within the large Greek community on campus, where students spend weeks of the school year dedicating themselves to their respective philanthropies and getting the entire campus to join in. Greek life has its own traditions, particularly in terms of a housing procedure called "Passdowns." These are Oxford houses that are consistently lived in by someone of a specific sorority or fraternity—Slow Idaho being a strong standing passdown. Just three years after its naming in 2005, Slow Idaho became a Phi Mu Beta Eta passdown and continues to be so today.

With the passing along of a house like Slow Idaho from group to group comes the collection of mini-traditions and memorabilia. One specific reference of memorabilia that Slow Idaho is well-known for is the Glass Bottle Wall, a tradition that started when Slow Idaho was given its name. When you walk through the pastel pink kitchen, you will be presented with an entire shelved wall of glass bottles that have been collected and preserved by all of the previous tenants. This serves as a little reminder of all the people who have come before.

So, as I stated before, every resident's impact on Slow Idaho shines just as brightly as the house's impact on you all. 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.

From,
Slow Idaho

Evidence #22: Flyer with Instructions

Location: Bagel and Deli





How to Make the Wall of Fame at Bagel & Deli

When adopting the goal to appear on the wall of fame of one of Oxford's most famous locations, here are the six steps that should not be taken lightly in order to accomplish this feat.

1. Know where you're going: To learn as much information as possible about Bagel & Deli—located at 119 East High St. Oxford, Ohio—you can talk to almost anyone in the small town about this highly recognizable establishment. Founded in 1975, they quickly gained popularity for transforming a well-known breakfast food into a cuisine consumed for not only breakfast, but lunch, dinner, late night snack, or even dessert. However, their menu, which has vastly expanded over the years, can come with some intimidation, causing people to retreat into the familiarity of what they get every time. To combat this, and to encourage the consumption of some of their less ordered menu items, the wall of fame challenge was created.

2. Know what it is: Bagel & Deli has approximately 96 different bagel sandwiches on their menu, all of which are a variety of the different bagels (2a), spreads (2b), meats (2c), cheeses (2d), toppings (2e), and condiments. While this extensive menu does inevitably bring along a bit of intimidation, the step by step challenge of trying to conquer every combination that Bagel & Deli has to offer is one some attempt, and few

succeed at. So at this point, the question may arise: what is the motivation to complete such a thing? 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. 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, joining a select group of only 26 other participants who have succeeded throughout the company's fifty years of existence.

- a. Banana nut, blueberry, bialy, jalapeno, combo/everything, egg, garlic, onion, plain, pumpernickel, raisin, sesame, sourdough, rye, tomato, whole wheat, and gluten free
- b. Plain cream cheese, veggie cream cheese, spinach cream cheese, and hummus
- c. Turkey, ham, bacon, pepperoni, salami, sausage, meatball, roast beef, corned beef, and chicken salad
- d. American, pepper jack, provolone, Swiss, smoked cheddar, and Colby
- e. Lettuce, tomato, avocado, spinach, banana peppers, onion, cucumbers, green peppers, and pickles
- f. Barbeque sauce, honey mustard, 1000 Island dressing, Italian dressing, mayonnaise, spicy brown mustard, hot sauce, pizza sauce, Parmesan peppercorn, horseradish, oregano, cinnamon, peanut butter, jelly, salt, pepper, and butter

3. Live where it is: If one is attempting to have their picture on the iconic, maximalist wall of fame, it is preferable that they 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 one's goal is to consume all 96 of the bagels needed to have their picture on the wall, a residence, as well as family, friends, or colleagues, in the aforementioned 6.7 miles of land in southwest Ohio is preferred.

4. Know who to go with: To accomplish eating over ninety bagels, it is highly recommended that the adventure be taken in the presence of company. Not only will pride motivate one to continue their quest when they feel as though they can't look at, let alone eat, another bagel, it will also allow for the strengthening of relationships. It is a well-known phenomenon that the act of sharing a meal can greatly aid in the development of a human connection, but, further, this will make the

experience infinitely more enjoyable. It is possible that going with different people might invite a variety of orders, but it's also possible that one would hear multiple orders of the same thing. There's a fair chance that you'll find a Crunch and Munch bagel, their most popular order, which consists of turkey, cheddar, lettuce, tomato, honey mustard, parmesan peppercorn, and the customer's choice of Doritos. Regardless of the orders of any family or friends, or any temptation to simply reorder the same thing as the last time, it is crucial to remain focused on the mission if one wants their picture among Bagel legends.

5. Have a stable source of income (trust me on this one): This one may seem a bit out of place, but Bagel & Deli, though greatly beloved, is not known for their low prices. A singular bagel with nothing on it is sold at \$2.50; the various different combinations of toppings, meat, cheese, or condiments can cost up to \$10.75. Prices will vary depending on what bagel is ordered, but it's reasonable to deduce that these small expenses will add up, and could be detrimental to one's finances if there is no proper source of income to fund bagel-buying habits.

6. Plan out your visits: It is not this writer's 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. Opening at 8:00 a.m. sharp every day and closing after most bars to catch those seeking a late night snack, it is recommended that if one is accepting this challenge, the times that the bagels are purchased should vary. This challenge in and of itself encourages people to employ variety as the spice of life, so why not add even more variation with the time of the day the bagels are consumed? That being said, it can be reasonably inferred that certain bagels will suit certain times of the day. When rolling out of bed for the first time at 11 a.m., a Sam's Sunrise (scrambled eggs and American cheese on an egg bagel) might be your best bet. If one is taking a friend from home to lunch, an All-American (ham, American, lettuce, and mayo on a plain bagel) may suit your fancy. If a sweet bagel is what you're craving, 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 that wall of fame, it is crucial to keep the flavor of variety alive.

Is this ore edible? My stomach is grumbling...

Evidence #23: Creative Writing Contest Entry

Location: Skipper's



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 me 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 white board 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 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 shows 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, kinda 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 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 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 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 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, careful.

“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 hotdogs.” 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.

How has she potentially touched on the virus???

“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 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. It’s 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."

The ooze
could be coming
from a reservoir!

Evidence!!!

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."

Notes

- Fiction spawns from a basis of truth!
- This might be the breakthrough I've been waiting for!

Evidence #24: Promotional Article

Location: King Library



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.

Notes

- Infested with what I have decided is a virus.
- I couldn't make it through the doors.

Evidence #25: My Final Entry

Location: Hall Auditorium

As I am writing this, the only thing I am sure is real is the pavement beneath my feet. I am cloaked in the long, dark shadow of that godforsaken building, a shadow stretching beyond my dwarfed figure and into the dying grass. I know I should step away from this place, run from it, never look back on it, but here I am. Here I am in what should be the bitter cold air of the early morning, nothing but a light jacket—not fit for winter—draped over my shoulders. But can I be blamed? Can it really be my fault that since I arrived at this place, I have not been able to shake that dreary feeling, the daunting voice in my head that beckons me? Perhaps it is a sign I am going insane after all. I've lost track of the days here now, can't remember the last time I had a proper meal or a good night of sleep, but none of that changes what I feel. I need to get inside, I need to finally understand why everything is tracing back to Hall Auditorium.

In all of my research, everything I have uncovered, there is a sense of subtlety around this place. It is painted delicately as nothing but a building where music students once went to hone their performances, to play their finely tuned instruments to a small audience. But then why, I ask, is it that everything has managed to place a subtext around Hall? Around this "auditorium"? I can feel it now, in my burning insides as I scribble down my thoughts, there is much more lying beyond these doors than a decaying stage or tarnished brass.

When did it begin? Oh yes, I'm sure it was from the very first time I walked past the brick exterior with my head whipping in all directions as I tried to understand the mysterious place I had come across. It was a simple building if it weren't for that ring, at least from the outside, with its shingled pointed rooftop and uniform rectangular windows. It blended into the other hellscape on the campus, the only thing managing to set it apart being the worn concrete pillars with their intricate molding, boasting the name of the place in metal letters. That was another thing about all of the buildings, seeming so proud of themselves with their names plastered on their fronts, a false welcome.

I'm pacing now, hands shakily grasping at the leather cover of my notebook while my pen

bounces against the page. Procrastination, you might say, is a word I never thought I would associate with myself. But I never thought it would come to this either, lost, stranded, far from home, and staring down the face of a force I cannot yet recognize.

The soles of my shoes are becoming softer now, squishy, as though the material has begun to melt the longer I stand on this cracked sidewalk. I am willing myself forward, taking unsure steps in the direction of the dusty glass doors. It is even darker inside than it is out here, and I am stretching out my unsteady hand to push open the likely rickety door. The feeling of the brass plating is cool against my palm, and I am listening to the slow creak of the long-abandoned hinges.

The first thing I have noticed is the tile beneath my feet, and as I squint through the black, I can spot the outline of unlit light fixtures hung from the ceiling. Running my hand down the wall, its surface is smooth and appears to be cream in color. I am looking for more, I assure you, I am looking for more, but if I do not hover by the glass, I will lose what little light I have left. So now, I will take this time to address not only myself, but those I will share my research and discoveries with once I have left Hall and left this town altogether.

I was never one to believe in ghost stories, the paranormal, or any fantastical or mythical creatures. Science has been my backbone for as long as I can remember, and it is what I have dedicated my life to. It is why I stumbled into that park that day, on one of my usual hikes to document the last of the season's wildlife. It was routine, something I have done for the last decade, perhaps more now. All of this to say, I do not want to waste your time. I will not waste your time. What I have gathered, what is in this notebook, is all that I have worked toward in my life. Investigating, analyzing, gathering evidence, all of it has been a routine of mine since long before I found this place. I was simply doing my job when I stumbled upon these grounds and looked into them further, and I cannot name a job I have left unfinished.

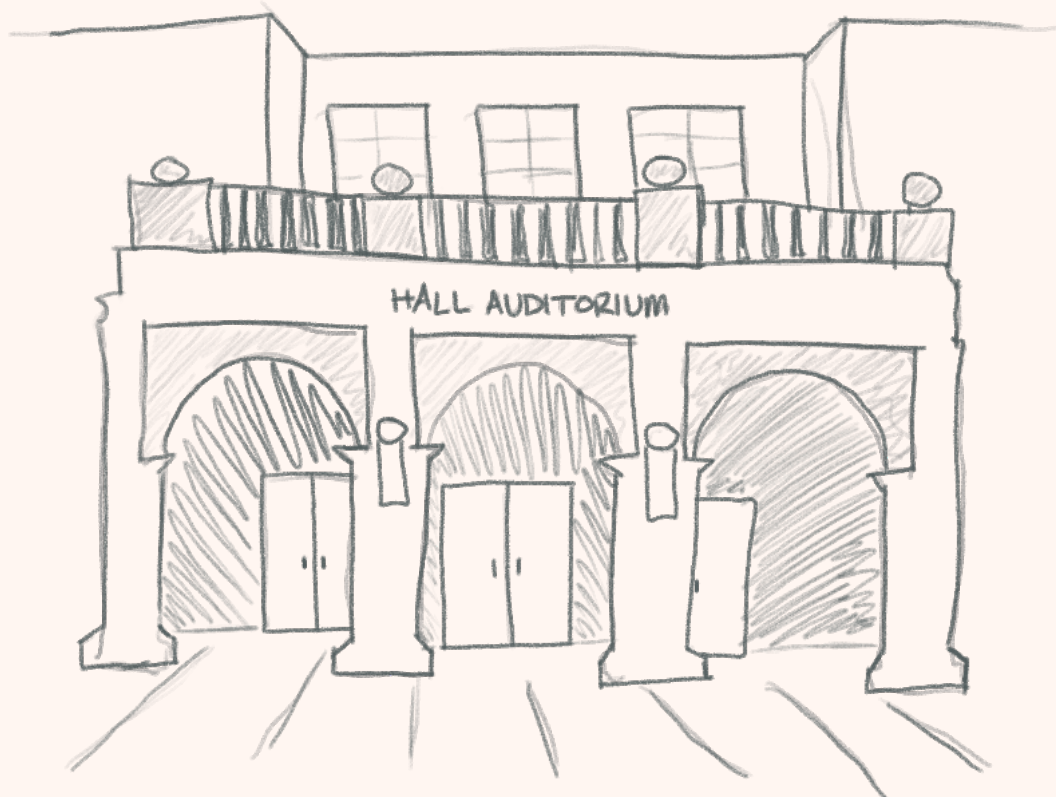
The heat is real, it is coursing through every part of my body at this very moment, and I know something is bubbling beneath the surface. Not just in Hall, but across this entire town. Never have I entertained what lies beyond the laws of science, but perhaps this

does not escape my normal confines. Perhaps this is simply a new discovery, a new breakthrough in the scientific world, and I am going to be the one to lead it. Or perhaps this truly is something I should turn my back on, try to forget about, and go back to my life of documenting flowers. But my conscience will not let me do that, I cannot rob the world of what this piece of land might mean for our societal future.

There is no more time for me to keep rambling; I must set down this book and venture into the dark halls of this forgotten place. I can hear it again, that still, small voice calling to me from somewhere just out of reach. My feet are moving again. There is no time to set down this book; I must find it. I must see what has robbed me of what little sanity I thought I had left.

Everything is a blur, but somehow, I am staring down the mouth of a black abyss—a spiraling staircase with seemingly no end, stretching deeper and deeper into the surface of the Earth.

For fear of damaging my data, I will leave my book at the top of these stairs and come back for it once I have my answers. I will document everything in as much detail as I can manage the moment I return. Rest assured, I will have my answers. We will all have our answers.



Authors

Hueston Woods State Park - Maddie Lee
Bachelor Preserve - Faye Smith
Oxford Cemetery - Letha Blair
Oxford Area Trails - Alaina Fitch
Hawks Landing - Kayla Angus
Kumler Chapel - Emma Henderson
Silvoor Biological Sanctuary- Mandy Holliday
Oxford Lane Library - Annabel Howe
The Conrad Gardens - Elizabeth Smith
Bachelor Hall - Nick Bermudez
Center for Performing Arts - Cassell Presnell
Goggin Ice Center - Kylie Mullis
Oxford Community Arts Center - Abby Showalter
Sesquicentennial Chapel - Becca Blanco
Kofenya - Kai Green
Shriver Center - Mikayla Clinger
Upham Hall - Caleb Chun
Hefner Museum of Natural History - Emma Estridge
Upham Hall, Rooms 180A, B, and C - Kathryn Keeley
CJ's Bar - Sophia DeVillez
Slow Idaho - Taylor Morgan
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