



Photo courtesy of University Archives

Raymond Hall residents congregate on the east steps during the early 1950s. This view of Raymond from 17th Street is now blocked by the Cather-Pound residence halls.

## 50-year-old residence hall continues housing UNL students - despite 'ghosts'

By Kema Soderberg

Ghosts of the past, present and future haunt the corridors of Raymond Hall, the oldest portion of the Neihardt Residential Center, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this month.

These ghosts are not spooks, however. They take the form of memories.

Jay Curtiss, a graduate student, is in the process of writing a paper on the history of Raymond Hall and the buildings adjoining it. Most of the historical facts included in this article are based on his research.

Raymond Hall was opened Oct. 8, 1932, although it was named for Carrie Belle Raymond on April 13 of that year.

Raymond was employed by the University of Nebraska for 33 years, beginning in 1894. She served as choir director, organist, music director and vocal ensemble director. The chorus grew to 300 voices during her tenure.

Raymond actively participated in the development of music in the community as well as in the university.

She organized the community chorus and helped bring the Minneapolis, New York and Chicago symphonies to Lincoln.

Raymond Hall is the central portion of the residential complex. Heppner Hall and Love Hall were built in 1939, while Piper Hall was added in 1956. The structure was then known as the Women's Residence Hall.

### Men move in

In 1970, men moved into the complex for the first time, and on Oct. 29, 1973, the name of the complex was changed to the John G. Neihardt Residential Center.

With the opening of the hall in 1932, women who

had previously lived in sororities, boarding houses or with families had a fourth choice in housing.

Curtiss cited two of the arguments for building the hall in his paper.

"Without a system of residence halls there is a lack of control of the mass of the student body. In a way, residence halls are more important than classrooms."

"This residence hall provides living and social conditions for all women students on a par with those facilities formerly restricted to members of Greek letter organizations."

### Questions raised

With the building of Raymond Hall, questions on the social standing of dormitory girls arose. A May 22, 1932, editorial to the Daily Nebraskan said:

"There is one great question in the social aspect of this dormitory. Perhaps to many it is trivial, but to the girls who will live in the hall, the questions will have great significance. Will the fraternity men upon the campus date the girls in the dormitory? The easiest way of answering this question is by evading it and declaring that it makes no difference anyway. But sane observation will show that it does. Fraternity men have always had an exaggerated sense of their own importance and with characteristic snobbery may refuse to date the girls in the dormitory because the dormitory has no rating. One thing is certain, the girls in the dormitory will be the same kind as those in the sororities and fraternity men would do well to forget their high hats and be fair."

Mrs. Adolph Wenke, a former resident and residence director at Raymond Hall, says the problem raised in the editorial was non-existent. She said she thinks the reason why fraternity men dated sorority girls before the opening of the dormitory was that a "high percentage of students lived in the sororities and fraternities and those were the ones that you met."

Wenke lived in Raymond Hall as a student during the second or third year it was open.

"I never had any idea I'd go back as a residence director," she said.

### Waiters brought food

One daily activity she remembers is formal dinner service. White-jacketed waiters brought food to the tables where it was served family-style.

Other activities she remembers include hour dances in the fall ("when people were all new"), open houses, speakers, programs and floor or hall parties.

When Wenke lived in the residence hall the women had to keep hours. At one time they had to be in at 9:30 p.m., but when more students began to have night courses it was changed to 10:30, she said.

"Students today say it's terrible to be locked up," Wenke said, "but I think it gave them an opportunity to get to know each other. The pressures were off and when you closed the hall doors you could run around in your pajamas."

However, she said she doesn't believe today's lack of hours is necessarily bad. "It's all relative to the time," she said.

### Ghosts living in hall?

Some students believe that something is still "locked up" in Raymond Hall. According to Curtiss' report, a ghost is rumored to reside in a room on the third floor of Raymond Hall.

As the story goes, one resident died in her room from the flu or pneumonia. Before she died she had a high fever and was delirious and kept asking that the curtains be opened and closed. Years later, another student noticed a mysterious opening and closing of the curtains in her room.

Wenke said she does not believe the story.

"I had never heard anything about a ghost story until a year ago," she said. "Someone is always dreaming up something."

But no one has dreamed up much change in Raymond Hall. Curtiss said the building "hasn't been remodeled that much."

"Probably the biggest renovation has been the addition of fire doors," Curtiss said. "Some of the room usage has changed, but all four fireplaces still work and the furniture is original though some of it may have been reupholstered."

Today, Raymond Hall houses the Modern Language Floor on its second level.

In honor of the hall's 50th birthday, the Neihardt Council, comprised of students from the entire complex, is considering a project to improve Raymond Hall.

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