

Classic Elon: Maintaining tradition, nature of older buildings on campus

Rachel Southmayd
Reporter

In 1923, a fire roared through the main building on Elon College's campus, incinerating the library, chapel and some school records.

After that day, the Board of Trustees stood on what is now

"Under the Oaks" and voted to rebuild the destroyed buildings. Over the next 70 years, 900,000 square feet of building space was constructed,

according to Neil Bromilow, head of construction management.

Today, Bromilow said there are about 2 million square feet of building space, with hundreds of thousands more in progress or planned. As Elon looks to the future, a question of how to deal with older buildings remains.

Bromilow said any concerned parties have nothing to worry about when they think of buildings like Mooney, Alamance, Duke, Carlton and several others.

"It's not like it's some kind of tumble-down blighted neighborhood," he said.

He said the majority of academic buildings have undergone extensive renovations recently, including modern upgrades like elevators and new plumbing. Some have just had certain things replaced or repaired, but others have had more done to maintain them.

"The Duke building was completely erased inside," he said.

The original Duke building was completed in 1925 and was the home of the sciences. When McMichael Science Center opened in 1998, everything in the old Duke was torn out, all the way down to the outer brick walls, which were left alone.

But not all of the older buildings need this much assistance. Bromilow said Whitley Auditorium was redone in last 10 years, but was made to look just as it did when it was originally constructed in 1924.

"There are some things about the older buildings that you wouldn't rip out and change, just to say we changed them," he said, adding that Elon tries to take a "constructive reconstruction" approach to larger maintenance projects in the older buildings.

Sallie Hutton, director of Alumni Relations, said former Elon students place a high value on the buildings in the "historic district" of campus.

"In many ways that's part of their memories," she said. "It's a reconnection point for them."

Eight of Elon's dormitories are located near these older academic buildings and are at least 40 years old, housing several hundred students.

Last week, McEwen Dining Hall was closed for a night after a leak in the roof was discovered. Bromilow said he thinks McEwen is due for a new roof next year. He said major maintenance like this is

scheduled on a regular basis, and Elon doesn't wait for problems to occur before scheduling major upgrades like that.

Robert Buchholz, director of Physical Plant, said new roofs can last 20 to 25 years, which couldn't be said about roofs built 30 years ago.

"This is an item that can help an old building last a lot longer," he said.

Erin Cooke is a resident assistant on the first floor of West, and said she loves the proximity of the dorm to academic locations and the beauty of it but had concerns at first.

"I was nervous when I got here in the summer," she said.

Although she likes living in West, Cooke said, given the choice, she'd choose to live in a newer dorm, like the Colonnades.

"I think everybody likes stuff when it's new," she said.

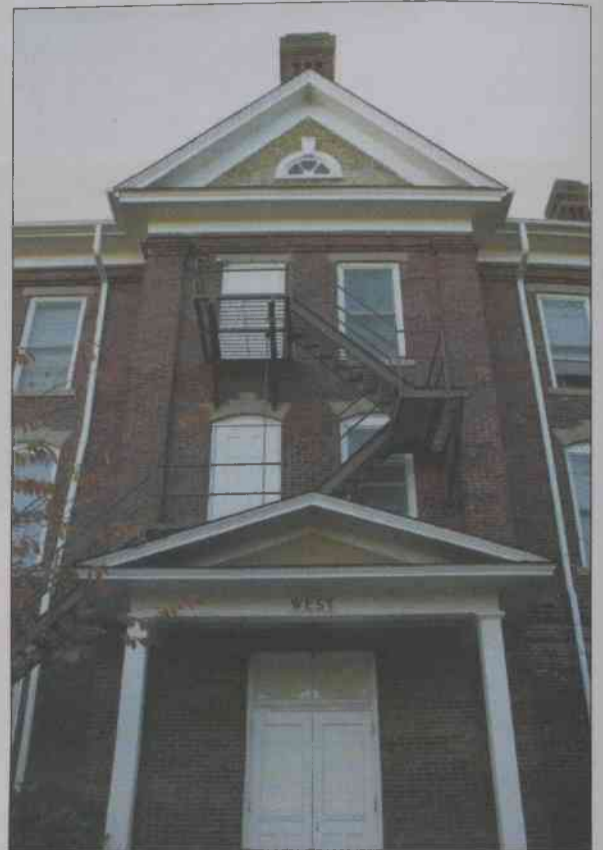
Students will have several "new" places to live as more phases of construction get completed as part of the 10-year Elon Commitment, and Buchholz said he foresees some renovation happening in the older academic and residential buildings in the near future.

He said maintaining the older buildings is a lot like an old car.

"If the car is well maintained and cleaned regularly, it will last a long time," he said. "You have to do regular maintenance, cleaning and pay attention to them."

Both Bromilow and Buchholz agreed that these buildings will be standing for many years to come.

"We have solid buildings that are well-maintained," Bromilow said. "And, to put it bluntly, they should last forever."



JULIA MURPHY | Staff Photographer
As new construction projects continue on campus, Elon is taking steps to preserve the safety and tradition of older buildings.

Interest Meeting Summer 2011



McEwen Studio B
Monday, November 22 7PM
Open to all Majors