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## UA1B2/1 Student Life: Potter, Schneider, Diddle Halls & On-Campus Activities

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Student Life  
Potter Hall  
Schneider Hall  
Diddle Hall  
On-Campus Activities

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Student Life  
Coll 301  
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From quaint home-style interior designs to today's multi-dimensional living spaces, Western's residence halls have come a long way since their inception during the roaring twenties. The expansion and renovation of Western Kentucky University's residence halls have made positive increases and various accommodations for the growing number of students on the Hill. That growing number of students has changed the home-like qualities to resemble of small apartments. The halls have experienced name changes and others have been taken down completely over the years. Western has had over fifteen different names placed on residence halls since the first residence hall built was 1923 including South, North, East, McLean, and Regents Halls. The top two halls that have added to the uniqueness of Western's residence hall history are Potter and Schneider Hall. Two halls were the earliest halls built at Western.

Built in 1921, J. Whit Potter Hall was the first and only residence hall on the Hill. During that time, Western was known as a Teacher's College. The hall was named after Jerome Whitfield Potter (1851-1923) who was a regent of Western Kentucky State Normal College. Potter went back and forth in gender occupancies, from its start as a female boarding home from 1921 to 1949, to a male hall from 1949 to 1957 and back to a female hall from 1957 to 1991. Because Potter was the first residence hall to grace the hill, a vast array of memories and a strong rich history flow from the alumni who had an opportunity to share in its experience.

In a 1948 article of the *College Heights Herald*, it was said that, "Potter Hall Embodies the Spirit of the Hill."<sup>1</sup> The most interesting aspect of the Hall was that it housed a cafeteria in its basement that had a capacity of 300 individuals. In July of 1921, the cost of living in Potter was \$8.50 per month and the meals in the cafeteria were \$.50 per week.

To keep everyone in polite and courteous order, there were many rules given to the cafeteria. At the sound of a bell, a blessing was given at each meal and "loud talking and guffawing was greatly discouraged. Toothpicks, considered to be of bad taste, were also discouraged in the cafeteria and anywhere outside of the students' rooms or out of sight of other individuals. In addition to the rules accorded to the cafeteria, the 168 women housed in Potter were also under strict restrictions. Seniors were allowed to leave the hall any evening until 10:30 p.m., except on Saturdays when their curfews were 11:45 p.m. The other curfews for freshman, sophomores and juniors were much stricter imposing only two to three nights out with a curfew of 9:30 p.m.<sup>2</sup>

After years of holding hungry college students, in 1943 the cafeteria at Potter Hall was changed to a "mess hall" for the United States Army Air Corps. It was mandatory for the men to eat in the cafeteria three times a day. A 1943 article in the *College Heights Herald* said,

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<sup>1</sup> "Potter Hall embodies the spirit of the Hill." *College Heights Herald*. Vol. 24. No.11. March 26, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> "Your Home Away from Home." General Info Pamphlet on Dorms. 1964-1965. Western

"There was less noise now than when college students used the dining room."<sup>3</sup> This change was just the beginning of the many changes seen at Potter Hall. The cafeteria was eventually closed in 1955 and a new dining hall was built in what was called the Student Union Building.

One of the rumors surrounding Potter Hall was it was haunted. Rumors of showers and faucets turning on mysteriously as well as other unexplained mishaps. One of the most discussed tales was the famous story of a coed's suicide in the basement. Another part of its rich history was a fire that damaged a room in October 1962.<sup>4</sup> The legacy of living in Potter came to an end when it ceased to be a residence hall in 1991 and was renovated into an administration building in 1994.

When the growth of the enrollment at Western rose so did the need for additional housing. Completed in 1928, West Hall, which was renamed Whitestone Hall in 1961 and changed to Florence Schneider in 1961, became another fixture holding memories for the Hill's alumni. The design is of Georgian Revival and housed 200 females in 1939. Eventually, the girls had to move and in the spring of 1943 it provided housing for the 321<sup>st</sup> College Training Detachment, a group of Army Air Corps cadets. From the summer of 1944 until 1984 it was again a women's hall, 1984, until the summer the enrollment of women at

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Kentucky State College.

<sup>3</sup> "Cafeteria to be installed." *College Heights Herald*. Vol. 19 No. 14 p.1. April 23, 1943.

<sup>4</sup> "WSC Dorm Damaged by Blaze." *Park City Daily News*. October, 10, 1962

Western declined. At that time it was rented out as a conference center and office space. It went back to a residence hall in 1987 where it was co-ed and was the first residence hall on campus to have 24-hour visitation.<sup>5</sup>

Schneider like Potter Hall, experienced fire incidents, including an arsonist and had tales of being haunted when a ghost appeared every spring.<sup>6</sup> The tales of ghost have continued even down to the residents of 2003.

Throughout it's various changes there has been continuous renovations due to hazard materials that have caused health problems for students. The material in the roof in 1972, called asbestos caused cancer and was banned in the use of construction at that time. The hall has been renovated in 1959, 1963, 1965 and 1977. In 2003, another health problem came about surrounded the appearance of mold.<sup>7</sup> The mold, the leaks in the ceiling from the moisture from old, leaky pipes caused enough problems for Schneider to close as a residence hall in August 2003.

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<sup>5</sup> Batcheldor, Matt. "Dorm Roof to be fixed next summer." *College Heights Herald*. October 7, 1997. p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Sutherland, David. "Ghost of Whitestone returns every spring." *College Heights Herald*. February 23, 1971. Vol 50

<sup>7</sup> Sisco, Scott. "Western dealing with mold in Florence Schneider." *Daily News*. February 14, 2003.

There may be plans for Schneider reopen in 2005 as home of the Kentucky Academy for Mathematics and Science, a program for Kentucky high school students who have excelled in math and science.<sup>8</sup> The legacy of Schneider will continue and it's various transformations have been a part of it's uniqueness on the Hill.

Potter and Schneider Hall sparked the start of many residence halls that would grace the hill over a century. Both facilities have since ceased to house students, but each decade the buildings were active, there was an abundance of a connected community and home-like atmosphere. Over the years, the strict rules of curfews have lessened to very few to currently non-existent. But specifically, the curfews for women continued until October 1975. There has been no record of curfews put into place for male students. There has also been a change of co-ed visitation from non-existent to debates on how long students should have visitors from the opposite sex. Potter and Schneider Hall helped to add to the community of the students living on campus and the advancement of dorms that came after.

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<sup>8</sup> "Western's Florence Schneider Hall could reopen in 2005 as home of the Kentucky Academy..." WKU News and Events. July 4, 2004.

### On-Campus Activities

Even in the late 1800's Western students always made time for leisure and social events available on campus and in the city of Bowling Green. Students hung out in on-campus activities such as The Cellar, Nightclass, Potter Hall, Downing University Center and Garrett Conference Center. Off-campus sites were also points of attraction, such as The Goal Post, the Western Lunch Room, Western Drive-IN, and various local clubs opened through the years. On campus however, was where students could have activities free of charge. The Cellar, Nightclass and the Garrett Conference Center were the three main places where students could enjoy a club like atmosphere without the cover charge.

The Cellar started out as a teahouse in the basement of West Hall that featured students singing original songs and presenting poetry. The music style in the 1972 Cellar was Folk. (Cellar Dwellers)

In 1977, because of the disturbances of non-students coming into the Cellar, restrictions were enforced that you must have an ID to enter (West Hall Recreation). Eventually the Cellar was closed and dance parties were moved to Garrett Conference Center.

Currently, Nightclass, once a restaurant that offered café food for students has been the fixture at Western that hosts poetry readings, parties and concerts.

### Diddle Dorm

When Edgar Allen Diddle, head Western basketball coach from 1922-1964, moved into 1529 State Street, little did he know the legacy that this decision would make. Previously, the Richardsonian Romanesque style structure in over a span of forty years



had been a male and female residence hall, music hall and home to architect Robert Underwood and Methodist minister Dr. Frank Thomas. After moving his family into the house in 1950, Diddle decided to allow his basketball players to also reside in his home. Diddle was able to keep a watch on his team and better the quality of his relationship with the team members. The closeness of Diddle to his players proved successful within the forty years of his coaching career. During his career, 759 games were won and 302 lost for an overall winning percentage of 71.5 percent Diddle made sure the players' hair was cut and helped keep the players focused by keeping keys to each room and checking up on the players day and night.

When Diddle ended his coaching career due to health problems, the players moved to Barnes-Campbell and after repairs and renovations to the Diddle Dorm, players eventually moved back in 1978 and remained until 1994. In 94', due to the infestation of termites and old age, Diddle Dorm was razed and made into a campus landmark called Diddle Park.