



Ceremony marks return of renovated Old Main fountain

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SU President Bill Ruud addresses the more than 150 people who took part in the ceremony rededicating the Old Main fountain.

The fountain in front of Old Main has been an iconic part of Shippensburg University’s campus since it was built in the 1890s, when SU was the Cumberland Valley State Normal School.

Whether entering from Prince Street or Earl Street, it is one of the first things a visitor sees when arriving on campus. Countless photos have been taken in front of it — new graduates with families and friends, alumni returning for reunions, wedding parties and more. It is as much a part of the original campus as the buildings that surround it.

On June 2, the fountain was the site of yet another memorable moment — its own rededication after an extensive, three-month restoration.

More than 150 people gathered at the fountain for the rededication ceremony, held as part of SU’s annual Alumni Weekend. The fountain was a gift to the school from the Class of 1896, and the ceremony harkened back to the original dedication on June 30, 1896, including a reading of the “Fountain Song” sung by class members on that day.

“The students who so generously donated the fountain as their class gift could not have envisioned the important place it would come to occupy in the hearts of the tens of thousands of students who would follow them,” stated SU President William Ruud.

Not only has the fountain been the site of student and alumni gatherings and photos, but it also has been the scene of various pranks over the years, Ruud said, including the nearby burial of an alligator that was the pet of an Old Main resident. “The fountain’s history is rich in legend and lore, and will always be intertwined with the university as a symbol of the individuals who bring life to Ship every day,” he said.

“We stand here today, especially those of us proud to be Shippensburg alumni, as a living legacy to the Class of 1896 and to their spirit that epitomizes all of the qualities that make our alma mater so extraordinary, so unique and so special to us all,” said B. Michael Schaul, chairperson of the SU Council of Trustees, who earned his bachelor’s degree from SU in 1971 and his master’s in 1972.

Schaul quoted from S.M. Wherry, trustees president in 1896, who “spoke in glowing terms about not just the class gift, but of the spirit that was part of what was then a normal school.”

Wherry said the fountain served as “a recognition not only of what has been done by us in the past to make this one of the first training schools in the state, but it is a perpetual testimony of your faith in what we and our successors shall do in the time to come.”

Krista Williams, student appointee to the trustees, said the fountain represents the impact that students have had on the university. She said she hopes that, “like the Class of 1896, we [current students] can leave behind a legacy for the future.”

Shippensburg Mayor Bruce Hockersmith and Franklin County Commissioner Robert Thomas also spoke, and cited the positive impact SU and its graduates have had. “For well over a century, this fountain has stood as a symbol of the knowledge that has flowed from this campus out into the world,” said Hockersmith, a 1961 graduate.

While SU’s campus is located in Cumberland County, “when people come to Franklin County and ask what we have to offer, we point to Shippensburg University,” Thomas said. “This university has a tremendous impact on Franklin County, and has for many years. It has educated our young people so they can have a better future.”

The \$164,000 renovation project was led by Kreilick Conservation of Orland in partnership with Robinson Iron in Alexander City, Ala., and OuterSpaces, a landscape architectural firm in Paoli. The fountain was disassembled in late January and taken to Robinson Iron, whose founder purchased all of the original patterns from J.W. Fiske, the New York company from which the SU fountain was commissioned, when Fiske went out of business. While Robinson Iron was completing its work, OuterSpaces restored the fountain’s limestone basin.

The fountain was reassembled in time for spring commencement ceremonies last month.

Over the years, the university has performed regular maintenance and painting on the fountain, but a more extensive renovation was needed because of the fountain’s age, university officials said.

Scott Kreilick, president and CEO of Kreilick Conservation, said historic photographs provided essential guidance throughout the project, but because they were in black and white, they were not beneficial in determining the correct color scheme.

“The green that’s on the fountain now — as we were dismantling the fountain and chipping off paint, deep in some crevices we found remnants of the original paint,” he said. “We are very pleased with how it turned out.”

The renovation of the fountain itself is just the first phase of the project, according to Lance Bryson, executive director of facilities and management at SU. In July, work will begin on the fountain’s mechanical equipment to replace water pumps, the water treatment system and the fountain’s reservoir, which is housed in the basement of Old Main.

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