



Photo: Lee Thomas

“President Patterson, your building is back!”

By Liz Demoran

That's how UK President Lee T. Todd Jr. opened a "conversation" with President James K. Patterson, at the dedication of the restored Main Building October 25 celebrating the completion of this extensive restoration project.

"This is a great day in University of Kentucky history," said Todd. "Built in 1881 with clay and stone found right here on campus, the Main Building is an important Kentucky landmark. Opening it again, not just to administrators but to the entire campus community, is a tremendous feeling. I look forward to this building remaining a university icon for many years to come."

Thomas D. Clark, alumnus, Kentucky historian laureate and emeritus professor of history recalled his first encounter with the Main Building when he arrived as a graduate student in 1928.

"I landed in Kentucky without knowing anybody. I got out of a taxi cab right there," he said, pointing to the drive in front of the building. "Never could I have imagined that this building would mean so much in my life."

Re-establishing the Main Building, Clark said, re-establishes Kentucky's goal to make UK a nationally prominent university. "On that day historians will have an opportunity to write a very happy chapter about a Commonwealth that had the courage, the energy and the imagination to realize its full possibilities."

Patterson's statue still holds court between the Patterson Office Tower and the Main Building, known to students and alumni as the Administration Building since 1948. The original building was designed by Harry P. McDonald of McDonald and Brothers (Architects) of Louisville. Patterson guaranteed completion of the building by pledging all of his personal funds to cover the \$81,000 construction money borrowed to complete the project. Other buildings constructed at the same time included a men's dormitory (later named White Hall), the president's house and the campus heating plant.

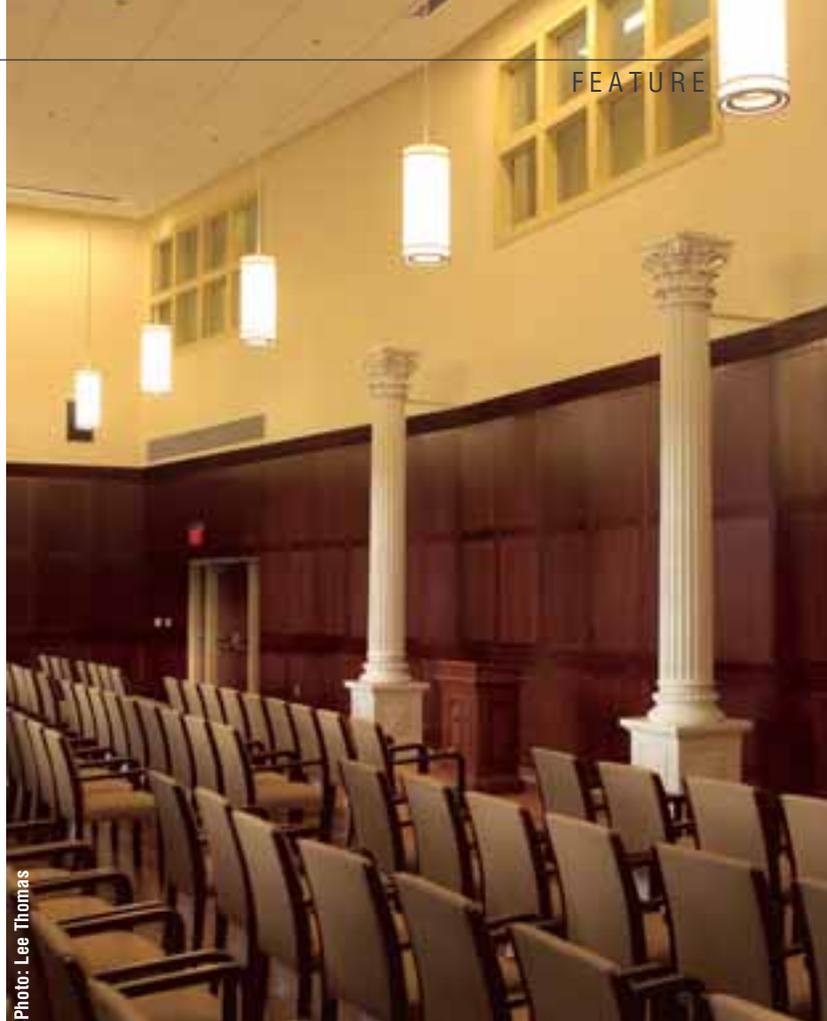


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Columns from the original chapel, hidden for years, were rediscovered after the fire and preserved in the new public meeting room.

The tower feature once again graces the building.

Solemn dedicatory ceremonies for the new campus took place February 15, 1882. Students and faculty, along with assorted dignitaries, marched to the new campus just off Nicholasville Road for the formal ceremony dedicating the new buildings and campus.

All of the academic and administrative operations of the college were encompassed in the Main or College Building as it was often called in the early days. There were campus offices, classrooms, and related facilities including the college armory and the classrooms used by the Commandant of Cadets; a shop; the President's Office (equipped with fireplaces and a classroom); a natural history museum; two laboratories; the Normal, French, German, English, Mathematics, Classical, and Preparatory departments; an assembly room containing an organ; a smaller chapel (which was able to seat the entire student body, faculty, and staff); the headquarters of the Union Literary and Philosophian societies; and the Kentucky Geological Survey.

Those interested in the history of the university and historic preservation will find much to like. The brick shell of the building was stabilized after the fire that severely damaged the structure on May 15, 2001, preserving the authenticity of the original building. The third generation of windows, installed in 1971, remains in place as does the keystone window element adopted throughout campus.

The foundation that had been back-filled at some time in the past 120 years was dug out to its original grade exposing the full depth of the limestone base. The grade around the building was lowered to the original mark in front about two feet and about four feet in the rear for a walk-out level to the plaza.

The roof ridge is exactly the same elevation as the original roof line and the tower was reclaimed at the top. The roof is made of lead-coated, standing-seam copper. Initially the tower and cupola formed a weather observatory 157-feet tall with a captain's walk and a clock. The flattened, gabled roof most alumni of today remember was constructed in 1919, although a previous remodel also had shortened and altered the tower before its removal.

At night the tower, Todd says, is symbolic of UK as a beacon of education and outreach. "Light will shine from the four tower windows equally in all directions — toward downtown Lexington and Northern Kentucky, toward the adjacent neighborhoods and Western Ken-



Photo: Tim Collins

Photo: Jonathan Palmer

The Main Building now has an entrance to the Visitor's Center and a balcony overlooking the plaza area where students often congregate.

President Lee T. Todd Jr. moves into his new office that offers several appealing vistas of the campus.

tucky, toward the Medical Center and Southern Kentucky and toward the main campus and Eastern Kentucky — because we are one university and our campus is the Commonwealth."

A panoply of light characterizes the interior. Sunshine coming in from the skylight above bathes a third floor meeting room. Additional interior light borrowed from large windows provides natural lighting to most interior spaces in the building. Soft yellow walls contrast with deep cherry, bead board wainscot.

The Main Building houses the Visitors Center, two "smart" classrooms, meeting rooms, a public room and offices for the president, provost, executive vice president for research, executive vice president for finance and administration, other senior administrators and staff, the Commission on Women, the Commission on Diversity and the councils for the University Senate and Staff Senate.

Original cast iron columns were relocated to the new public room. (These were used in a decorative manner to support a light frame over the podium). TV stations can connect to pre-wired cable at curbside which will make for easier remote transmission from the public room during news conferences.

The facility is connected to the campus central heating and air conditioning system and the central utility management system via a utility tunnel to the Patterson Office Tower building.

The architect of record is James W. Potts and Associates of Lexington; the design architect is Kliment-Halsband Architects of New York City; and Messer Construction Company of Lexington is the construction manager.

The \$17.35 million, state-of-the-art facility contains 43,243 square feet, featuring a new fourth floor, a fifth floor mechanical room, and two balconies. The renovation increased the building's square footage by 12,543.

This time around, insurance plus an \$8 million fundraising endeavor among alumni, friends and corporations is funding the restoration.

An historical marker has been placed in front of the Main Building and a time capsule is sealed in the cornerstone. Among the items it contains are a CD directory of alumni and a copy of the *Kentucky Alumni* magazine.

Liz Demoran '68 '76 is associate director of communications and editor of *Kentucky Alumni* magazine and can be reached at 859-257-7164 or at ldemora@email.uky.edu