

## A Historic Look at Heffernan Hall

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Clockwise from top left: The dedication of Heffernan Hall in 1964. Heffernan Chapel. The exterior of Heffernan Hall.

On Saturday, August 22, Rosemont College welcomed the first class of coeducational undergraduates into the halls of Heffernan, Kaul, and Mayfield. Of the three residential halls, Heffernan was the center of most of the activity. The following article is a brief history of the building.

As early as 1961, the SHCJ knew that a new residential hall was required. Student boarders were housed in Main and off-campus houses - Gracemere, Dalton, and Carroll Halls. What pushed the move was the Lower Merion Township Fire Marshal who found Main not up to fire code standards for students. (Evidently the rule did not apply to the Sisters who continued to live there).

A 1961 letter from the SHCJ at the College to their Superiors in Rome requested permission to build a student residential hall and convert the off-campus houses for educational use for the Sr. Formation Program of the SHCJ.

In 1962, the SHCJ in Rome granted permission and noted that the Society would cover a loan of \$500,000 the College would borrow from the Beneficial Savings Bank at 5.25% interest for the residential hall, and the SHCJ would issue a loan of \$200,000 for changes to the off-campus buildings.

The architect firm was Gleason & Mulrooney and Mr. John McShain the builder. It was to be erected beside the Science Building. The estimated building costs from Mr. McShain came to \$819,000. College administration felt that they could come up with the difference.

In an April 1962 issue of the student newspaper *The Rambler*, an article covered an announcement from Sr. M. George O'Reilly, President, that ground would be broken in the spring of 1963 for a new residential hall, to be ready for occupancy in September 1964. It was primarily for the use of upperclassmen.

By February 1964, students had been asked to submit suggestions for the new residential hall. The student poll showed surprisingly few complaints of current problems in residential halls: overhead lights a problem - in Connelly, they were too harsh, in Kaul they were too dim; number and noise of telephones and dearth of

electrical outlets. Requests ran in a pattern - tearful pleading for faucets that stay on when turned on...high metal sinks for washing hair and scales for obvious reasons.

The new residential hall as describes in *The Rambler* was to be in an H design, two entrances with a lounge between.

It was to house 148 students: 59 doubles and 30 singles, 6 rooms for nuns and house mothers. There was to be a Chapel for approximately 43 people.

Other amenities included utilities in center, surrounded by rooms, built in bookcases in every room, regular sash windows. In the basement, a kitchenette, a trunk room, and campus club rooms. On the second and third

floors, typing rooms.

The April 1963 issue of *The Rambler* reported that the chapel would be named for the alumnae who had filled all requests for memorials and donations, by furnishing the stations, vestments, altar, etc. The response of the alumnae was so great that not enough furnishings existed to fill their desires. Cost of chapel furnishings was \$5,900.

By October 1963, it was announced that the new residential hall would be named Heffernan Hall in honor of Mr. Raymond W. Heffernan, a trustee of the College and the father of Clare Heffernan Shlora, '47 and Frances Heffernan Rooney, '48. (As time went on he was delighted to see his granddaughters graduate - Clare's girls - Joan in 1974, Nancy in 1978, and Marie in 1980). When the Sisters told Mr. Heffernan that they wanted to name the building after him, he insisted that they name it for his wife, Margaret. Well in a day or so, Margaret called the College and said that the residential hall was absolutely not to be named for her but for her husband whose first love was Rosemont. Mr. Heffernan gave in. Heffernan Hall was dedicated on September 30, 1964.