

# Renovators have big plans for Lawrence

**Nissa Billmyer**

ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

The rattle of falling debris, broken concrete and gravel catch the attention of students as they walk by Lawrence Hall. A construction worker is emptying a load of removed bathroom floor on the top floor of Lawrence, down a big yellow tube and into one of several dumpsters below.

For the past five weeks, Gopher State Contractors have been incessantly tearing apart Lawrence Hall as this

summer marks the beginning of the 12-month renovation project to make the building back into a useable dorm and staff offices.

"It's going to be gorgeous when it's done," said Ken Boelens, heating foreman.

In November of 2001, SCSU, the state of Minnesota and MnSCU agreed to make headway on the renovation of the nearly 100-year-old building. MnSCU provided \$2.5 million and the state of Minnesota has contributed at least \$3.5 million. So

far, the total bill for the complete makeover is estimated to be at least \$7 million.

Lawrence Hall was built in 1905 as a women's dormitory after the original building, constructed in 1885, burned to the ground. Later, in the 1940s it housed cadets of men's U.S. Naval Academy as they trained and attended classes in St. Cloud. These cadets later served in WWII and there is a plaque commemorating them in Lawrence Hall's entryway.

The building was named for Isabel

Lawrence who was a university professor from 1879-1921 and acting president for the college in 1915. At that time, the university was called the State Normal School at St. Cloud.

Lawrence Hall was a residence hall from 1905-1969, after which it was used for office space and classes until the late 1990s. The building was not kept up to increasingly higher building code standards and was eventually closed for good—until now.

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# Construction

It is evident walking through the dilapidated building that neglect has led to decay. The back porch, which has to be completely removed, has been destroyed by excessive water damage and stress from Minnesota's winters. Wood in many areas, exposed to the weather, has started to rot away.

Fixing this wear and tear, in addition to updating the building from pre-WWII fittings to meet modern day standards, has become the year-long task assigned to seven different companies. Gopher State Contractors, Inc. is the general contractor, the first on the site to begin the removal of unnecessary items.

Taking part of this monumental task: Luken Architecture, P.A., architect; Rehder and Associates, Inc., civil engineer; Sanders, Wacker, Bergley, Inc., landscaping; Mattson/Macdonald, Inc., structural; Erickson Ellsion & Associates, Inc., mechanical and electrical and Lerch Bates & Accociates, Inc., elevator.

So far, 16.5 tons of radiators, bathtubs and metal have been removed from the building. Many more tons of concrete, brick and wood have yet to be removed; each room has to be stripped down to bare walls.

Every window, trim and fitting has to be removed and replaced. All the original wood trim, thought to be oak, is to be removed from around the doors and stairs, and will be cleaned, renovated and replaced in the finishing stages of work. This trim repair is also believed to be the longest, most difficult and tedious part of the renovation.

"Taking all this wood trim down and then putting it up again is going to take the most of our time," said Todd Rajdl, plumbing foreman. "It's beautiful wood trim."

Unfortunately, a lot of the original wood and some of the interior walls have caused a few unexpected

minor delays.

"Some of the interior walls, the bottoms are rotted," said Rajdl, "so there are a few extra walls that need to come out."

These interior walls are made of a red brick that appears to fall apart easily; they pose a new question for the contracting team. After structures like old closets were removed, gaping holes were left in some walls. To fix these problems, some of the walls need to be removed. The blueprints also instruct that additional walls must be removed. However, due to the instability of some walls, the removable amount is questionable, as it would jeopardize the remaining structure.

Other additions include an elevator, new electrical wiring, new plumbing and a new heating and cooling system.

Lawrence's attic has to be redone to house students; currently it is just an empty, unfinished space. The roof needs to be replaced and the bathrooms have proved to be a challenge. The original bathrooms were raised 10 inches in order to accommodate indoor plumbing added after the building was built. This has to be removed for new plumbing to be installed.

Lawrence Hall still contains some pieces of history. In the attic, two large metal machines sit in the dark, their use in question. They date from 1950 and appear to be some type of steam powered pressing apparatus. The wood of the attic is also shows its age. It is solid, old, thick and ruffly cut—a sign of early logging of the turn of the century.

"(Wood) isn't cut like this anymore," said Boelens.

Despite many signs of wear, Lawrence's foundations show the building's overall stability; its original granite footings and the bricks have not moved, chipped or fallen.

The contractors see the deterioration of the building as unfortunate. The lack of preventative maintenance is a large cause of the work that the workers have ahead of them. Many of those working agreed that it was unfortunate that the back porch and other simple upkeep was neglected for so long.