

CONYNGHAM HALL was the second building presented to the College. This was on August 19, 1937, when Wilkes was still affiliated with Bucknell University. The donor was the late Bertha Robinson Conyngham, widow of John N. Conyngham. Originally built by the late Charles Parrish, prominently identified with the Anthracite mining industry, Conyngham Hall originally housed the classes of Engineering and Chemistry. The Commerce and Finance department used the building up until the time it was destroyed by fire, December 28, 1968.























A Living Landmark

The Story Of Conyngham Hall

by William V. Lewis '80

It was once observed that history tends to repeat itself. This observation takes on additional significance when the story of Conyngham Hall, the new Wilkes College Student Center, is considered. Remembered by past generations as the stately home of the distinguished William Conyngham family, the building has taken on a new meaning to the present College community. As the hub of campus social life and activity, the mansion has once again come alive, its huge, restored rooms serving as the "home" of today's students.

Yet, there was a time when this was the home of one of Wilkes-Barre's leading families. Within its walls grew a generation of community leaders, raised in a life style never again to be experienced. Standing on the front porch, one can visualize the past with the calm Susquehanna flowing within its dike-less banks and Model-T's and horses passing on the tree-shrouded South River Street. The main hall, with its massive Corinthian columns and the bronze lamp atop the stair post, dominated the entrance to the house. To the left was the family library; a gas fire burned in the

carved and inscribed fireplace. The bookshelf-lined room really came alive at Christmas time, serving as the center for holiday activity. Changing with the times, the room later became the place for viewing television.

Behind the library was the dining room, elegantly set for one of the many parties which the family hosted. Along its walls were decorative plates, set on the chair rail to ornament the room. In the rear was the pantry and then the breakfast room, which, besides serving its obvious function, was where the children ate until they reached a proper age to join the adults in the dining room.

Near the breakfast room was the kitchen, a room dominated by a massive gas and coal stove. To the rear of the house was the open porch, which was used to dry the family's laundry when the only type of dryer available was a breeze. The back area housed the china room where the dishes were cleaned and stored. The room was also filled with the household's collection of dinnerware. In addition, the back staircase, used mostly by the servants and children, and the family elevator were located near the rear of the house. Opposite the library, in the front, was the living room area. Originally two rooms, the partitions were removed, leaving one enormous area. A huge stone fireplace dominated one wall, and close by was the door to the sun porch. No longer existing, the porch was characterized by swan wallpaper, ceramic tile, and a small fountain in one corner.

The main staircase to the second floor faced the master bedroom. The size of the room was staggering, made to look even larger by the many windows. Beneath the windows was the roof of the front porch. This was a favorite spot during parades, giving the family an excellent view of the marchers going past. To the left was Mr. Conyngham's dressing room, a place to dress for the day and to nap after work. On the other side of the master bedroom was Mrs. Conyngham's study. Here, she took care of the many details of the running of the household, which, with a staff of up to 12 servants, was no easy task. Her activities were further evidenced by a closet off the room which she used to store the household records and her jewelry safe. Lining the hallway toward the rear of the house was a

guest room, frequently occupied by one of their many visiting friends. Next was the linen room, lined with overflowing shelves and then the doors concealing the family vault. Adjacent to this was the sewing room, where, several times a week, a seamstress would come to care for the mending needs of the household.

Construction on the mansion was begun in 1897 and Mr. Conyngham moved into the dwelling with his first wife sometime later. Tragedy was to strike the home with her death but a few short years later. For many years, the building was vacant, until 1918 when Mr. Conyngham married Jessie Guthrie. The new Mrs. Conyngham decided that the home needed enlarging to accommodate the growing family, so an addition was built on the back. The new section consisted of a porch area and china room on the first floor, children's bedrooms on the second floor, and a playroom and servants' room on the third floor.

Several additional guest rooms were located in the front of the house on the third floor. To the right and extending down the hallway were the servants' quarters. One interesting tradition of the household was that the chief servant, in terms of seniority, always occupied the front room of the servant's area providing the best view of the river. In the back of the home, the children's playroom was located. Their model train zooming around on its track can be imagined as well as their moans as the governess dragged them to the room's wash basin after a hard day of play.

The children thoroughly enjoyed living in the home as they played in the storage area of the attic, attended to their dogs on the side of the house, or sneaked over the brick wall that separated their yard from that of their uncle's, John Conyngham, to play with the children of his chauffeur.

The carriage house to the mansion's rear also holds its own stories. The large building housed the family's horses and the children's ponies, later the family automobiles. Remnants of an age long gone, such as the sophisticated hay loft or the pulley elevator that conveyed carriages to the building's second floor for storage, still exist. The second floor also housed the living quarters of the family's chauffeur.

The grounds generated a sense of solitude. Many threats came to this environment, but fortunately, most were averted. When the house was being built, cost overruns were mounting and, in hope of avoiding added costs, Mr. Conyngham expressed a desire to build a wooden front porch rather than one of brick and stone. Fortunately, the architect, Charles Gifford, was able to dissuade him from his intentions by showing the inconsistency of such a porch attached to so magnificent a dwelling.

Flood waters have taken a toll on the building. Built by design to be above water level of the great Flood of 1865, confidence in its ability to withstand flood damage was solid. This confidence was shaken in 1936 when the basement filled with water and was shattered when the home received four and a half feet of water on the first floor in 1972. Several months after the 1972 flood, fire struck the building, damaging several walls in the library and dining room.

The impact of commercial interests was also felt in the neighborhood. The lot next door to the house, formerly the site of the Wright residence, was being considered as a prime location for a gas station. Fortunately, Mr. Conyngham and Mr. Harry Hershowitz, the former owner of the present Annette Evans Alumni Faculty House, intervened and mutually purchased the land, thus preserving the beauty and character of the neighborhood.

And so, a home that was once very much alive, as the dwelling of a socially active family, has once again come to life. This time, the home has been restored to serve another family, the Wilkes College Family. The halls and great rooms of this mansion are once again filled with the hustle and bustle of gatherings, dining, and also, at times, a quiet sense of relaxation. To many, it has become and will be a kind of "campus home." History really does, indeed, repeat itself.

William Lewis, a senior political science major and president of the Commuter Council, prepared the article with the cooperation of William Conyngham, a longtime member of Wilkes College Board of Trustees. The Conyngham Student Center was formally dedicated on November 10 although the facility has been in use since the start of the first semester.













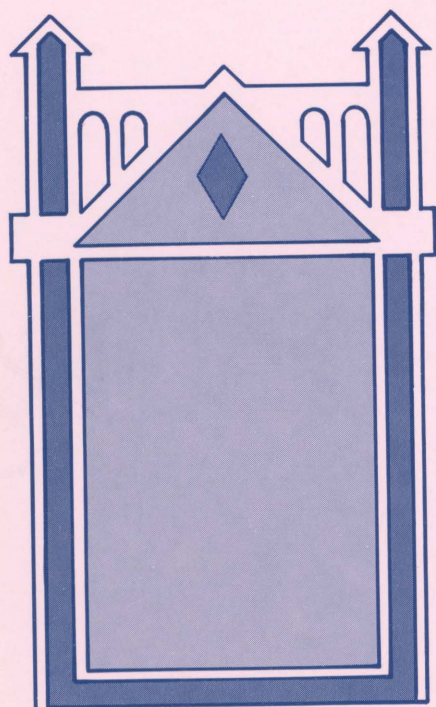








WILKES COLLEGE



dedication of the
CONYNGHAM
STUDENT
CENTER

9:45 a.m., Saturday, November 10, 1979



CONYNGHAM HOUSE

The Conyngham House was designed in 1897 by Charles A. Gifford (1861 - 1937), a friend of William Hillard Conyngham, the owner. The architecture is Chateausque, a style that combines French Gothic and Renaissance. This style was popular in the United States during the latter part of the 19th Century, and the house is one of few of this type architecture in the Wilkes-Barre area.

At one time, the house was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Conyngham and their three sons, William L., George Guthrie, and John N. III. The last occupant of the house was Mrs. Jessie Guthrie Conyngham, the wife of Mr. William H. Conyngham, who passed away in December, 1974, leaving the house to Wilkes College.

Resident

PRELUDE

Sonata
from Sonate et Canzoni, Libro sesto —
Giovanni Battista Buonamente
*Wilkes College Brass Ensemble directed by
Professor Jerome Campbell*

REMARKS

President Robert S. Capin

RESPONSES:

David L. Blumfield
President, Student Government
For the Students
William L. Conyngham
Trustee
For the Conyngham Family
Benjamin Badman
Chairman, Board of Trustees
For the Trustees

POSTLUDE

Canzon Noni Toni — Giovanni Gabrieli
Wilkes College Brass Ensemble

— following the ceremony —

TOUR OF CONYNGHAM STUDENT CENTER

BUFFET LUNCHEON

Farley Lounge, Stark Learning Center

Barnes
Caryugh
Capin
Blum

Dan Sanderson

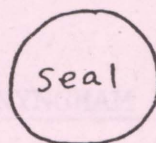
Robert S.
Dave

Capin
Blumfield
William Caryugham
Guthrie Caryugham
Bert Barnes

ARCHITECTURAL
LANDMARK

Q-152
NAVY on ~~white~~
ragged edge
good stick
folded
copy have
history (attached)
on inside

WILKES COLLEGE



DEDICATION

OF THE

CONYNGHAM STUDENT CENTER

9:45 a.m., Saturday, November 10, 1979

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Sonata
from Sonate et Canzoni, Libro sesto
-- Giovanni Battista Buonamente

Wilkes College Brass Ensemble
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- - following the ceremony - -

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Benjamin Bedman
Chairman, Board of Trustees

POSTLUDE

Carzan Nomi Band
- Giovanni Gabrieli

For the Conyngham Family

For the Trustees

Wilkes College Board of Trustees

- - following the ceremony - -

TOUR OF CONYNGHAM STUDENT CENTER

BUFFET LUNCHEON

Farley Lounge, Stark Learning Center

WILKES COLLEGE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

The fulfillment of a long standing dream will take place on the Wilkes College campus on Saturday (November 10) when the reconstructed Conyngham building, located on the second block of South River St., is formally dedicated as the Conyngham Student Center.

The total cost of reconstructing the three-story, red-bricked Wilkes-Barre City landmark was \$400,000. According to Wilkes College President Robert S. Capin, "The Student Center is essential to the education of our students and fills an important need."

"Other priorities in the past have forced us to take only temporary measures in providing a facility for social and co-curricular activities. The new Conyngham Center will serve as a permanent solution to this problem and be a viable student resource for many years to come," he continued.

The dedication ceremony will begin at 9:45 a.m. with a program at the Schaeffer Lecture Hall of the Stark Learning Center. President Capin will offer dedication remarks.

Others making responses at the ceremony include David L. Blumfield, president of the Wilkes College Student Government, on behalf of the students; William L. Conyngham, a Wilkes College trustee, on behalf of the Conyngham Family; and Benjamin Badman, chairman of the Wilkes College Board of Trustees, on behalf of the trustees.

more

Conyngham Center- ad 1

The Wilkes College Brass Ensemble, under the direction of Professor Jerome Campbell, will offer the prelude, "Sonata." from Sonate et Canzoni, Libro sesto, by Giovanni Battista Buonamente, and the postlude, "Canzon Noni Toni," by Giovanni Gabrieli.

After the dedication ceremony a tour will be taken of the Conyngham Student Center followed by a buffet for guests and participants in the Farley Lounge of the Stark Learning Center.

The Conyngham Student Center provides 19,340 square feet of space for meeting and recreational rooms, offices, and a food service area to accomodate the needs of commuter and residence students who choose to get together between or after classes for conversation, group study, meetings of student organizations, and informal interaction with faculty members.

Among the features of the Student Center is a rathskellar on the basement level, which is utilized for food service and social gatherings. Additional food service facilities are included on the first floor. The second floor of the Student Center contains lounges, game rooms, and reading rooms.

"Most of the reconstruction has been with the interior while nearly all of the exterior of the building remains intact," notes President Capin. "Thus, the College has been able to preserve an important part of the architectural history of the community."

The Conyngham house was designed in 1897 by Charles A. Gifford, (1861-1937), a friend of William Hillard Conyngham, the owner. The architecture is Chateausque, a style that combines French Gothic and Renaissance. This style was popular in the

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Conyngham Center- ad 2

United States during the latter part of the 19th century, and the house is one of the few of this architecture in the Wilkes-Barre Area.

At one time, the house was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Conyngham and their three sons, William L., George Guthrie, and John N. III. The last occupant of the house was Mrs. Jessie Guthrie Conyngham, the wife of William H. Conyngham, who passed away in December, 1974, leaving the house to Wilkes College.

The Conyngham Student Center is one of the immediate benefits of the College's current three-year "Alpha" Capital Campaign. Reconstruction of the facility was also aided in part by grants from the Conyngham Family, Leslie Fay Foundation Inc., and the J.N. Pew Jr. Charitable Trust.

Next was the linen room, lined with overflowing shelves and then the doors concealing the family vault. Adjacent to this was the sewing room, where, several times a week, a seamstress would come to care for the mending needs of the household.

Construction on the mansion was begun in 1897 and Mr. Conyngham moved into the dwelling with his first wife sometime later. Tragedy was to strike the home with her death but a few short years later. For many years, the building was vacant, until 1918 when Mr. Conyngham married Jessie Guthrie. The new Mrs. Conyngham decided that the home needed enlarging to accomodate the growing family, so an addition was built on the back. The new section consisted of a porch area and china room on the first floor, children's bedrooms on the second floor and a playroom and servant's room on the third floor.

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The grounds generated a sense of solitude. ~~For~~ Many threats came to this environment, but fortunately, most were averted. When the house was being built, cost overruns were mounting and, in hope of avoiding added costs, Mr. Conyngham expressed a desire to build a wooden front porch rather than one of brick and stone. Fortunately, the architect, Charles Gifford, was able to dissuade him from his intentions by showing the inconsistency of such a porch attached to so magnificent a dwelling.

Flood waters have taken a toll on the building. Built by design to be above water level of the great Flood of 1865, confidence in its ability to withstand flood damage was solid. This confidence was shaken in 1936 when the basement filled with water and was shattered when the home received four and a half feet of water on the first floor in 1972. Several months after the 1972 flood, fire struck the building, damaging several walls in the library and dining room.

ad-1
Wilkes College students will have
a new Student Union Building for the Fall ~~1979~~ Semester, 1979.

Common
President Robert S. Capin announced today
that the Wilkes College Board of Trustees has approved the
reconstruction of the Conyngham building, located on the
second block of South ~~Franklin~~ ^{River St. between} ~~into a student facility.~~ ^{UNION} ~~South of Northampton St.~~

cost of ~~of the~~ ^{gracious} ~~city landmark~~
total reconstruction will ~~cost~~ \$350,000. "Other priorities

in the past have forced us to take only temporary measures in
providing a suitable centralized gathering place for students,"
activities which are a vital part of a student's college experience,
he said.

"We cannot delay this much-needed project
any longer. A satisfactory and permanent student union facility
is essential to the education of our students." President Capin
added.

at this time to provide an effective facility for present and future students at Wilkes College.
When completed, the new student union
facility will provide ~~the~~ ^{WILKES} students with 19,340 square feet of
space for adequate meeting and recreational ^{rooms} areas, offices, and
a food service ^{area} ~~are~~ to accommodate the needs of commuter and residence
students, who may wish to ^{choose} ~~get~~ together between classes for
conversation, group study, ^{meetings of student organizations,} and informal interaction with faculty members.

In keeping with its responsibilities to the college, community organizations will be invited to use the historic facility for meetings and activities.
The red-bricked, three-story mansion
was given to Wilkes College by the Conyngham family. President
Capin reports that \$150,000 in gifts from the current "Alpha" Capital Gifts
Campaign have been designated towards reconstruction of the
~~three-story edifice.~~
Conyngham building.

It was the former home of the late Mr. + Mrs. _____ Conyngham. One of their sons, William, is a member of longstanding on the Wilkes College Board of trustees.

Among the features of the Student Union Building will be a ratskellar in the basement level, which will be utilized ^{for} ~~by~~ food service and social gatherings. Additional food service facilities will be included on the first floor.

"We anticipate transferring ~~most of the~~ equipment from ^{present food service} ~~"The Commons"~~, one of our ^{The Commons} ~~Commons~~ facilities," President Capin said. ^{been utilized by} ~~The Commons~~, located on West South Street, ^{SERVED} ~~has serving as~~ the College's ^{use} ~~central dining facility~~ for several ~~decades~~. ^{MULTI-PURPOSED STUDENT FACILITY.} ~~decades~~ but is limited ^{as a} ~~as a~~

The second floor of the ^{new} ~~Student Union~~ facility will contain lounges and reading rooms while the third floor will provide office space for student leaders and College administrators.

"While enriching our overall educational program, we feel that the new student union building will enable the College to preserve part of the architectural history of the community. Most of the reconstruction will be ^{on the} ~~interior~~ with ^{nearly all of} ~~most of~~ the exterior ^{of the building} ~~remaining intact~~," added the Wilkes College president.

The new building will provide 100,000 square feet of space for academic meeting and recreational needs, offices, and a food service area to accommodate the needs of computer and residence students, who may wish to get together between classes for conversation, group study, and social activities. The three-story building was given to Wilkes College by the Capin family. President Capin reports that \$100,000 is going from the current "Alpha" Capital Campaign have been designated towards reconstruction of the three-story space.

It was the former home of the Capin family. One of the sons, William, is a member of the Wilkes College Board of Trustees.

WILKES COLLEGE

WILKES-BARRE
PENNSYLVANIA 18703

Wilkes College students will have a new Student Union Building for the Fall Semester, 1979.

President Robert S. Capin announced today that the Wilkes College Board of Trustees has approved the reconstruction of the Conyngham building, located on the second block of South River Street between South and Northampton Streets.

According to President Capin, the total cost of reconstructing the gracious city landmark will be \$350,000. "Other priorities in the past have forced us to take only temporary measures in providing a facility for social and co-curricular activities which are a vital part of a student's college experience," he said.

"A satisfactory and permanent student union is essential to the education of our students. We are pleased to move forward at this time to provide an effective facility for present and future students at Wilkes College," President Capin added.

When completed, the new student union will provide 19,340 square feet of space for adequate meeting and recreational rooms, offices, and a food service area to accommodate the needs of commuter and residence students, who choose to get together between classes for conversation, group study, meetings of student organizations, and informal interaction with faculty members. Community organizations will be invited to use the historic facility for meetings and activities.

The red-bricked, three-story mansion was given to Wilkes College by the Conyngham family. It was the former home of the late Mr. & Mrs. William H. Conyngham. One of their sons, William^{L. Conyngham,} is a member of longstanding on the Wilkes College Board of Trustees. *President Capin reports that \$150,000 in gifts from the current "Alpha" Capital Rites Campaign have been designated toward reconstruction of the three-story edifice.*

Among the features of the Student Union Building will be a rathskellar in the basement level, which will be utilized for food service and social gatherings. Additional food service facilities will be included on the first floor.

"We anticipate transferring equipment from 'The Commons,' one of our present food service facilities," President Capin said. Located on West South Street, The Commons has been utilized by the College for several decades but is limited in use as a multi-purpose student facility.

The second floor of the new Student Union will contain lounges and reading rooms while the third floor will provide office space for student leaders and College administrators.

"While enriching our overall educational program, we feel that the new student union building will enable the College to preserve part of the architectural history of the community. Most of the reconstruction will be on the interior with nearly all of the exterior of the building remaining intact," added the Wilkes College president.

