Discovering Our Past:
The History of Old and New Strong Hall(s)

On the east end of Cumberland Avenue in the 1800's, nestled amidst sprawling elm trees and a meticulously kept flower garden, stood the stately home of Dr. Joseph Strong. Dr. Strong, a surgeon from Philadelphia, moved to Tennessee during the mid-1800's to practice medicine. He married Miss Sophronia Mars from Shelbyville, TN where the two began their family on the outskirts of the UT campus.

Mrs. Sophronia Mars Strong epitomized the idealized perception of the 19th century woman. A model of grace, charm, and sophistication, she raised her 12 children to follow strict codes of etiquette. Unfortunately, her life was short-lived; she died at the age of fifty on November 20, 1867.

Mrs. Strong's influence remained with her son, Benjamin, throughout his life. He ultimately became a wealthy financier in Knoxville and upon his death in 1914, he bequeathed $208,000 to the university. Of that sum, $142,926 was approved for the construction of Sophronia Strong Hall. The will stated that the money was to house women only and that a wildflower garden be kept in recognition of his mother's life long passion for gardening.

The original Sophronia Strong Hall was built in 1925 and housed fifty women. One of the unique features of the hall was the mirror, which University history fascination for the residents. The telephone booth, which was a Due to the increase of sororities demanding an organized wasn't built in 1939 just to the east of Strong Hall included five "dorms" each named after the first five co-eds admitted to the university; Barbara Blount, Polly McClung, Jennie Armstrong, Mattie Kain, and Kittie Kain. Hall. New Strong Hall also included the University Cafeteria and a Pan-Hellenic unit. The Pan-Hellenic Unit, offered a suite of rooms for meeting and entertaining purposes. Sororities utilized New Strong Hall until the construction of the current Pan-Hellenic building in 1963. Ultimately, Sophronia Strong Hall or "West Strong Hall" as it became known after the completion of New Strong Hall, was demolished between 1963 & 1964 to make way for Clement Hall.

It is interesting to note that in the early 1940's, the University's Department of Anthropology moved into West Strong Hall. The Anthropology Department was established to investigate American Indian mounds which would be permanently flooded by the TVA. At this time, the hall served as the campus museum and held the artifacts of the investigation until the construction of the Frank H. McClung Museum.

"New" Strong Hall was scheduled to be closed in the Spring of 2004 after the consulting firm of a university sponsored 10-year plan, found it financially irresponsible to keep the hall open. This decision was met with great discontent from the community and residents, which were upset to see the beautiful building with so much history close it's doors. However, the decision was quickly postponed when student enrollment numbers surged after the State of Tennessee implemented the Hope Lottery Scholarship in 2004. Today, Strong Hall stands proudly as the oldest operating residence hall on campus.

Information compiled by Ashleigh Meyer, June 2005
Works Cited: Torch 1940-1941, Torch 1941-1942, Tennessee Alumnus Fall 1975, The Volunteer Tour Guide 1979, and "Discovering Our Past: The Legend of Sophie's Hall" by Christopher Hogin
This is in the Hall Director's office. The staircase is now covered. The phone booth is now a storage closet.
The Sesqui-Centennial
CELEBRATION

The system was adopted in 1888 when the library contained more than 200,000 volumes in the Knoxville branch.

The College of Law was started in 1890 with the help of the Supreme Court Judge, Thomas J. Freeman, of Tennessee. About 15 years later a three-year course was offered, and since this time the College of Law has received nationwide recognition as one of the strongest in the South. The University is comprised of the following Colleges: the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Education, the Pre-Medical School, the Pre-Dental School, the College of Engineering, the College of Agriculture, the School of Home Economics, the College of Law, the College of Medicine, the College of Dentistry, the School of Pharmacy, the School of Biological Sciences, the School of Nursing, the Junior College of Agriculture, Home Economics and Industrial Arts. The Colleges of Medicine and Dentistry and the Schools of Biological Sciences, Pharmacy and Nursing are at Memphis. The U. T. Junior College is at Martin. The other Colleges are at Knoxville.

The erection of Ayres Hall and improvements on the medical buildings at Memphis were two of the greatest steps taken in the history of the University. Prior to these improvements, the Legislature of the State of Tennessee appropriated a million dollar bond especially for improvements. Public and private gifts have enlarged the facilities and the services of the University. The benefits of the institution have been disseminated through its resident teaching, its research, and its extension teaching. In addition to the thousands of students who attend the University of Tennessee in normal years, additional tens of thousands of citizens of the state are reached through extension instruction, short courses, and institutes.

Resident instruction in normal years embraces more than three thousand students in the Knoxville branch alone. Enrollments have gone over this number, especially in the years immediately preceding the current war.

Already the officials of the administration are concentrating upon curricula for returning servicemen. This year there were 128 returned servicemen in school and a program has been put in effect for their benefit. Approximately 5,000 Tennessee students are expected to return after the war to complete their education and many are expected from other schools. Due to the G. I. Bill of Rights, many boys will be able to go to college who would not ordinarily have been able to do so. U. T. will receive many of these boys in addition to the yearly number of students. The Administration is making plans for the expansion of the University to take care of this influx of students.

Undoubtedly, the University of Tennessee will continue its progress of the past 150 years in the coming years.
Old Strong Hall
Constructed in 1925
Stood where Clement stands today
The Strong Hall we live in was built in 1939