

# Sherman Garden Cooperative Apartments

*A monthly publication for residents of Sherman Garden Apartments, 1856-66 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, IL*

AUGUST 2014 NEWSLETTER

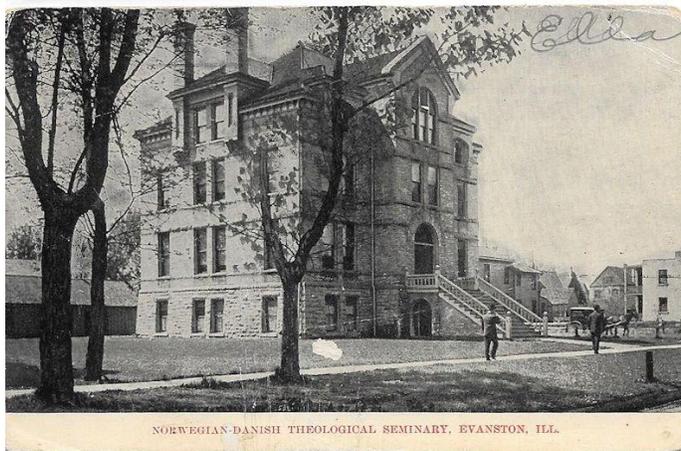
## OUR NEIGHBOR TO THE SOUTH

By Joan Cotter



*Photo by Diane Petersmarck*

Whether you think of it as the “Copy Cat Building” or “1830 Sherman” or just an anonymous old structure, you’ve no doubt walked mindlessly past it numerous times. Surprised by our own lack of curiosity, the newsletter staff decided to peek in the front door one day and resolved to do some research on our neighbor to the south. Here is what we’ve learned.

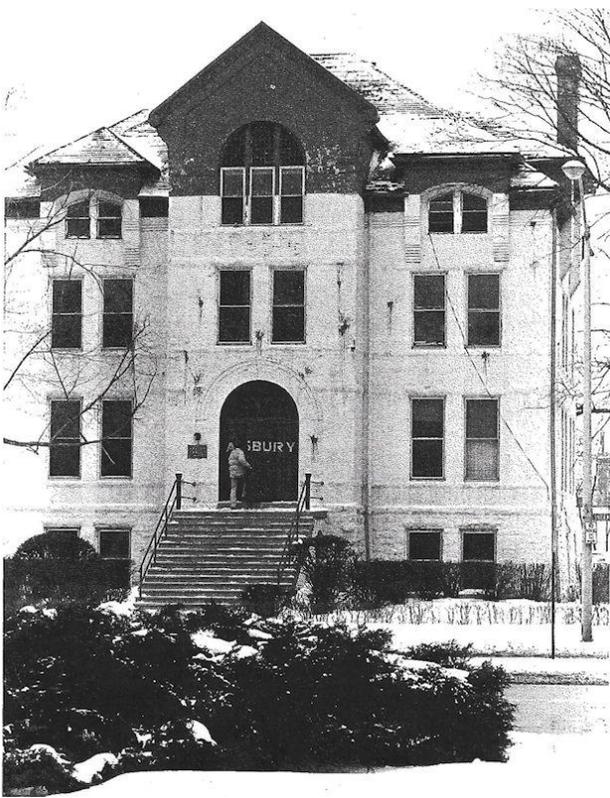


*Postcard mailed from Evanston in 1910 and recently purchased on eBay. Don't miss the horse in the background!*

Northwestern. Nineteen students enrolled in the seminary when it opened. They took Scandinavian language classes and homiletics as well as courses at Garrett Biblical Institute. A school bulletin from 1909 describes Evanston as the ideal location: “Evanston is the site of Northwestern University, of Garrett Biblical Institute, and of other seats of learning. The population is of the highest character, and the religious influence from the churches is powerfully felt. No intoxicating liquor may be sold in the city.”

By the mid-1930s theological schools no longer needed to prepare students for ministry to Scandinavian immigrants. So the Norwegian-Danish Seminary merged with the Swedish Wesley Academy and Theological School to form the Evanston Collegiate Institute at 2408 Orrington. The 1830 building, now called Asbury Hall, served for classrooms and dormitory. (In 1950 ECI became Kendall College.)

Northwestern bought the building in 1949, renovated it and used it as an “International House.” Descriptions of the interior lauded its ultra-modern design with maple furnishings, Formica card tables, red leather easy chairs and Mexican draperies. As an “international house,” Asbury Hall also became the first men’s integrated housing attempt at Northwestern. (Orrington House had been opened with a similar purpose for women in 1947.) Newspaper accounts at the time variously described Asbury Hall as an experimental dormitory for foreign and Negro undergraduates, or for black, Asian and foreign undergrads, or as open to all applicants. An article in the *Daily Northwestern* of September 28, 1949, spoofs this policy of open residency. “Asbury Hall will house 40 students after next Jan. 1. All male applications for quarters will receive equal consideration. There will be no distinction between Europeans or Asiatics, Negroes or Caucasians, Catholics or Jews, giants or dwarfs, blonds or brunets, geniuses or morons, or any of those other clever categories into which we innocents occasionally fall.”

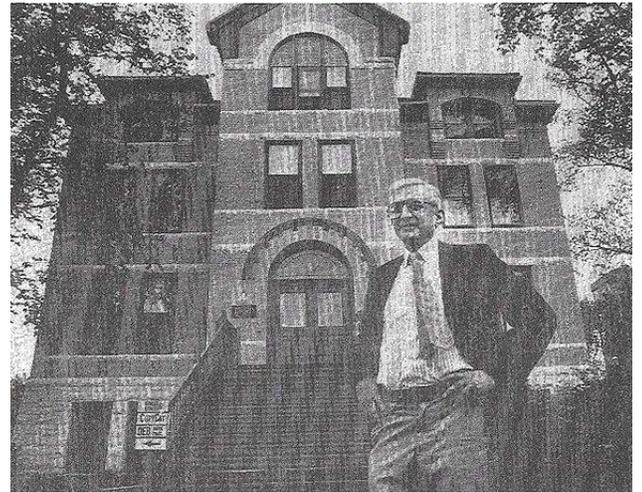


Some administrators were probably surprised to learn that some white students welcomed the chance to live with students of color or from abroad. They even started letter-writing campaigns to recruit more African-American and Jewish American students to the campus. Residents initiated a popular tradition called the "Firesides," Sunday evening presentations by professors who spoke on favorite or requested topics and answered questions. An alum recalled, "By the end of the year we were packed – no seats available, people on the floor and out the door."

Residents of Asbury Hall were known as Razzberries and they came to have a reputation on campus. In one incident in 1973 integration included a chicken purchased for a fraternity stunt. The bird, at first resident on the third floor, eventually enjoyed its own box in the lobby and was introduced to the university president as Asbury Hall's homecoming queen candidate. Shortly thereafter Northwestern's security detail came to collect the chicken and turned it over to the Evanston animal warden.

By 1980 Northwestern no longer needed Asbury Hall as a dormitory and the building stood vacant. In 1984 Frank Wheby, a civil engineer who passed the building every day, decided to buy it and restore it. "It was a disaster, dark and dreary. The plumbing didn't work and there were huge leaks in the roof. The electrical

wiring was worthless. The heating plant was vintage 1920s. It was a dismal place," recalled Wheby in an interview in the *Evanston Review*. After almost a year of work he had restored it to 95% of its original condition. He kept the dorm rooms partitioned as they were, replaced the roof with an exact duplicate of the original wood shingles, and worked to match the woodwork on the interior staircase. Looking for authenticity in the exterior, he hired a color consultant who recommended the warm brown tones as more consonant with pre-1900 exterior colors. Once finished, Wheby opened Copy Cat photocopying services for his own engineering drawing needs and for course packs for professors.



Wheby sold the building in 1996 to Chuck Happ, who sold it four years later to the current owner Steven Rogin. Copy Cat remained

as the first floor retail tenant until 2012. Rogin proudly points to the fact that some of the early tenants from Wheby's days are still tenants in the 20 offices on the upper three stories of the building. They include therapists, a screen writer, marketing professional and other sole practitioners. When I asked Rogin how he refers to the building, he said, sometimes the "Copy Cat Building," sometimes "1830 Sherman." So, choose your name, but hopefully our southern neighbor is no longer an anonymous structure for you!

*We gratefully recognize the assistance of Steven Rogin, Northwestern University Archives, Garrett Theological School Library, and the Evanston Public Library in the research for this article.*

Photograph by Diane Petersmarck