

William E. Bruner Hall of Science and Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall

In 1963, the Nebraska Legislature voted an allocation of \$500,000 for the first unit of a new science building. Plans for this building had called for a facility with an estimated cost of over \$1.5 million. What could be done with \$500,000? Since the term "first unit" was not understood by the Board of Trustees, the members then attempted to find out what the legislature had meant by "the first unit of a science building." Did the first unit refer to a complete entity, or could this term be construed to mean the shell of a larger building?

After a plan had been devised for a shell large enough to house both the science and mathematics departments of the college, the Board sought the approval of each legislative committee applicable to the situation, including the Legislative Budget Committee, the Legislative Executive Council, the State Attorney General, and the Governor, to build the shell. Attorney General Clarence A. H. Meyer gave his decision that the Board could be defended by building either a first unit that was self-contained or the shell of an overall building.

Therefore, upon the approval on January 23, 1964, of Governor Frank B. Morrison, the construction of a shell or basic overall structure as the first unit of a science building was authorized. On October 15, 1964, bids were taken for the shell which was estimated to cost approximately \$500,000 from state funds. Helleberg and Helleberg, Architects and Engineers, of Kearney, were the designers.

The cornerstone was laid at ceremonies on September 30, 1965. The main oration was delivered by Dr. William A. Brandenburg, President of Wayne State College. Construction of the shell was completed in 1966.

Although the shell of the new building had been built, no funds were available to finish and equip the inside of the building. Late in 1964, the Higher Education Facilities Act was passed by the federal government, stipulating matching money for the construction on college and university campuses of library and science facilities. If the state would pay two-thirds of the money for the building, the federal government would appropriate the remaining one-third of the cost of the building.

A deadline for application for the funds was March 31, 1965. In January of 1965, the new session of the Nebraska Legislature convened. To meet the deadline of March 31, 1965, President Milton J. Hassel asked the Legislature for the balance of funds to finish the three-story building. The bill was presented to the floor of the Legislature on March 1, 1965. By noon of March 31, the bill was passed 40 to 0. L.B. 868 appropriated \$1,250,000 to be taken from the 1965-1967 state building fund to be matched by \$699,893 in federal funds for the completion of the science building, including both the interior and necessary equipment. In August, 1965, the college was notified that the federal grant had been approved. The entire building, costing \$2,449,893, was finished on September 1, 1966.

Some members of the Legislature were unhappy with the decision to construct the "shell" as the first unit. Their resentment was even greater when the request for the second unit was coupled with the necessity of rapid approval, to take advantage of federal funds to assist with the costs of construction. For some years Kearney's requests were given greater scrutiny to prevent them from playing another "shell" game.

Formal dedication of the William E. Bruner Hall of Science and the Mary Morse Lecture Hall took place on April 26, 1967, after the facilities had been in use nearly a year by the departments of mathematics, biological and physical sciences. The building housed the instructional programs in the fields of Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Mathematics. It also housed Nebraska's only Foucault pendulum as well as a planetarium and rooftop observatory.

The building was named for **Dr. William E. Bruner**, who gave the greater part of his professional life to the Kearney State College campus as Chairman of the Biology Department. His tenure on this campus encompassed 33 years, from 1932 to 1965.

A native of Red Cloud, Nebraska, Dr. Bruner started his teaching career in a rural school in Lincoln County in September, 1914. He taught in Lincoln County for two years, and in Webster County one year before enrolling at the University of Nebraska. He received his B.S. degree in 1921, his M.A. degree in 1922, and his Ph.D. degree in 1929, all from the University of Nebraska. Following the earning of his masters degree, he joined the botany staff at the University of Oklahoma for four years. In 1926 he returned to Nebraska and taught at the University

while working toward his doctorate. From 1929 to 1932 he was on the biology faculty at Baker University at Baldwin, Kansas.

In 1932 he joined the Kearney State faculty as head of the Biology Department, a position he held until 1962. He remained as a teacher in the department until his retirement.

He married Bertha Dedrick in 1921. They were parents of two daughters before Mrs. Bruner died in 1935. He married Ruth A. Ahlstrom in Portland, Oregon, in August, 1937.

His memberships included Sigma Xi, Nebraska State Education Association, National Education Association, National Association of Biology Teachers, American Society of Plant Taxonomists, Ecological Society of America, Botanical Society of America, the Nebraska Academy of Sciences, and Beta Beta Beta.

The lecture hall, a part of the science building, was named the "Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall" in honor of **Dr. Mary E. Morse**. A faculty member for nearly twenty years, Dr. Morse, a professor of Chemistry, first joined the Kearney State staff in September, 1937. She taught at Kearney until her untimely death on February 28, 1958, except for two years she spent teaching at Mississippi College for Women during World War II.

Her entire life was built around the teaching profession. She proudly proclaimed that teaching was one of the great professions. To support her statement she joined and served in many capacities as officers in professional organizations. She was a past president of the Kearney chapter of the American Association of University Women, a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Chemical Society. She was treasurer of the College Education Association, a patroness of Zeta Chi Alpha local sorority, and advisor of Lambda Delta Lambda, national honorary physical science fraternity.

Born in St. Louis in 1896, she grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, where her father was a faculty member at the University of Nebraska. Dr. Morse received her B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Michigan and her Ph.D. degree from the University of Minnesota in 1929. Before joining the Kearney State faculty, she taught at Duchesne College in Omaha, Bryn Mawr College and the University of Nebraska.

The John C. W. Bliese Biology Laboratory and the Harvey E. Cole Botany Laboratory on the building's third floor were dedicated on May 13, 1987.

Through support by the Airway Science Grant Program in the Federal Aviation Administration, the College acquired a TRIMET Meteorological System for its Meteorology laboratory. This was installed in Room 105 and dedicated in ceremonies at 10AM on April 19, 1989.

William E. Bruner Hall of Science has been remodeled twice; one renovation was completed in 2004 at a cost of \$6,500,000. After the \$14,000,000 renovation and addition in 2007-2009, the structure was renamed the William E. Bruner Science Complex. The 2007-2009 renovation and addition resulted in the demolition of the old Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall, and the building of a more modern one.

A newer and much larger planetarium was included as well, with seating for 60. The centerpiece of the UNK Planetarium is the NASA-provided state-of-the-art projector, the Zeiss Starmaster ZKP 4. Each of the six thousand stars is individually projected on the dome with fiber optic technology and fully computerized controls that allow past or future astronomical displays with the push of a button.

A striking mural adorns the exterior west wall of the building's newest addition. "On the Shoulders of Giants" by Jay Tschetter and Tom Meyers illustrates mankind's conceptualization and organization of nature.



EXTERIOR SKETCH

Proposed SCIENCE BUILDING
KEARNEY STATE COLLEGE
HELLEBERG & HELLEBERG, Archts



Laying the Cornerstone of William E. Bruner Hall of Science, September 30, 1965



Dr. William E. Bruner



Dr. Mary E. Morse



Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall Under Construction, 1965
Interior View Looks to the Northeast



**Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall Under Construction, 1965
Exterior, View Looks to the Southwest**



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 1968
View Looks to the Northeast



**Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall , 1969
William E. Bruner Hall of Science Behind It
View Looks to the Southeast**



Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall in Use, 1969



**Classroom in
William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 1977**



**Foucault Pendulum in
William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 1977**



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 1980
View Looks to the Northwest



**William E. Bruner Hall of Science and Mary E. Morse Lecture Hall,
2000. View Looks to the Southwest**



**William E. Bruner Hall of Science
Planetarium Under Construction, Fall 2008**



William E. Bruner Hall of Science
Pendulum, 2009



William E. Bruner Hall of Science
Pendulum, 2009



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

Zeiss Starmaster ZKP 4 Projector in Planetarium



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Southeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the East-Southeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the East-Northeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the East



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Northeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Northeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the East-Northeast



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Northwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Northwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Southwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the West



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Southwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Southwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

View Looks to the Southwest



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009
Looking Southeast from Calvin T. Ryan Library



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

Mural "On the Shoulders of Giants" on West Wall



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009
Hallway, Second Floor



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

Biology Laboratory



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009

Looking Past Planetarium to Memorial Carillon Tower



William E. Bruner Hall of Science, 2009
Looking Past Planetarium to Copeland Hall