

Whitman (Tully) House Residence: Acadia University's Only Remaining All-Female Residence

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On March 24, 1914, the Board of Governors of Acadia University in Wolfville announced the building of a Women's College Residence. The plans called for the new residence to be home to 50 women, as well as housing several staff members and a matron who would oversee their wellbeing. Optimistically planned to be completed in time for the new school year in the Fall of 1914, construction fell behind. However, this did not deter 44 female students from moving into the residence during the first winter, despite its incomplete status and the ongoing construction.

Shortly after its opening, the Women's College Residence gained the nickname of Tully. Tully was reportedly the surname of an unattractive woman who lived in the area, and the male students adopted her name in their system of rating the attractiveness of female students. Under this system, "one Tully" was used to describe those deemed unattractive and "one-thousand Tullies" being the highest score possible. However, the women in the building soon adopted the name Tully as their own in solidarity against their male peers, and Tully became the commonly used name for the residence building.

Owing to the decrease in male attendance caused by the war, the number of female students at Acadia was beginning to increase by 1916 and they had to be housed in two other buildings on campus. However, dividing the female students was deemed to be bad for morale, and resulted in the first slate of renovations to Tully.

The building's first addition allowed the number of residents to increase to 70, and provided a dining room able to accommodate 120. The extension also allocated space for a nurse and hospital rooms. The inclusion of a hospital wing and dining room meant that the women were increasingly separated from the male population of Acadia when it came to the daily necessities of life. The patriarchal ideals of the time can also be seen in the strict rules regarding when and where the male students could visit the females living in Tully.

A second addition was started in 1926, and completed the original plan set out for the building by turning the building from an "L" shaped floor plan into its current "U". Thanks to the addition of the West wing, the building was now able to house an additional 44 girls. By this time, Tully was also home to the office of the Dean of Women who oversaw the lives of the women studying at the university. Furthermore, all female students whose families were not residents of Wolfville were now required to reside within university-owned housing, allowing for easier supervision.

In 1927, the Women's College Residence was officially renamed Whitman Hall in honour of Acadia Governor E. C. Whitman. While the official name of the building may have changed at this point, the nickname of Tully continued to be popular. In fact, Tully remained the name of choice to such a degree that to this day it is often more widely recognized across campus than the name of Whitman.

In the summer of 2001, as part of the Acadia Residence Advantage program, Tully underwent a series of renovations to update the building and bring it into the 21st century. These renovations included: individual rather than communal bathrooms; increased ceiling height for the third and fourth floors; a centralised back entrance to the building; and extended wired internet access, cable hookups and telephones within the building.

As of 2019, Tully can house 98 women in single and double rooms and the building is also home to a main lounge, quiet lounge, two kitchens, two television rooms and two laundry rooms. The building also remains an all-female residence, the only one still existing at Acadia University. Thankfully, female students no longer face the restrictions they once did concerning their residence choices, visiting hours or male visitors.

Sources:

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