A view of campus: Places with a past

Univeristy landmarks reflect antiquity and tradition

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for the Index

In its 140-year history, the University has changed its name many times to reflect its evolving educational mission. Pioneer educator Joseph Baldwin opened the North Missouri Normal School and Commercial College on Sept. 2, 1867. The school soon was the First District Normal School, becoming Missouri’s first state-supported and co-ed school, whose primary purpose was educating teachers for public schools in 1870.

In 1919, the institution was renamed Northeast Missouri State Teachers College, still concentrating primarily on regional teacher education. As its academic scope broadened, the school became Northeast Missouri State College in 1967 and eventually Northeast Missouri State University in 1972.

In 1985, Gov. John Ashcroft signed a bill changing the mission of the University from regional comprehensive education to statewide liberal arts and sciences. Northeast Missouri State became Missouri’s only highly selective public university.

Ten years later, in 1996, the school officially became Truman State University to better reflect its new mission. The name was chosen as a tribute to Harry Truman’s dedication to public education.

Truman’s campus today is much different than when it was founded as the North Missouri Normal School in 1867.

Pickler Memorial Library is located on what we now know as the Quad. Prior to 1924, the Quad was a lake, but it was emptied to put out a fire when the original Baldwin Hall burnt down. That site is now the location of the sunken garden.

The weathervane that sits atop the Kirk Memorial Building and serves as a recognizable symbol for the University is not functional. After the school’s name change to Truman State University in 1996, it was welded pointing northeast in honor of the institution’s previous name.

Sources: Truman State University Faculty Handbook and A History of Truman
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