Student Housing at Northern

Before There Were Dorms
1871 - 1949
One of the marked features of the Ohio Normal University [the institution's name was changed in 1885] is that the students are not herded together in large halls, as is the custom and manner of arrangement of many other institutions. The plan is certainly not conducive to good manners or morality.

It is a fact well known by all college students that the Hall is the place for fun and the breeder of mischief. We have avoided this by inducing the citizens to room our students. In this they are brought into the families and are made to feel at home and comfortable.

In case of sickness, the lady of the house having few to care for, assists in nursing and supplying them with those delicacies so essential to speedy recovery.

H.S. Lehr – First President
Estell Boarding House – On site of Presser Hall
Circa 1909

University Archives - Heterick Mem. Library
Pastime while in College. Jan 20, 1900.
Students living in boarding houses might have one or more meals provided. Otherwise, Ada offered numerous commercial alternatives.
CITY RESTAURANT

E. C. Burnett

“Home of good eats”

ADA, OHIO
Brown Hall – Campus Cafeteria in Basement - Starting 1922

University Archives - Heterick Mem. Library
In addition to the cafeteria, the university purchased five residences and converted them to co-ed housing. By 1939, Northern owned five such facilities.

Miller House – South Main St.

Mooreman House
South Gilbert St.
In January 1930, the university purchased its first house, Dr. Lehr's former residence, from P.W. Turner and converted it into a hall for some 15 women. Lehr had sold the home to Turner in 1903, and, in honor of its most recent owner, it was christened Turner Hall. The structure stood on the site of the present Stambaugh Hall.
Turner Hall Parlor

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Despite its elegance, Turner shared a problem common to wooden frame structures – combustibility. After the 1949 fire ......
In April 1941, the former residence of S.M. Johnson was opened as the Terrace dormitory for women. This structure stood roughly where the Elzay Gallery is today.
In the postwar period the flood of students attending Northern, many on the G.I. Bill, pushed the university to offer on-campus housing. Fortunately there was a wealth of inexpensive surplus military housing available.

By the beginning of fall quarter 1946, the university had in place 114 trailers and five barrack-style dormitories for single men. Even so, the housing shortage delayed the beginning of classes that year by a week.
Trailers on South Lawn of Presser Hall

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Looking East Toward Dukes

University Archives - Heterick Mem. Library
Trailers Behind Taft Gym. Students used showers and toilets in Taft
Drainage was a Continuing Problem. Note Board Walkways
Interior of Trailer with irritated spouse

University Archives - Heterick Mem. Library
No wet feet here!
Some Conditions even Board Walks couldn’t Help
January 1959 – Last Trailers Behind Taft Gym
January 1959
Finally, in 1949, the university faced up to the need for permanent student housing and erected the first dormitory, Clark Hall.