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Sheean Time Capsule to be Opened at Homecoming

Oct. 10, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – It is only a small copper box, aged and fading after more than 40 years in its hiding place, but this box holds a great deal of unknown secrets and memories.

The box is a time capsule, placed with the cornerstone of Sheean Library during construction in 1967. This summer, Sheean was demolished to make way for a future, state-of-the-art classroom building. The mammoth, brick and concrete building had been vacant since 2002, when The Ames Library opened.

At **Homecoming** festivities this year, a University team plans to open the time capsule, revealing the contents sealed in the walls of Sheean so many years ago. The opening will take place at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 22 in the Mini-Museum Tent on the Robert S. Eckley Quadrangle.

“What people place into these time capsules gives us an idea of what they feel is significant, what they want others to remember about their time here,” said Archivist Meg Miner, who located documents about the Sheean time capsule shortly before the building was to be destroyed. “We had a request to research the possibility of creating a time capsule for the new classroom building.” When Miner and her student Melissa Huang ’13 uncovered an old story in the student newspaper *The Argus* talking about a time capsule for another building on campus, Miner thought, “If there is one time capsule we don’t have on archive record, we might have others.”

Miner and her student workers have uncovered the existence of several time capsules on campus. Along with the box recovered from Sheean, there are also capsules buried in Dolan Hall, the Memorial Center, the Mark Evans Observatory and Shaw Hall. A box that was set in 1870 in the foundation of Hedding Hall was recovered in 1965 during the demolition of Duration Hall (which was the only part of Hedding Hall spared from a fire in 1943), to make way for Sheean.



Several members of the community gathered to unearth the time capsule before demolition began on Sheean this summer. (Left to right) the Rev. Bill White, former IWU chaplain; Robert Mowery, former humanities librarian; and Andy Harris, the mason who placed the original cornerstone in Sheean.



President Lloyd Bertholf kneels next to cornerstone of Sheean Library during a ceremony to place the time capsule in the building during construction. The young girl standing is the daughter of the building designer.

The Ames Library will have an exhibit displaying the Sheean time capsule and cornerstone, along with information about what is stored in the other time capsules. The items vary from an 1870 Bible to newspapers, money, programs from the schools of theatre and music, Wesleyana yearbooks, Illinois Wesleyan catalogs, first-year “green beanies” and even a packet of food designed to be taken into space.

Officials are keeping the contents of the Sheean box a mystery until it is opened at Homecoming. According to Miner, a contest to guess what’s inside the capsule will run from Oct. 1-21, with a box for guesses stationed at The Ames Library circulation desk. The winner will be announced Oct. 22 and the name will be on display with the contents after homecoming through the beginning of November.

The box was removed from Sheean in a ceremony in July. Miner attempted to bring as many of the people from the original dedication ceremony as she could. "We were able to bring in the Rev. Bill White, who was the University chaplain at the time and oversaw the dedication," said Miner, who also located Andy Harris, a local mason who helped lay the original cornerstone.

Former Humanities Librarian Robert Mowery, who was one of the first librarians to work in Sheean, also joined in removing the box from the cornerstone. "It was amazing to have those connections made with the campus once again," said Miner, who added "this artifact captured a moment in time. And because we are all part of Illinois Wesleyan, that moment is ours as well."

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