

# Out of the Ashes



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BEGINNING AT UPPER LEFT: 1 The mechanical building, built around 1885, was sometimes called the mechanical lab or mechanical shops and later referred to as the engineering shops. 2 The Engineering Building was built in 1907 and formally dedicated on June 22, 1908. Both the engineering building and the mechanical building were destroyed in a fire in the early morning hours of Sunday, March 5, 1916. (Pictured to the right of the Engineering Building is Wells Hall, a dormitory.) 3 The R. E. Olds Hall of Engineering (center of photo) was built on the old foundation of the former Engineering Building. Inside and out, it was a near replica of the original structure. Olds Hall was formally dedicated on June 1, 1917, along with the new engineering shops ("a two-story, fire-proof shop building," located to the left of Olds Hall). Wells Hall is to the right of Olds Hall in the far distance. 4 The College of Engineering occupied Olds Hall until 1962. 5 On December 28, 1960, groundbreaking ceremonies for a new engineering building on Shaw Lane took place. Standing, left to right: Dean John D. Ryder; Carl I. Mensendick, assistant to the dean; Maria Z. Krzywoblocki, professor of mechanical engineering; Agnes McCann, assistant to the dean; Charles E. Cutts, professor and head of civil engineering. Kneeling: Siegfried M. Breuning, associate professor, engineering research. 6 Construction was completed in 1962. 7 In 1989, the building was renovated and expanded. The \$34.5 million, 77,000-square-foot addition was dedicated on October 11, 1989. On October 4, 1995, a cornerstone ceremony was held at the site of the future Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Institute for Materials Research. That \$14 million, 46,000-square-foot addition, known as the Dow Wing (8), was formally dedicated on April 11, 1997.

RIGHT, MAIN PHOTO: 1 Wells Hall starts to burn. The fire purportedly started about 5:00 A.M. Sunday, March 5, 1916, in the cement labs in the southeast corner of the Engineering Building basement. Fire quickly spread through the building and to the engineering shops. The fire then leapt to the roof of Wells Hall (left), a dormitory near the Engineering Building, but it suffered only minor damage. According to the 1916 *Wolverine* (the yearbook), "... the ruins had scarcely ceased smoking before a new schedule of classes ... was formulated" for the 400 engineering students. "When sessions began on Monday morning ... not a class was missed."

R. E. Olds, in a letter to MSU President Frank S. Kedzie dated April 29, 1916, confirmed his intent to contribute \$100,000 toward reconstruction of the engineering building. The April 25, 1916, issue of *The M.A.C. Record* had reported: "The story goes that in the early days of M.A.C., Dr. Kedzie's father, Dr. R. C. Kedzie, was in a position to do a great favor to the father of Mr. Olds. These men were warm friends and their sons have continued this friendship. Hence Mr. Olds finds this a very opportune time to help Dr. Kedzie out of the first real worry of his college administration."

On June 5, 1917, *The M.A.C. Record* reported: "R. E. Olds was present in person [at the dedication of R. E. Olds Hall on June 1, 1917] and, in turning over the keys of the building to Dean Bissell, he said, 'It is my observation that the students turned out of this college are better fitted on the average than those from any other college in the country.'"

2 Fire spread to the engineering shops. 3 Ruins of Engineering Building on March 5. Wells Hall (on right) received only minor damage. 4 Ruins of Engineering Building on March 11.

To view additional photos of the fire, visit our Web site <http://www.egr.msu.edu/egr/>



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