

# The Lantern



I L L U M I N A T I N G H I S T O R Y

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 7

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JOHN BROWN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

MARCH 2008

## The Taming and “Treeing” of the Quad

When John Brown Sr. built his school in his legendary cornfield, “College Hill” was not a place of outstanding beauty. Dirt roads snaked through campus’s dusty flat areas. Trees were scattered except near Sager Creek and other water sources. Students avoiding the gravel pathways lined with whitewashed stones wore down ugly “cow paths” across the face of campus.

With the construction of attractive permanent buildings, such as the Cathedral Group, campus leaders began to push for a more attractive campus. The Threefold Advocate took up a habit of scolding known sidewalk trespassers each week in the paper. Native

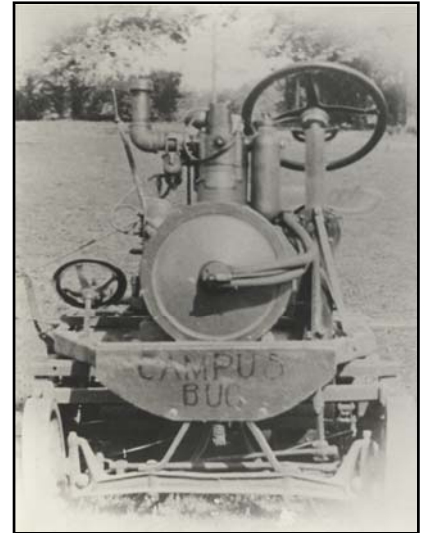
elms were planted along the main roadway, which wound from the cemetery through the middle of the Quad, past the Cathedral Group to the front of J Alvin Hall.

In the 1960s, however, JBU was invaded by an alien force: *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*. This fungus, thought to have originated in Asia, decimated most North American elm populations by inflicting them with Dutch Elm Disease. Today, only two campus elms remain – one adjacent to J. Alvin, and one down by the tennis courts.

Seeing that the quad was becoming barren, science professors Larry Seward and Lee Netherton teamed up to start the JBU Arbor Society – a faculty and staff fund dedicated to

the purchase and planting of new trees. Many employees contributed to the fund, and they often specified what type of tree they’d like to have planted. For instance, broadcasting professor Mike Flynn requested that a crab apple tree be planted outside KLRC offices, to celebrate his status as “the crabbiest person on campus.”

The Society was able to plant some 75 trees originally, many of which are our most stately trees today. Some members continued to contribute to the fund for decades to ensure the lasting beauty of campus. Our current trees are a physical legacy of JBU’s dedicated employees.



**Above:** The “campus bug” – an example of JBU’s early farm-style mowing machinery.

**Below:** Part of a 1980s landscaping plan for the JBU Quad proposed by a company in Rogers, AR. Recognizable landmarks are the LRC, flagpoles, and Cathedral group.

## Milestones

**March 1942:** A fire breaks out in the science and chemistry labs, located on the second floor of the Alumni (Hyde) building. The structure was only saved thanks to the rapid response of the campus fire brigade. Char marks are still visible on the building’s trusses.

**20-21 March 1959:** JBU hosts the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual convention of the Arkansas Academy of Science, with over 400 displays packed into the new Cathedral Science Building (the modern Art building).



# Insights



*From the works  
of John Brown, Sr.*

A kind-hearted man found a nest of little kittens whose mother had died. The kittens were so young their eyes were not yet open. Moved with pity, the

kind man made a little house, placed it on four wheels, and to this new house the four kittens were moved.

The little house [...] was moved about from spot to spot, in order that the warming rays of the sun might shine into this cozy home. At regular intervals the kind man came with rich, warm milk upon which the kittens fed. The kittens drank of their milk, stretched themselves in the morning sun, and were content. [...] At night, the house was hauled to a place of safety.

The blind kittens could not see their great benefactor, but they felt that he was there, and they loved him and trusted him. This was the time of faith.

As their eyes began to open a little, these kittens became venturesome, and one crawled a long distance from the house. A vicious dog found this venturesome kitten and tore it to pieces.

Another of the kittens witnessed this tragedy [through partially-opened eyes], and at once a wave of doubt swept over him.

"It's all a horrible joke," he said, "this idea that there is a kind man who cares for kittens!"

"If these is such a man, he is a monster, or he would have not allowed little Tommie to be so fearfully torn by that vicious dog! [...] There is no kind man to look after us, and we kittens are the biggest things that walk. We have got to fight our own battles, and look out for ourselves!" This was the time of infidelity.

Another kitten, with a mind vastly superior and eyes that were now wide open, began an investigation of his surroundings. After examining the house, the wheels, the back porch, the yard, and the near-by horizon, he sat down and soliloquized thus:

"I am a scientist. Whether there be a kind man or not is beside the issue.

"If there is such a being he has nothing to do with our daily existence. We, as a family of kittens and all that here exists, are the abject slaves of certain laws.

"How this house came to be, and how the wheels were placed under this house, does not concern me. What I do know is that this house moves around, ever keeping in the sun, and it does this of its own volition.

"By a certain law, called the 'law of milk passing,' our milk for each meal is passed to us. This house moves and the milk comes through the undeviating operation of nature's laws independent and apart from the will or wish of man." This was the time of skepticism.

While this argument was at its height, the kind man came, bringing the evening meal. When the kittens were

# ECHOES OF THE PAST

*Excerpt from the 12 March 1949 issue of the Threefold Advocate*

Showers of blessings were not descending on Bill Watson last Saturday afternoon as he indulged in his weekly ablutions. His 5:15 bliss was disrupted as Harold Stephenson pounded down the hall shouting, "Bill Watson's car is on fire!"

The entire J. Alvin Brown dorm emptied as everyone rushed out to see the excitement or to push other cars out of danger in event the gasoline should explode. However, Bill, retaining that scientific attitude in spite of shocked amazement, took the cap off the tank to prevent

such a happening, and then helped the other fellows to put out the flames with an extinguisher.

The fire, which evidently started below the instrument panel, burned all the upholstery and inside wiring, cracked all the windows, and even melted the door handles.

The motor, which was not harmed in any way, was the only part worth salvaging. So, if anyone wants any well-sterilized parts for a 1939 Hudson Terraplane, see the fellow with a long beard on an even longer face, Bill Watson.

**Below:** JBU students with their unfortunate automobile in the 1930s. Their back door reads "John Brown College" and "This is where my money goes;" on the side is scribbled, "From C\_\_ and going back," a scroll dated "1492," and "Pay as U Denter."



fed and housed for the coming night, he gave each a parting, affectionate pat, and went his way.

Those dazed, foolish kittens sat there blinking at each other, until finally one said, "What fools we kittens be! Good night, I am going to bed."

Next morning, when the

good man came with the morning meal, the kittens said, "Forgive us for being such pitiable fools." The good man said, "Forget it, and just think of the time when you are a little older and you can catch mice for me."

*Excerpt from The Foundation of God, or The Bible Versus Infidelity*