



(Above) An artist's concept of Eberhardt Hall after restoration and (right) work in progress during June.

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**NJIT Magazine:** There's a lot of excitement on campus about the restoration of Eberhardt Hall and its rededication this fall as the university's alumni center. Why is this project so important to NJIT?

**Dees:** The renaissance of Eberhardt Hall, with its Victorian grace and charm, was planned as a counterpoint to the sleek, contemporary Campus Center. The juxtaposition of the two buildings makes a strong statement about NJIT's identity — the pioneering technological university leading the way into the future, but also an institution with a rich history. Eberhardt reminds us that the university had its roots in Newark's industrial golden age and that technology giants like Edison and Weston had a hand in its establishment.

Eberhardt is also the link that ties our alumni together across many generations. Ask any graduate of the last 50 years what the NJIT campus looked like, and he or she will likely describe "the castle." Even for those who attended before the university

acquired Eberhardt in 1948, the building would have been an unmistakable landmark in the neighborhood. Eberhardt is a visual symbol of the common tradition that the university has imparted to the technological leaders of three centuries.

**NJIT Magazine:** Eberhardt Hall is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Can you tell us something about the building and its history?

**Dees:** Eberhardt is a beautiful example of the Gothic architecture of the mid-19th century, built in the Elizabethan style with elements reminiscent of 15th- and 16th-century castles. According to Dave Gibson, the architect leading the restoration project, it's a rare building — there's only one other Elizabethan Gothic in New Jersey and a handful on the entire Eastern Seaboard. It was designed by Philip Welch, a founder of the American Institute of Architects and a noted church architect.

Our records tell us that the building was built as the Newark Orphan Asylum. The original structure — now the central tower and north wing — was completed in 1857, with the design allowing for the addition of the south wing, which was constructed in 1874. According to the architectural team, the interior was designed for the comfort and welfare of the children who would live there, as you can

# ORIAN ELEGANCE

## WITH CHARLES R. DEES, JR.

tell by the height of the banister on the grand staircase, for instance. The building was state-of-the-art for 1857, with conveniences such as gaslight, steam heat and hot-and-cold running water, amenities rare even in affluent homes of the period. Contemporary records show that there were also unusual safety features, including an early fire-extinguishing system and emergency exits. In many ways, the building is a monument to the city of Newark and its tradition of compassionate humanitarianism, in providing such a gracious and well-equipped structure for the benefit of orphaned children.

By the middle of the 20th century, the emphasis in child welfare had shifted to foster care, and in 1948 the university was able to purchase the building for \$58,000. The Board minutes tell us it was renovated — mainly by painting the entire interior light green — and renamed Eberhardt Hall.

**NJIT Magazine:** Who was Eberhardt?

**Dees:** We know a lot about Fred Eberhardt from a history of Newark Technical School done during President Cullimore's administration. He was, in many ways, the embodiment of the NJIT spirit. He was an alumnus, a graduate of one of the very first classes of Newark Technical School, our predecessor institution. He became president of his family's company, Gould & Eberhardt, a Newark-based manufacturer of gear cutters and shapers, and led the firm's growth into a major supplier to the auto industry, as well as to the military during World War II. He maintained close ties with his alma mater, joining the Board of Trustees in 1910 and serving until his death in 1946. He helped to shape the development of Newark Technical School and spearheaded its evolution into a full-fledged, degree-granting engineering school — our Newark College of Engineering — by 1919. The Board of Trustees

paid tribute to his many contributions by naming Eberhardt Hall in his memory. I hope that the restoration of the building will revive interest in the man, because Fred Eberhardt is a role model for students and alumni alike.

**NJIT Magazine:** What can you tell us about the restoration project?

**Dees:** Dave Gibson says that the exterior is being restored using authentic 19th-century materials — red brick and brownstone with mortars matched to those used by the original builders. We're removing and repairing 20th-century adaptations such as holes for air conditioners. The front parking lot is being replaced with a terraced green and a bluestone forecourt for outdoor events. Inside, the public areas on the first floor are being restored, with simulated gaslight fixtures, Victorian patterned wallpaper, and carpet and wood trim to recreate the styles of the late 19th century. The restored area will include the central lobby, board room, dining room and meeting facilities. It will be an environment unlike anything else on campus.

**NJIT Magazine:** So you believe that the restored Eberhardt will be an important enhancement to campus life?

**Dees:** Most definitely. The other buildings on our campus are modern and utilitarian, and that's as it should be. An institution that focuses on technology and science should emphasize contemporary style and functionality. But a university also needs some space that expresses grace and elegance, an enclave away from the rapid-fire distractions of 21st-century life. That's the role we see for Eberhardt Hall. ■

**Editor's note:** There will be much more about the restoration of Eberhardt Hall in future issues of *NJIT Magazine*.

