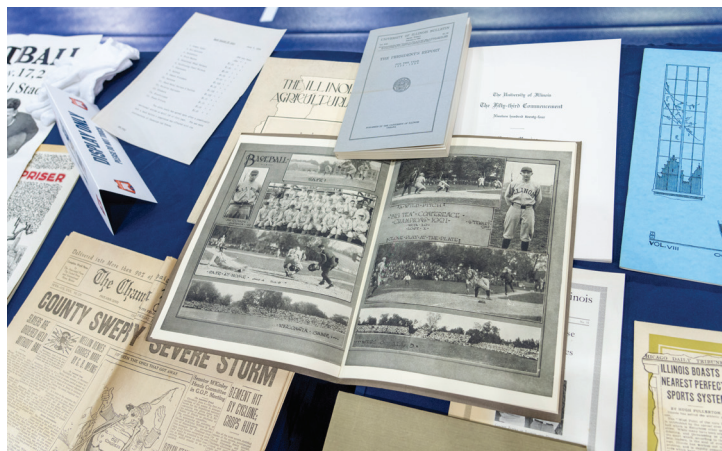




Huff Hall History

New Gymnasium Completed 100 Years Ago

When it opened in the fall of 1925, the Georgian Revival building at the southeast corner of East Gregory Drive and South Fourth Street was named New Gymnasium. Designed by architect Charles A. Platt and university architect James M. White, it was constructed at a cost of \$722,000. English Brothers of Champaign, fresh off their work at Memorial Stadium, were the general contractors.



Built to be the new home for programming previously housed in Men's Gymnasium and the Military Drill Hall (now the Kenney Gym and Kenney Gym Annex), the premier activity to be featured in New Gymnasium was Illini Men's Basketball. The new venue would prove to be a winning one for the Illini. In the very first game (Illinois v. Butler) on December 12, 1925, the Illini eked out a 23–22 victory in front of more than 6,000 fans. Over the next dozen years, the team would win more games than they lost in New Gymnasium—with only the 1927–1928 season posting a losing record at home (3 wins, 5 losses).

Then, in 1937, the building was renamed Huff Gym to honor Illinois' former athletic director (1901–1935), George Huff, who had passed away the previous year. The winning continued, with perfect records in Huff Gym in five seasons and no additional losing seasons at home. In fact, their home record over 38 seasons was 339 wins and 79 losses, for a winning percentage of 81.1 percent.

Part way through the 1962–1963 season, the basketball team moved to the new spaceship-shaped stadium south of Memorial Stadium: Assembly Hall (now the State Farm Center). Other basketball moments were also part of the history of Huff. March Madness started there, but not the college contest you may fill out brackets for. No, March Madness originally referred to the Illinois High School Association's boys' basketball state finals tournament, which was played in Huff Gym every March from 1926 to 1962. The

women's basketball team also played there beginning in the 1970s and hosted first and second round games of the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament in 1997, before also moving to the Assembly Hall.

Of course, Illini Basketball wasn't the only program housed in Huff Gym. A pool was added in 1927, and swimming and diving were held there. Fencing, wrestling, volleyball, and gymnastics teams also practiced and competed there. Outside of sports, the building hosted dances and other events, including a speech by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who came in 1942 to encourage the war effort, noting the event in her February 7 "My Day" newspaper column as "a meeting in the big gymnasium of several thousand people attending the 41st conference of Farm and Home Week." Huff Gym also included classrooms, laboratories, and offices for the faculty, staff, and students studying physical fitness and movement, and it continues to do so today as the home of the College of Applied Health Sciences.

While the actual gym still retains the name Huff Gym, the building itself was renamed Huff Hall in 1992. It has seen numerous upgrades and renovations in the past 100 years. More recently, the Khan Annex, a 24,000 square foot addition that has LEED Silver certification, was added in 2011. During recent years, F&S has worked on several projects, including replacing the gym floor with a springy volleyball surface in 2014, providing life-safety upgrades in 2015, replacing wooden seating on both sides of the mezzanine level in 2016, and making classroom renovations in 2018. The locker rooms were also completely renovated and upgraded in 2019. With this excellent stewardship, Huff Hall is ready to serve the campus for the next 100 years.



Story continues on the next page.

Huff Hall History

Time Capsule

The cornerstone of Huff Hall was set on Saturday, June 7, 1924, and it contained a time capsule. Laborers and brick masons, assisted by the F&S Architectural Review Committee, removed the capsule this year, and it was opened at a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the building on November 7. George Huff's great-grandchildren and Illinois luminaries were on hand to help unpack the copper box. The items were well-preserved for having been hidden away for 100-plus years. They included a homecoming poster from 1923; tickets to the Chicago-Illinois football game on November 2, 1923; a copy of The Champaign News-Gazette from June 6, 1924; course catalogs; and other ephemera.

Perhaps the most interesting to F&S team members, however, is a piece of paper titled "Wage Scales of 1924," and dated June 7 of that year. It explained that the wages were agreed to on April 1, after "a practically universal strike" that lasted a week. It listed the wages of 15 groups in the crafts and trades. For "common labor," workers were to make 65 cents an hour; hod carriers, 85 cents; reinforcing steel workers, \$1.05; carpenters and hoisting engineers, \$1.15; lathers, painters, and sheet metal workers & roofers, \$1.125 (note that extra half cent an hour!); structural steel workers, cement finishers, plumbers, electricians, and steam fitters, \$1.25; and brick masons and plasterers, \$1.50. The website CalculateMe estimates that top 1924 amount would be equivalent to approximately \$28.50 an hour today.

| | June 7, 1924 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Common Labor | .65¢ per hour. |
| 2. Hod Carriers | .85¢ " " |
| 3. Carpenters | \$1.05 " " |
| 4. Brick Masons | \$1.15 " " |
| 5. Structural Steel Workers | \$1.00 " " |
| 6. Reinforcing Steel Workers | \$1.05 " " |
| 7. Plasterers | \$1.25 " " |
| 8. Lathers | \$1.05 " " |
| 9. Cement Finishers | \$1.60 " " |
| 10. Painters | \$1.12½ " " |
| 11. Sheet Metal Workers & Roofers | \$1.12½ " " |
| 12. Hoisting Engineers | \$1.12½ " " |
| 13. Plumbers | \$1.12½ " " |
| 14. Electricians | \$1.15 " " |
| 15. Steam Fitters | \$1.25 " " |

The above scale was agreed upon after a practically universal strike on April 1st of this year. The men were out a week before a compromise was effected with the contractors of Champaign and Urbana.

Noontime Knowledge Recap: Rainbow Reflections

A Trip to the Spurlock Museum

A small group of F&S team members was able to participate in a tour of the Spurlock Museum organized by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee in honor of LGBTQ+ History Month in October. The tour was led by Abigail Padfield Narayan, the museum's manager of academic programs. The main focus of the tour was their curated display called Rainbow Reflections, which ran throughout the month, although Narayan also discussed related objects in the main collection.

While the display itself was small, Narayan offered knowledgeable commentary on the artifacts and queer history. Environmental graphics explained Rainbow Reflections was meant to be "a glimpse into the rich and complex history of LGBTQ+ life, activism, and culture. The stories reflected in these pieces and images hold deep meaning, highlighting struggle, resistance, visibility, and joy that have shaped—and continue to shape—LGBTQ+ communities."

The exhibit included sake cups in the style of *Shunga*, an artform of the Edo period (1603 to 1868 CE). Narayan explained that this type of art was often carved in wooden print blocks, and the images often explored local gossip with humor and included explicit sexual scenes. The 20th-century cups followed this tradition by depicting a tryst between two women. Another collection, this time of teacups, represented the "tea parties" held by the LGBTQ+ community throughout the centuries, when the use of this euphemism allowed queer people to gather safely. This tradition continued across the globe, even into the 20th century, she explained, with the tea parties or tea dances offering a social space for members of the LGBTQ+ community to connect with each other.

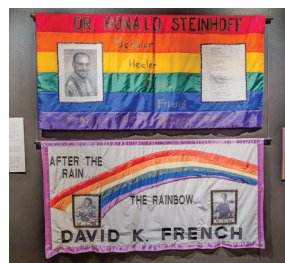
Local drag queen Mona Monclair donated a rainbow-themed outfit to the exhibit. Created in 2022, she wore the gown, jewels, and wig in a local Pride Parade. Accompanying signage noted that "the first recorded drag ball took place in 1867 at Harlem's Hamilton Lodge, where both drag queens and drag kings took the stage." It also explained that "drag has evolved over time into a powerful means

of self-expression, blending performance, gender expression, and resistance."

The most moving exhibit in the collection incorporated panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The Spurlock has a collection of 19 panels honoring local residents. Narayan explained the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt began in San Francisco in 1987. It was displayed on the National Mall in Washington, DC, on October 11 of that year. Each panel is 3 feet wide by 6 feet long. That size was chosen because it matches the measurements of the standard grave. Each was lovingly created for someone who succumbed to the disease while the world largely ignored the issue because it was "a gay people problem." The two panels on display commemorated Dr. Ronald Steinhoff and David K. French, both of whom passed away in the 90s.

Narayan explained that the museum uses the panels in classes to educate university students. She estimated three-fourths of current students taking health and kinesiology, sexual communication, or history classes, who rotate through the museum 80 students at a time throughout the year, report that they did not know anything about HIV/AIDS until they came to college. The panels are an eye-opening conversation starter for them and anyone else who was able to visit the exhibit during October.

For more information, visit <https://www.spurlock.illinois.edu/exhibits/profiles/rainbow-reflections.html>.



Noontime Knowledge Recap: An Unbreakable Code

Native American Code Talkers in WWII

As befitting a Noontime Knowledge in honor of Native American History Month, the occasion began with the reading of the Land Acknowledgment statement, which recognizes the university is built on the lands of Native people. Then, the first video, *The Navajo Code Talkers*, played. Navajo historian Martin Link explained that years after the end of World War II, a civil engineer approached the tribe to offer a treasure trove of artifacts he had collected about the code talkers. His name was Philip Johnston (1892–1978), and he is credited with the idea of using Native American languages to aid the Americans with their secure communications during the war.

A code that could be used on the fly in the battlefield was needed, but it had to be one that could be transmitted without secure lines and equipment. Johnston suggested using the Navajo language. The son of a missionary, Johnston had grown up in Arizona and learned to speak the language while playing with Navajo children. After Johnston demonstrated the effectiveness of the plan, the Marine Corp set out to recruit 30 native Navajo speakers. Twenty-nine answered the initial call in May 1942 and were sent for training. Ultimately 400 to 500 Navajo men would serve as code talkers.

Because their work was top secret, these early recruits were assigned to the first all-Navajo platoon. In the beginning, it was difficult. The Navajo language was not written, but it had to be to teach the code words. Yet, the recruits couldn't take notes. Because of secrecy concerns, everything had to be memorized.

After boot camp and code talker school in the United States, the platoon had additional training in New Zealand and on a secured Guadalcanal in the summer of 1943. Then they were ready for combat. The code talkers weren't trusted by the higher ups at first because it was a new system, but they soon proved themselves to be invaluable. They were then used extensively during operations in Guam and Iwo Jima.

After the war, the code talker project remained classified until 1968, so their contributions, and the many thousands of American and Allied soldiers they saved with their work, were hidden from the public. Even after declassification, recognition took time. President Reagan declared August 14, 1982, to be National Navajo Code Talkers Day, and the 29 original code talkers finally received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2001.

A shorter video, *Cree Code Talkers*, discussed the experience of Canadian code talkers, particularly Charles "Checker" Tompkins. Because England went to war in 1939, Canada quickly followed. Early on, the request came out from Canadian Military Headquarters for Native Canadians to report for a special assignment. About 600 showed up, including Checker. They were assigned to an American unit, sorted into language groups, and trained to encode messages using their Native languages so Axis countries could not decode them.

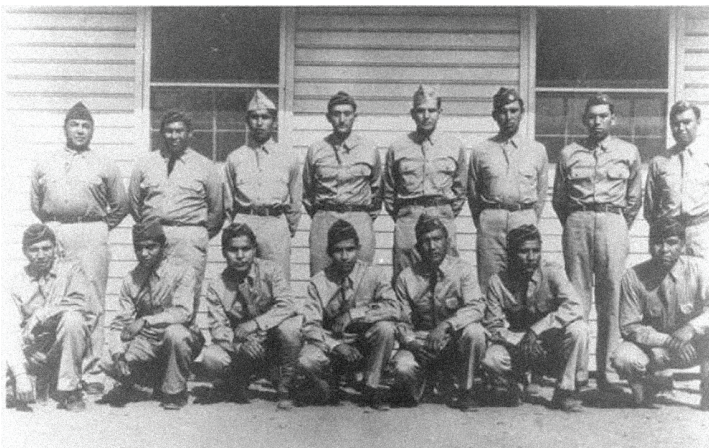
Unlike their American counterparts, the Cree code talkers largely remain unrecognized to this day. Canadian Senator John McNair noted in an address for Indigenous Veterans Day, on November 6, 2025, "To my knowledge, the [Canadian] federal government has never formally recognized the services that the Cree code talkers rendered to Canada. Indeed, many of them remain unidentified." He went on to argue it was well-past time to change that.

To watch the videos, visit <https://www.youtube.com/>

[watch?v=734hnN9KQvY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=734hnN9KQvY) (*The Navajo Code Talkers*) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzkEsMYxhFM> (*Cree Code Talkers*). Read Senator McNair's statement, which includes additional history, at <https://sencanada.ca/en/senators/mcnair-john-m/interventions/676147/4>.



Above: Navajo Code Talkers at Work. **Below:** Comanche Army Code Talkers. Front Row, left to right: Roderick Red Elk, Simmons Parker, Larry Saupitty, Melvin Permansu, Willie Yackeschi, Charles Chibitty, Wellington Mihecoby. Back row, left to right: Morris Sunrise, Perry Noyebad, Ralph Wahnee, Haddon Codynah, Robert Holder, Albert Nahquaddy, Clifford Ototivo, Forrest Kassanavod. (Not pictured: Elgin Red Elk and Anthony Tabbytite)"



Send your stories and photos to
fscustomerrelations@illinois.edu

Upcoming Calendar Dates

December 24
Gift Day

December 25
Christmas Day Holiday

December 26
Day after Christmas
(Designated Holiday)

December 29
President Designated Holiday

December 30 & 31
Gift Days

January 1
New Year's Day Holiday

F&S at Work

CCFD Wrap Up

The university completed another successful Campus Charitable Fund Drive this year, raising more than \$1 million over the eight-week drive. At F&S, the fundraiser for Crisis Nursery sponsored by Abbott Power Plant and Kappa Delta Sorority raised an amazing \$23,838.30 from the pork sandwich luncheon. They delivered approximately 40 meals that day and served about twice that many in person. Since the dedicated fundraiser began, the collaboration has donated more than \$115,000 to the local charity that is open for kids in need 24/7/365. Many thanks to all who participated in this delicious way to support them this year and in the past!



Members of Kappa Delta deliver the proceeds of the 2025 pork lunch to the Crisis Nursery.

F&S team members also supported dozens of charities through the CCFD giving program. The groups chosen represented a cross-section of interests—from those that help in the local area to those with global reach, including tackling food insecurity at home; helping find cures for health problems; supporting science, the arts, and human rights; protecting animals and green spaces; and lifting up kids. F&S donations exceeded \$23,025 here. In total, F&S team members contributed almost \$47,000! Your willingness to support good causes, whether through CCFD or privately throughout the year, truly makes a difference in this world. Thank you for your kindness and commitment. Together, we make change.

Freezer Challenge Success

Since they first joined My Green Lab and the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories (I2SL) challenge in 2017, the Urbana campus has now won or received a special award eight years in a row, including this year, when 103 laboratory groups, representing 71 research spaces, combined to save an estimated 575 kilowatt-hours (kWh)/day, or 209,985 kWh/year, in the challenge! To learn more about how Utilities & Energy Services is coordinating with these labs, visit <https://fs.illinois.edu/international-freezer-challenge/>.



Freezer challenge participants from the top-performing campus labs

Altgeld Hall Moving into Next Phase.

With the recent reinstallation of the chimes and the bell tower roof, exterior work for the renovation of Altgeld Hall is almost finished, including the façade and infrastructure improvements. Attention next turns to the inside of the building, with the Phase 4 interior renovations expected to begin in early 2026.

Snowy Start to the Holiday Season

The end of November and start of December brought snowy conditions to Central Illinois, with almost a foot of the white stuff falling over two snow events after Thanksgiving, and again with more storms in mid-December. Fortunately for the university, F&S was on it, and the campus community noticed immediately, with positive posts popping up on Reddit about the speedy efforts to stay on top of the accumulation. Kudos to the many team members involved in the process, including Grounds, Building Maintenance, Transportation, Building Services, Operating Engineers, Construction Services, and others across F&S. A special shoutout to Information Technology Services for the snow reporting tool they developed that greatly streamlined the snow and ice removal request process.

Recycling Diverted from Waste Stream at Tailgate Event

During the Illinois-Maryland Game, a new “Sustainability Gator”—a mobile recycling station—rolled through the tailgating areas in Lots 31 and 32 near Gies Memorial Stadium to help fans participate in efforts to keep bottles and aluminum cans out of the waste stream. An estimated 600 pounds of recyclables were collected in blue bags on game day via the roving gator and stationary barrels, boxes, and a green dumpster placed for that purpose. The volunteer team also spread the word about the benefits of recycling.



Ted's Café

F&S' manager of communications & external relations, Steve Breitwieser, created a short video about the café renovation project at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, a project managed by the Capital Projects division. Shot during the grand opening, it discusses the history of the building, explores what Ted's Café will offer in terms of food and drink, and delves into what it means to the campus community. Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMPRFtJExv0>.

