

Ask Geoff

By Geoffrey Williams,
University at Albany Archivist



Q. What's in a school name?

A. My last column on the University's name changes since its founding in 1844 prompted a number of follow-up queries – and some additional investigation on my part! One 1988 graduate told me that the wording on his diploma reads *State University of New York, University Center at Albany*. I asked our registrar, Robert Gibson, what is currently on our diploma. Bob told me that in 1999, the practice of putting *University Center at Albany* on the diploma was discontinued, and the wording was changed to *State University of New York, University at Albany*. He added that the form of the name on the

diploma is always approved by SUNY Central.

In answering this question, I discovered that we do not have a complete file of diplomas – just a hit-or-miss archival collection covering the period from 1846 to the 1930s. So, my questions to you are: **What is the wording on your diploma?** and **When did you receive it?** I am particularly interested in the wording on diplomas conferred in the early and mid-1960s, the late '90s and the early 21st century. Did the diploma ever read just *State University of New York*? When was *University Center at Albany* adopted and discontinued? When did the first diploma say *State University of New York, University at Albany* – 1999, 2000 or 2001?

Q. When did our names change during the period 1959-62?

A. Norman Kiner '65 questioned my Fall 2006 timeline for name changes during the period 1959-63. He remembered the changes as having taken place in 1960, 1962, and 1963. I went back and checked the SUNY Board of Trustees minutes and our school catalogs. I discovered that each time the SUNY Board of Trustees approved a name change (June 18, 1959; Oct. 21, 1961; and June 14, 1962), it was too late in the year to incorporate it into the school catalog. The catalogs for 1959-60, 1961-62 and 1962-63 all carried the old name of the school, *State College for Teachers, State University College of Education at Albany*, and *State University College at Albany* into the new academic year.

Q. You noted that “*University at Albany*” is the “unofficial” name. Why is that so, who can make it official, and how is that done?

A. This question came to me from Charles LaFontaine '58. The brief answer is that only the SUNY Board of Trustees has the right to name a State University of New York school. *University at Albany*, approved by then-Chancellor D. Bruce Johnstone in 1993, was probably first used in 1976 to distinguish us from the State University of New York System Administration, which is also located in Albany.

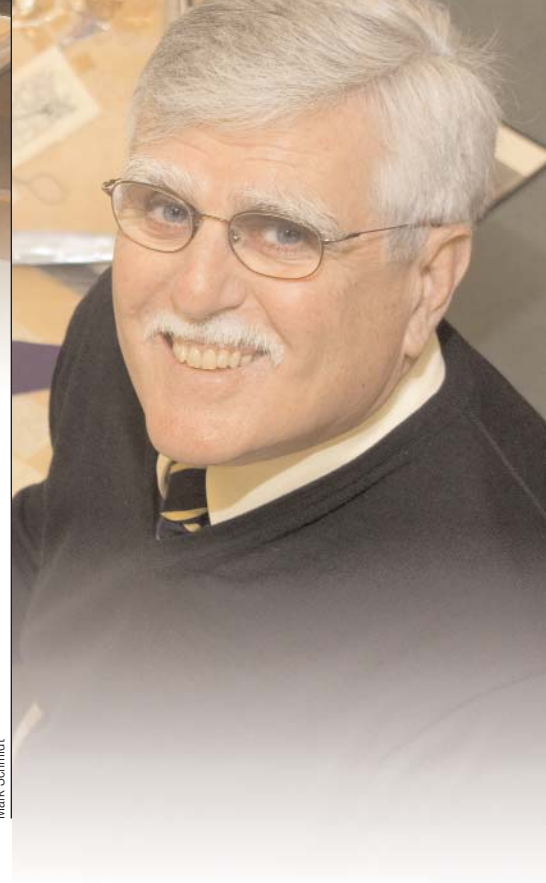
Q. Was our uptown campus originally intended for India or another warm-weather location?

A. James Close '75 wrote that he's heard “different variations on just how this particular design came to be UAlbany's uptown campus – and all of them revolved around the notion that the campus, with its large open-air podium, was originally designed for a balmy place.”

I can state unequivocally that the uptown campus was *not* designed for a warmer climate; in fact, beginning on page 18 of this issue, you can read about architect Edward Durell Stone's style and how he applied it to the University (“A Work of Art” by Greta Petry, M.A.'01). During an impressive career, Stone evolved from the International Style of the 1930s – he was an architect on the team that designed the Museum of Modern Art in New York City – to a much more eclectic one



Chicago's 83-story Aon Center, designed by Edward Durell Stone, bears a striking resemblance to UAlbany's high-rise dorms.



Mark Schmitt

that borrowed from southern European and Middle Eastern architectural traditions. After his second marriage in 1954, he traveled extensively in, and studied the architecture of, those regions. While it is true that Stone designed a number of buildings for the Middle East and for warmer climates in the U.S., he also planned – for climates similar to (or worse than) UAlbany’s – buildings that share the architectural elements of the uptown campus. Chicago’s 83-story Standard Oil Building, now the Aon Building, dates from 1969 and looks remarkably like our high-rise dormitories, as does the 27-story UMass Library, completed in 1972. Stone’s 1962 plan for the Atwood Center at Alaska Methodist University (now Alaska Pacific University) in Anchorage bears a strong resemblance to our Campus Center, University Library and Performing Arts Center.

One of Stone’s earliest innovations called for employing broad overhangs, first used on the A. Conger Goodyear house on Long Island in 1935, to shelter a building. There, he also hid automobiles from view by keeping them behind walls – just as he exiled cars and trucks from the center of the uptown campus by designing a raised podium inaccessible to motor vehicles. Other design elements you see on the uptown campus include floating stairs similar to those used in the Museum of Modern Art; and covered passageways between buildings and roofs supported by tall columns (University of Arkansas Fine Arts Center in Fayetteville, 1949). The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India (1954), set on a wide, raised podium, also boasts very prominent water features and a wide overhang supported by columns. Cutouts on the perimeter of the flat roof allow light through exactly as those on UAlbany’s uptown campus

do. Stone repeated this feature again and again in his architecture.

If you plan to be at UAlbany this spring, please visit University Hall to see the major permanent exhibit Professor Ray Bromley is mounting on Stone’s architecture. In addition, you may want to stop by the Science Library entrance to see the exhibit of Stone’s design for our campus; it’s on display until June. You’re also welcome to visit the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, located on the top floor of the Science Library, to read *The Evolution of an Architect*, published in 1962, and *Recent and Future Architecture* (1967), two books Stone wrote about his architecture.



Courtesy Alaska Pacific University

The columns and overhanging roofs Stone planned for the uptown campus are features he also incorporated into his design for the Atwood Center at the former Alaska Methodist University.

To submit a question for
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