

Memorials Keep Holmberg Name Alive

A FITTING memorial to the pioneering services of Fredrik Holmberg, first dean of the College of Fine Arts, who came to the University of Oklahoma in 1903 and who died on January 1, 1936, was established by the University Board of Regents on January 3, 1938, when it passed a resolution naming the fine arts building "Holmberg Hall." This is the culmination of a series of tributes that have been paid to the memory of Dean Holmberg.

The faculty of the College of Fine Arts in a resolution dated January 27, 1936, said of Dean Holmberg:

We feel that his death is a loss to the College of Fine Arts, the University of Oklahoma and all persons interested in the fine arts, not only in Oklahoma, but in the Southwest. Whatever the future success of the College of Fine Arts may be, that success must always be the result of Fredrik Holmberg's careful and sincere efforts as dean of the school from its first uncertain status to its present position in the Southwest. . . .

On Sunday, May 3, 1936, a Fredrik Holmberg Memorial Concert was given in the Fine Arts Auditorium by the University Symphony Orchestra, the University Women's Choral Club and the University Men's Glee Club. Acting Dean Lewis S. Salter, in presenting to the University, on behalf of the faculty of the College of Fine Arts, a portrait of Dean Holmberg, said:

This is the first day of National Music Week. It has seemed particularly fitting to us to open the music week celebration by paying a tribute to the memory of Dean Fredrik Holmberg whose life work and influence has meant so much to the cause of music and the fine arts in this state and in this university.

Dean Holmberg came to our campus as a young man in 1903. He came as a teacher of violin from that Kansas center of musical culture, Bethany College at Lindsborg. He found here a small institution of about four hundred students, the majority of whom were preparatory students, and a small department of music with three teachers. He organized an orchestra and a glee club that first year. In a few years he became head of the department of music. Under his direction it grew into a school of music, and finally, together with the departments of art and dramatic art, into a college of fine arts with an enrollment more than three times the total number of college students in the entire institution when he came thirty-three years before.

We have met to pay a musical tribute, primarily, to the memory of Dean Holmberg in the realization that it is impossible to recite fully his many achievements in behalf of music and the fine arts during his long term of service, and that words are inadequate to express the love, the admiration and the gratitude of his many pupils.

I can make no better summary, nor pay no finer tribute, than that expressed by President Bizzell in the following statement which I quote: "Facts and figures do not reflect adequately the services of Dean Holmberg to the University. He not only touched the lives of hundreds of students, but his knowledge of music and appreciation for all of the fine arts quickened the cultural lives of thousands of people in the state who were never students here. The College of Fine Arts will forever be a monument to his devotion to the University and to his talents as a musician. His memory abides in the hearts of all of us who

knew him and appreciated his worth as a man, a citizen and a cultured gentleman."

The associates of Dean Holmberg on the faculty of the College of Fine Arts, desiring to keep alive in the hearts of future generations of fine arts students, the memory of this inspiring leader, present to the University, this portrait of Dean Holmberg, painted by Professor Patricio Gimeno, as an expression of our love and gratitude.

Dean S. W. Reaves, in accepting the portrait for the University, said:

President Bizzell has asked me to come here in his place and to accept for the University this portrait of Dean Holmberg presented by the faculty of the College of Fine Arts. President Bizzell expressed deep regret that, because of an out-of-town engagement of long standing, he could not, himself, be here at this time.

Dean Salter has quoted to you Dr. Bizzell's beautiful words of appreciation of Dean Holmberg. In these sentiments I, as well as all other members of the University community, heartily join.

Since I have been a colleague and associate of Dean Holmberg during all but the first two years of his stay here I hope I may be permitted to pay my own humble tribute to his memory.

Dean Holmberg was a kindly, gentle, friendly man. His reading was wide and his information so comprehensive as frequently to cause me surprise. His love and appreciation of music and his knowledge of its history and theory were profound. To a marked degree music was his life.

Resulting from his fine personal qualities, his broad scholarship, his thorough knowledge of music, his appreciation of the other fine arts, and his unbounded enthusiasm and energy, he has built here one of the strongest and best colleges of fine arts to be found in this country.

It is eminently fitting and appropriate that the faculty of the college he has built should present this portrait of their departed leader and friend. I am pleased to have a small part in these exercises and, acting for President Bizzell, to accept this portrait for the University.

In the fall of 1936 announcement was made of the establishment, by Mrs. Holm-



The late Dean Fredrik Holmberg

berg, of the Fredrik Holmberg Memorial Awards of \$50 each to be given annually to three outstanding seniors, one from each of the Schools of Art, Drama, and Music. On June 6, 1937 the first awards were made, to Miss Vera Oxenford of the School of Art, Miss Janey Lou Johnson of the School of Drama, and Miss Mildred Andrews of the School of Music.

On Friday, November 26, 1937, the Oklahoma State Music Teachers Association at its annual convention in Tulsa held a memorial service honoring Dean Holmberg. The following tribute was paid by James L. Waller, '08fa:

In the fall of 1903, Fredrik Holmberg came to Oklahoma University as head of the violin department. He had graduated previously from Bethany College, in Lindsborg, Kansas.

To his associates he told of his having come to America from Sweden in his late 'teens; of his having spent summers in Kansas wheat fields where he was engineer or expert "separator man"; of his membership in the football squad that caused Bethany College teams to be called "The Terrible Swedes"; but also of his having been a violinist under Theodore Thomas in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Possessed of the divine spark, he yet talked the language and lived the life of the early settlers whom he found here. Hence he was God-sent to our state university—then the Oklahoma Territory University—where the music department was struggling to be born.

After a very few years, he became head of the music department, and this position he held during the remainder of his thirty-three years of service at Oklahoma University.

Thirty-three years! Years of building and organizing amid discouragements and difficulties well-nigh insurmountable; years of matching his Nordic energy and determination against the unenthusiastic attitude toward art of a young, raw commonwealth; years, however, of constant upward progress, during which he advanced his music department first into a School of Music, and then into a College of Fine Arts; and years of music-missionary work which planted throughout our state a high regard for the beautiful, especially in music.

He was particularly proud of the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra, which he organized and directed. Called "Father of Music in Oklahoma," he was unanimously voted life membership in our organization, the Oklahoma State Music Teachers Association. He was listed in *Who's Who* as a pioneer and leader, and was selected by *The Etude* as one of America's outstanding musicians.

Little realizing the magnitude of his accomplishing but knowing only that he had striven hard and long, he stepped off stage to rest as the new year was dawning January first, 1936, handing his baton to the music teachers of Oklahoma with the simple injunction: "Carry on."

On Monday, January 3, 1938, the Oklahoma Federal Symphony Orchestra in its concert at Oklahoma City dedicated the playing of Tschaiakowsky's "Symphony Pathetique" to the memory of Dean Holmberg. A note on the program read:

We request no applause between the movements of the Tschaiakowsky Symphony which is played in honor of Fredrik Holmberg and those first musical pioneers who established the original Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra.