

Presser Hall - Pictures

Presser Hall was named in honor of Theodore Presser, the university's first music instructor. After a career in education Presser entered the field of music publishing where he enjoyed great success. He established the Presser Foundation to distribute his considerable fortune, and part of the foundation's funds were used to construct music education facilities on various college campuses including Ohio Northern.

In October 1926, the university secured a \$100,000 construction grant from the Presser Foundation. By February 1928 the work of clearing the building site began, a task that involved the demolition of the Estill Boarding House and the Lottie White residence. Later the former residence of Senator Frank Willis was removed. The actual construction started in August 1928, and the project was completed the following Spring. A formal dedication ceremony was held on May 26, 1929.

Bonsack & Pierce and William Unger were the architects while Mr. Clarence L. Knowleton was the builder. The building's eight impressive stained glass windows were fabricated by the Von Gerichten Art Glass Company of Columbus, Ohio. This firm sold out to Franklin Art Glass Studios in 1929, the latter being still in business.

During WWII the number of students at Northern plunged, dropping below 200 at one point. As a cost saving measure, Presser Hall was closed for the duration. After the war an influx of new students provided funds to repair Presser and to reopen it in 1947. To cope with the large number of students, several temporary housing facilities were created on campus, One of them, the "Vetsburg" trailer park with 22 trailers, graced Presser's south lawn for several years.

In 1953, much of Presser was remodeled to serve as the home of the Heterick Memorial Library. During the summer of 1953 the sloping floor and orchestra pit in Presser's auditorium were filled with soil over which a level concrete floor was poured. The stage was removed, and a steel-framed, three-floor book stack was erected in its place. The auditorium was used as a reading room while the stack area housed the library's collections. The former practice rooms behind the first-floor stacks were removed. That space was converted into offices and an area for processing incoming materials. Moving the approximately 30,000-volume collection started on August 17, 1953, and the new facility was ready for use that fall quarter. The following year, the Schoonover Language Laboratory was also installed. This awkward situation existed until 1968 when the library was transferred to its present location. In 1972, a partial remodeling was undertaken and the language lab was moved to Dukes.

The next renovation, in 1985, finally returned Presser to its original function as a music facility. The recital hall, formerly the library's main reading room, still had a flat floor, an arrangement quite unsuitable for performances. The original stage and office area behind the hall had been converted to book stacks and then back to offices, with the stage omitted. Even part of the third floor had been given over to other uses. The speech and theater department had a small experimental theater there, the aptly named "Black Box."

All of these earlier alterations were swept away beginning in June 1985. In the recital hall, the flat floor was pulled out and the earth fill, added in 1953, removed. The stage was restored, new offices and individual practice rooms were built, and a large practice room was added to the rear of the building. Special care was taken to ensure that it blended with the original building, and it was constructed to accommodate two additional floors in the future. For decoration, the historical stained-glass windows from Lehr auditorium were removed and placed in the practice room. Despite the magnitude of the project, work was completed in under a year, and the renovated Presser Hall was dedicated on May 23, 1986. In February 1992, the recital hall was named in honor of Dorothy and Lowell Snyder in recognition of their long-standing support of Northern's music program. In 1997-98 the building was further enlarged when a two story addition was constructed over the practice room. It contains offices and classrooms.

Biography:

See ([link to Presser bio. Online](#))