



**NAME OF BUILDING:** Myer Residence Hall

**DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1955 – 1956; dedicated in 1957

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:** Colonial Revival

**ARCHITECT:** John Alfred Hamme (1897 – 1965)

**CONTRACTOR:** Wohlson and Sons from Lancaster, Pennsylvania

**PURPOSE(S)/USE(S):** Residence Hall

**PERSON(S) FOR WHOM THE BUILDING IS NAMED:** Elizabeth Myer (1863 – 1924)

**BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE:** Elizabeth Myer was born in Bareville, Pennsylvania with sight only in one eye. She loved reading and learned very quickly from a young age. She came from a very religious background and officially joined the Conestoga church of the Brethren congregation in 1886. During this time, there was an emphasis from the Church on dressing in “plain” garb to symbolize pacifism and nonresistance: “Dressing plain means you are a member of a church which emphasizes humility, egalitarianism, and conformity to community.” The church of the Brethren is a religious sect of the Pietists, and they also followed this dress code. Elizabeth Myer was an individual who decided to wear “plain” garb as a statement to her religion and beliefs, and on July 7, 1887, she became the first “plain” woman to graduate from a state normal school, Millersville State Normal School. She then went on to teach in the public schools of Lancaster County for 14 years, during which a controversy over the religious clothing she chose to wear ensued. The right of teachers to wear this religious clothing in the classroom was discussed in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the legislature and eventually it was decided that religious dress should be prohibited in public schools. This prompted the Pennsylvania Garb Law of 1895, which prohibited teachers from wearing “plain” clothing. Elizabethtown College was founded in 1899, and when deciding who to hire as its first educator, the Board chose Elizabeth Myer, thus making its opposition to the Garb Law clear.

Myer was characterized as having a “strong female personality,” and that’s exactly what made her an influential teacher at Elizabethtown College. In her initial years at the College, she taught math, elocution and English. Additionally, she was placed on a committee that handled catalogs, textbooks, printing and stationary. This committee set the first day of classes and prepared the program for the opening day. On July 17, 1901, she was appointed the Superintendent of the Model School, and the purpose of this position was to place future teachers in classroom settings. The College recognized her talent as an educator and wanted her to have a voice in who the other educators at the College would be; however, on December 2, 1901, Myer had to relieve herself of this position due to an overwhelming workload. Another role she served at Elizabethtown was as the preceptress (dean) of the College. Furthermore, in 1904, she assumed the role as one of the associate editors of *Our College Times*, a campus newspaper. Lastly, in 1920, she became the advisor for the Franklin-Keystone Society.

Apart from serving on committees, Myer had a significant role in designing curriculums. She organized the first primary and home departments at the Elizabethtown Church and played a large role in the national Sunday School Movement. Her involvement in these movements stemmed back to her interest in the Church and religion. She carried her religious beliefs with her throughout her entire life and made sure to incorporate them during her time at Elizabethtown College: “Probably the most outstanding contribution she made to student life was her chapel talks, whose humor and good sense made necessary and important lessons palatable and believable.” In 1957, Myer Hall was dedicated to Elizabeth Myer for all the contributions she made to Elizabethtown College.