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By Betsy Prueter

Rome had fallen nearly 1400 years prior to Denison University's founding in 1831. But its influence is remarkably strong on our small college atop the hill. It might come as a surprise to many of us that there could be any connection between a flourishing ancient empire and our own "Denison bubble." But Classical influence is everywhere and the editors of Ephemeris, as part of our mission and goal, not only want to expose our readers to the civilizations that laid the foundations for our own western culture, but also introduce them to the elements of Denison that would not have been possible without the architectural and engineering genius of the ancients. The Classics are alive and evidence of their long lasting ability to shape our culture is clear from the structural design of Denison.

First and foremost, we would like to draw your attention to the very substance of all residence halls and academic buildings, concrete. Romans invented it. In designing their cities, ancient architects discovered a way to mix rubble and mortar that was composed of a kind of volcanic earth known as pozzolana. It bound around the rubble and set into a hard mass, like modern cement, and its properties were responsible for much of the success of Roman architects in building vaulted structures. In a pre-modern society, this was an outstanding technological advance. What the Romans were able to do with cement resulted in feats of architecture unlike any ever seen and still unimproved upon to this day.

Concrete lays the basis for most of the construction of our campus (pun intended). But more detailed aspects of particular buildings bring our ancient parallels even closer. Buildings such as Gilpatrick, Swasey, Doane Administration building, Higley, Doane Library, several residence halls and Barney all exhibit Romanesque architectural features (see cover). Primarily, the classical evidence is represented through the use of columns and pediments. There are three "orders" of capitals, all of which are displayed at Denison. Careful examination of Gilpatrick Honors Center will reveal the use of Doric columns, recognizable by their stately and plain appearance. Symmetrical, as most Roman architecture was known to be, Doric columns were a sign of potency and power in Roman symbology. Associated with stability, they were meant to represent solidity and strength. The Doric capitals are very stoic in nature representing a characteristic conservative style.

An ancient author, Vitruvius, wrote an entire treatise on ancient architecture in the first century BC. An architect himself, his works have been influential on architects and their designs for centuries. It is from him that we receive insight concerning the application and usage of our three orders of columns. Evidently, the temples of figures such as Hercules, Minerva and Mars were adorned with Doric columns "since the virile strength of these gods makes daintiness entirely inappropriate to their houses" (Vitruvius, Bk 1, Ch 2). The Honors Center is not the only building that boasts of might and vigor. Residence halls, including Shaw, Huffman and East all front Doric capitals beneath their broken pediments. The pediment is the triangular feature atop the columns that would normally include additional elements such as relief sculpture or design. The influence is undoubtedly Classical. Doane Library, Barney-Davis and Higley Hall all exhibit Doric columns though the library and Barney's are more relief from the outside wall. Higley is designed much like the residence halls that