Leavitt Group

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The Legacy of Cedar City's "Old Hospital" and Leavitt Group

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On a snowy Thanksgiving weekend in 1983, Leavitt Group employees began moving from their two offices on Main Street into the newly remodeled "Old Hospital" in Cedar City, Utah. This was the new, official location for Leavitt Group's corporate office. The Old Hospital served as home to Leavitt Group headquarters for 38 years.

In November 2021, the Old Hospital became part of the campus at Southern Utah University (SUU).

Leavitt Group's headquarters moved from the Old Hospital to what is known by many in Cedar City as the "Old Library" or the Cedar City Memorial Library – located at 136 West University Boulevard in Cedar City.

The Old Hospital in the Early Days

> **"The three buildings associated with the Old Iron County Hospital are monuments to community cooperation and individual sacrifice."**
>
> DANE LEAVITT, FORMER LEAVITT GROUP CEO

The Old Hospital was built in 1922. Its construction was significant as it was the first hospital in Cedar City, a community of fewer than 3,000 people at the time, and the first hospital in Utah south of Provo. Though a bond of $25,000 was approved for construction, many private contributions were made as well. Lehi W. Jones donated the land for the building, and the community provided a great deal of volunteer work and other contributions during the hospital's construction.

The hospital property includes three buildings: the hospital, the red sandstone utility building, and the nurses' home. The architect was R.L. Jones, the builder in charge of the 1922 work was C. W. Kemp, and the 1935 construction was supervised by Moroni Perry.

When the Valley View Hospital was built in 1963, Iron County donated the Old Hospital to the College of Southern Utah (now Southern Utah University). From 1964 through 1982, the college used the building for dorms, classrooms, a lab facility, and storage.

ABOVE *Old Hospital (right) and nurses' home (left)*

Dixie Leavitt's Vision for the Old Hospital

> **"Renovation of the old county hospital by the Leavitt Group Insurance Company could almost be called a miracle of resurrection."**
>
> BARB YARDLEY, DAILY SPECTRUM

Dixie Leavitt has a lifetime of experience restoring old structures. His creative, architectural vision drove him to submit a bid to purchase the Old Hospital when it went up for auction in 1982.

Not everyone was originally on board for Dixie's remodel. "I have to admit I was one of the skeptics who thought the whole thing ought to be bulldozed," Dixie's wife, Anne, said. "But Dixie had the vision of what it would be like, and really everything has turned out so wonderfully." (Yardley 1984, B-3)

Dixie worked with construction manager Steve Kunz to "transform the structure from a dilapidated hull into a modern, stylish office building" which would house the Leavitt Group headquarters for 38 years. (Yardley 1984, B-3)

> **"Where once wheelchairs and hospital gurneys roamed linoleum corridors, busy employees now hurry down plush carpeted halls into very fashionable offices."**
>
> BARB YARDLEY, DAILY SPECTRUM

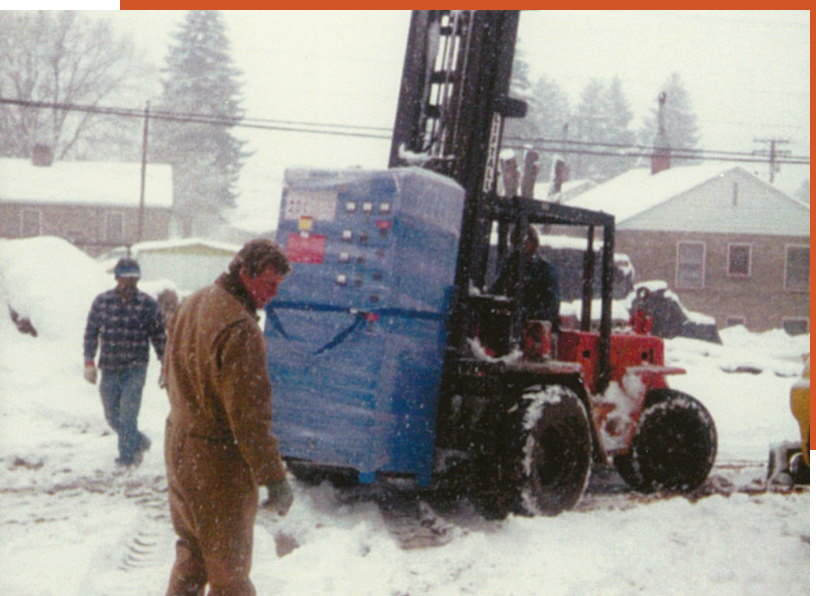
No official architectural plans were ever drawn. "We just did it as we went along," Dixie said. "I would get an idea and talk to Steve about it. He would make suggestions or sometimes even tell me it wouldn't work. As we went along, he kind of caught the vision of what I wanted to do." (Yardley 1984, B-3)

Anne said Dixie would go down to the construction site practically every morning at 7 a.m. and talk to Steve. "A lot of the plans for the building were drawn right on the 2 by 4's," she said. (Yardley 1984, B-3)

During the renovations, Mark Kenney, a long-time employee who currently serves as Leavitt Group's secretary and chief compliance officer, was living in an apartment building near the Old Hospital. "I would go over in the evening and walk through

LEFT *The 1982-1983 Old Hospital remodel. Approximately November/December 1983 during the initial move-in phase. Project manager Steve Kunz (age 30 or 31) is in the Carhart coveralls. George (Tony) Nesbitt is in the plaid shirt (Blue hat). The blue equipment was the "power conditioning unit" for the new computer system. The construction team was organized by Dixie Leavitt, who guided the project as general contractor.*

RIGHT *Dane Leavitt (age 27) and Dixon Leavitt (1 year), likely in the fall of 1983. Outside the under-construction west (main) entrance of the remodeled building.*



the building with Dixie and Steve as they talked about their plans for the next day. There were no blueprints. They would draw on the walls what they wanted. The plans for the remodeling are actually drawn on the walls behind the sheetrock in the building."

Between November 1982 and May 1984, all three buildings associated with the Old Hospital were renovated. The nurses' home was converted into a private residence for Dane and Ruth Leavitt's family. The utility building, which originally served as the heat plant and laundry room for the hospital, was remodeled into two apartments. Upon completion of the Old Hospital renovation, Leavitt Group occupied part of the building with additional space being leased to other businesses.

TOP *Footings for the 2001 addition.*

BOTTOM *Framing the 2001 addition on the southwest corner of the Old Hospital.*

Gradually, Leavitt Group grew to the point where they occupied the whole building. In 2001, another major renovation took place where an addition was built on the west side of the building. They also shored up the foundation with helical piers to make the building sturdier in the event of an earthquake.

Sharing the Old Hospital with the Community

> **"The Old Hospital has a warmth tied to its history – a history we love to share."**
>
> **DANE LEAVITT**

In June 1984, Leavitt Group hosted an open house so members of the community could tour the newly remodeled Old Hospital.

"There is one thing about it, Dixie Leavitt does not like to tear anything down. He likes to remodel. He saved that building," says Sandra Maxwell, long-time Leavitt Group employee. "There was so much emotion at the open house. There were so many people who lingered in various rooms because they were so appreciative of the fact that it hadn't been torn down."

Throughout the years, members of the community have visited the Old Hospital and shared their experiences with Dane from when the building served as a hospital. Dane shares, "I have had a number of women come visit with me and say, 'I was a nurse here.' They would tell me the story of their service. It is a place that has connections with many people."

Some members of the community would visit and ask to be shown the room where they or their children were born. Others would share tender experiences of family members passing away in the hospital.

Childhood Memories of the Old Hospital

> **"Mike, Mark, and I stood underneath those pine trees while Mom held Eric up to the window to let us meet our new baby brother."**
>
> DANE LEAVITT

The Old Hospital holds significant childhood memories for Leavitt Group employees and the community, many of whom were either born in the Old Hospital or know someone who was.

Dane shares, "I remember going to the Old Hospital after the birth of my brothers, Eric and David. Mike, Mark, and I stood underneath those pine trees while Mom held Eric up to the window to let us meet our new baby brother. Those are prime memories."

Prior to Leavitt Group purchasing the Old Hospital, the building had been boarded up and was not in use for some time. Craig Marchant and Jonell Hone, both Leavitt Group employees who had offices in the building, remember the Old Hospital during its years of abandonment.

Craig shares, "I grew up on Dewey Avenue, which is just around the corner from the Old Hospital. As Boy Scouts, we would sneak in and wander around. It was dark and not lit, and it was just a fun place to sneak in and scare ourselves."

JoNell Hones remembers, "When I was a teenager, this was our spook alley. It was boarded up, so we would sneak in and scare ourselves to death."

Experiences and Employee Traditions in the Old Hospital

> **"In the Old Hospital, we've watched the evolution of automation."**
>
> DANE LEAVITT

When Leavitt Group first moved into the Old Hospital, the lower floor was home to a large computer system. This "mother computer" tied together all the individual Leavitt Group agencies throughout Utah, Nevada, and Arizona.

Eventually the system would help eliminate the manual handling of insurance policies and the company's account records. At the time, this computer system was one of the most advanced insurance agency systems in the nation.

With this sizable and advanced computer, employees from Leavitt Group agencies throughout Utah and other western states needed onsite training. Sandra Maxwell and Dane Leavitt recall hosting these employees who travelled to Cedar City for training on many occasions.

When the Old Hospital was first remodeled, the lower level included several dormitory-type units. Each unit included a small bedroom with its own bathroom, and a shared kitchen was nearby. Employees who travelled to Cedar City for training would stay in these dorm rooms on their overnight stays. Sandra remembers the visiting employees "would get in their pajamas at night and sit in the hallway on the floor and play cards and board games and eat pizza. They had a great comradery."

In the early years at the Old Hospital, Leavitt Group employees remember celebrating birthdays and holidays together, along with enjoying the tradition of employee luncheons.

Once a month, they would set up tables and folding chairs along the hallway in the basement. All Leavitt Group employees (around 30 at the time) would gather and enjoy lunch together.

Mark Kenney recalls, “I remember holding the company Christmas dinner on the top floor. The Old Hospital corridors were wide and nicely accommodated parties and gatherings. We set up tables down the middle of the hall and had a private, family-style Christmas dinner for all Cedar City employees.”

Sandra Maxwell remembers celebrating employee birthdays together. “We used to have a birthday party every month to celebrate everyone whose birthday was in that month. Everyone would stop work and go down to the basement for a party with cake and ice cream. I remember Brent Slack’s birthday cake one year was “the big cheese.” The cake was shaped like a big wedge of cheese with holes in it with a couple of mice sneaking out. It was always a great time.”

Sandra also shared, “One of the things that was most beautiful for the city was the Christmas tree we had for several years. We would all get together and decorate the most beautiful, tall, live Christmas tree. It would show through the windows on the west for all who drove by to enjoy.”

Jim Douglas and Craig Marchant had offices in the red rock building next to the Old Hospital in the fall of 2001. Jim, a long-time Leavitt employee, remembers being at work in the red rock building and watching on the office television as the terrorist attacks unfolded on September 11, 2001. He also remembers having the opportunity to see the running of the Olympic Torch as it passed by the Old Hospital in 2002.

Prior to working for Leavitt Group, JoNell Hone worked for four years as a legal secretary for an attorney whose office was on the second floor of the Old Hospital. She then went on to join Leavitt Group and has been there ever since. JoNell’s office served as the delivery room in the hospital from 1936 through 1963, and it was the room where both her parents were born. JoNell says she appreciates the opportunity to have worked in this building, which she loves, and in this special location within the building as well.

Sandra sums it up best for how many of us even feel today, “It was a good place. Everyone worked, but we had fun. Everyone cared for each other. You could tell it was a good place to work because of the longevity of people who worked there.”

Sharing a Few Laughs Along the Way

> **“When she turned around and saw me – the Grim Reaper – files just flew everywhere!”**
>
> **MARK KENNEY**

Along with memories of days at work and shared employee traditions, we also recall a few funny experiences from the Old Hospital.

Craig Marchant laughed as he remembered the “squash incident.” It happened during that time of year when squash mysteriously appears out of seemingly nowhere (gardeners: you know what we’re talking about). Somehow, a large squash ended up in the Old Hospital. Craig recalls it was probably three feet long. “Instead of being perfectly shaped, it had a bit of a curve to it. They (names have been omitted to protect the guilty) came up with this brilliant idea to roll it off the roof.

“Instead of rolling straight down the roof and landing in the spot they planned, it careened off to the side (due to its curvature) and hit the sidewalk. It was so hard that it didn’t break, like they had thought it would. It hit the sidewalk, and that was the first bounce. The second bounce was through a glass window back towards the building where it landed in a basement office.” Luckily, no one was hurt during the “squash incident,” and this has remained a humorous memory we’ll take along with us.

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The Cedar City Memorial Library

> **"I can remember the librarians – one of my favorites was Arvilla Day."**
>
> DANE LEAVITT

In November 2021, Leavitt Group's corporate headquarters moved to what was originally known as the Cedar City Memorial Library.

Construction on the Memorial Library was completed in April 1957, with L. Robert Gardner as the project's architect. The Memorial Library served as Cedar City's library from 1957 until the Cedar City Library in the Park was built in 2003.

Leavitt Group acquired the Memorial Library in 2003. Since then, the building has housed a variety of tenants from Leavitt Group and Southern Utah University. When Leavitt Group purchased the Memorial Library, they remodeled the building with Ray Gardner as the architect. Ray is the son of L. Robert Gardner, the original architect of the Memorial Library.

Many Leavitt Group employees grew up in Cedar City and have fond memories of the Memorial Library from their youth. JoNell Hone's childhood home was within walking distance of the library. "I spent a lot of time there and always had a library card. I love that building, and I am so thankful we're going there."

Mark Kenney rode his bicycle to the library as a young boy, and one of his favorite things was getting a drink from the water fountain. "It was a free-standing water fountain in the middle of the library foyer. It was tall and had a little step on it, so the kids could step up and get a drink."

After taking the CPA exam, Mark remembers going to the library to find out if he had passed the exam. Letters with the exam results were eventually sent to registered applicants but not for several months after the exam. He recalls, "I was very interested to see whether I passed or not, so I actually went to the library and had to look back through the archival newspapers to find the edition of the Salt Lake Tribune that had the listing of those individuals who had passed the CPA exam."

Craig Marchant also spent time in the Memorial Library throughout his youth and college days. He remembers spending time in the children's reading room and attending a community film night in the basement of the library. He spent a lot of time studying there as a college student. "It was where I tell people I earned my college degree because I would go there on Saturday mornings and spend the entire day in the back corner of the basement. I didn't see a soul while I was there, so I could just focus and study."

ABOVE *Children's reading room in the Old Library.*

ABOVE *The Old Library in the early years.*

ABOVE *The Old Library now serving as Leavitt Group's headquarters.*

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Mark Kenney also shared a funny Halloween story that happened in the Old Hospital. "I used to really get into Halloween, and one year my wife made me a Grim Reaper cape. It was a big, black, flowing robe with a hood that was lined in white. On Halloween I was dressed up in this costume. I snuck up behind one of the secretaries who was getting files out of the file room. When she turned around and saw me, files just flew everywhere – they were all over the floor. I felt really bad that I scared her so bad."

Many have asked, "is the Old Hospital haunted?" We'll leave that to you to decide, but the secretary Mark surprised in his costume that day may say otherwise.

38 Years of Memories

> **"I love this building. I love that Dixie had a vision for it and has made it a memorable place for Leavitt Group and the community."**
>
> JONELL HONE

There are mixed emotions among Leavitt Group employees regarding the move from the Old Hospital after 38 years of memories in the historic building. There is a bit of sadness in moving on but happiness to see the Old Hospital become part of the SUU campus.

Craig Marchant shared, "This has been a fantastic building for Leavitt Group. It's neat to have the history, and it's a practical office building that's been very usable. You think back on Dixie's decision to buy it originally – he probably wouldn't have foreseen all the utilization that we've gotten out of it over the years, but he saw something. That early vision really turned into a fantastic asset for our company. It'll be nice to see SUU get the utility out of it."

Even though the building feels like home to Jim Douglas, he says, "I'm excited to see it go to SUU."

"Now the building has come full circle. Leavitt Group purchased the building from SUU in 1982 and now SUU has reacquired it from Leavitt Group," says Mark Kenney. "It's really a great building right in the center of town. It's a place I will always have fond memories of and a great place to work. It will be sad to leave."

Sandra Maxwell shared, "I think it is an amazing idea to move the building back to SUU. It is going back home. It is part of history that is now going to remain where it can be of the most benefit."

For Dane and Ruth Leavitt, the move will have a more significant personal impact. Their home of 38-plus years will be sold along with the Old Hospital. Dane shares, "We have loved our four decades living in this home. It's a special place for us. We can also see the inevitability of the university's need for it and it being an ideal circumstance for them. Ruth and I are supportive of the move. Although to say it's pain free would not be accurate, but we feel good about it. We're pressing forward and finding some excitement in the coming changes."

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