

Moulton Tower Arrives as an ‘Enduring Symbol’ of USA Spirit



Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza has become a campus landmark and a gathering place for events. The tower, named in honor of President Gordon Moulton and his wife, Geri, was funded through contributions and dedicated in 2010.

Picture a bucolic college campus setting with students strolling landscaped grounds as bells chime from an impressive tower.

After years of planning, fundraising and hard work by countless University of South Alabama alumni and supporters, a campus landmark emerged at USA.

On Oct. 8, 2010, more than 3,000 USA students, alumni, friends and supporters attended the dedication of the Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, located between Alumni Hall and the Mitchell Center.

The 140-foot-high brick and stone Gordon and Geri Moulton Bell Tower houses an electronic carillon as well as four bronze bells, ranging in size from 600 pounds to more than a ton.

The complex features seating for small and large events, as well as an amphitheater, two arbors, an alumni plaza and Walls of Honor with the names of the 1,300 donors to the project.



Gordon and Geri Moulton at the October 2010 dedication of the belltower named in their honor.

“This tower is a permanent reminder of the vital role the alumni play in the university community and family,” Alexis Atkins, a member of the Class of 1997 and president of the USA National Alumni Association, said at the dedication. “The nature of this project speaks to the community effort of the alumni association. You are the ones who made this happen and deserve the credit. This landmark represents USA’s honored past and most cherished ambitions. It will become our symbol.” Kimberly Proctor, then-president of the Student Government Association, said, “Each day, these bells will mark the moments of our lives.”

“I see a number of teaching moments all around me,” said Dr. Jim Connors, chairman of the Faculty Senate. “I see a beautiful setting for outdoor concerts, for poetry readings, oratory and debate, the exchange of ideas.”

The Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza complex has become a place where performances occur, students meet and groups gather, and it is now the centerpiece of major university moments including homecoming and graduation.

The complex was the culmination of 15 years of planning and fundraising by the USA National Alumni Association.

“At first, the dream was that of simply a large campus landmark,” said Dr. Joseph F. Busta Jr., vice president for development and alumni relations, “but it evolved to be much more than a concrete and brick structure. The dream, now realized, is a special, nay, a sacred space.”

Even while the tower was still under construction, USA’s Board of Trustees in 2009 unanimously passed a resolution naming the tower “in appreciation and recognition of the service of President Gordon Moulton and Mrs. Geri Moulton,” calling it “fitting and appropriate to associate their names and legacy with the belltower — a pre-eminent landmark structure that will be an enduring symbol of the spirit of the University of South Alabama.”

Upon approval of the resolution naming the tower, President Moulton said, “Working with the students and faculty, and being able to see this institution evolve, have been very rewarding experiences for me. I couldn’t imagine anything better than having your colleagues say thank you in a way like this.

“It’s been a great journey, and Geri has been a part of it every step of the way,” he added. “She has been an immeasurable help to me.”

Geri Moulton said she was deeply touched by the board’s gesture.

“This is a statement about my husband’s life’s work,” she said. “The unyielding trust and support of the board propels him to do his best. The University of South Alabama has given him an opportunity to make a living, to make a life and to make a difference. What can possibly be better than that?”



Murals that depict teaching, research, health care and outreach were installed at the base of Moulton Tower in 2012. Jason Guynes, USA visual arts department chairman, created the panels with the help of students.

Moulton Tower Murals will Forever Tell the Story of USA



Jason Guynes, chairman of USA's visual arts department, created the murals by employing the same ancient and painstaking painting techniques used to create the European frescoes.

When the University of South Alabama in 2010 realized a longtime dream in completing the landmark Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, the architect designed in an added bonus — a vaulted masonry ceiling to serve as a perfect canvas for telling the University's story.

USA had to go no further than its own visual arts department to find an accomplished muralist with a national reputation for creating exquisite works of public art. After a three-year labor of love, the colorful murals of Moulton Tower are being heralded as an awe-inspiring representation of the heart, soul and mission of the University.

An idea conceived at the dining room table of USA President Gordon Moulton and his wife, Geri, in a conversation with Jason Guynes, chairman of USA's visual arts department, the work is a montage of people and moments — enthusiastic students, committed

faculty, dedicated researchers, skilled physicians, triumphant athletes, gleeful marching band musicians and cheerleaders, and proud alumni.

"Just as the wonderful vaulted frescoes of Europe so vividly tell the history of the people who created them, the murals communicate to the ages the life of the University of South Alabama through its teaching and faculty, student life, research, health care and service," President Moulton said.

Guynes created the murals by employing the same ancient and painstaking painting techniques used to

create the European frescoes. Guynes and six students invested more than 4,000 hours creating the art in a campus warehouse.

"This has been a great teaching tool and a grand opportunity for our students to get firsthand experience on a highly complex and inspirational project," Guynes said.

The 70 models who posed for the murals are real members of the University family — faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends — chosen not on the basis of their personal identity or contribution, but to represent the whole.

Beneath the massive 140-foot tower, each of the four triangular murals is 22 feet at its base and 12 feet from top to bottom, representing more than 500 square feet of imagery. The pieces are trimmed in classic art cameos that represent USA's academic colleges.

The murals were made possible through a generous gift from Jim Barganier, principal architect of Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, with additional support from USA alumni and friends.



Student artists helped work on the murals as part of their classroom instruction.

"The murals project is a dream come true for an artist — a public art project that will have a lasting and far-reaching effect on the community," Guynes said. "This work will stand the test of time, outliving us all for the enjoyment of many generations."



The murals add to the beauty of Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza. A dedication for the murals was held during homecoming in the fall of 2012.

Moulton Tower Murals

The colorful murals of Moulton Tower are a representation of the heart, soul and mission of the University of South Alabama — student life, research, teaching, and health care and outreach. The murals took three years to complete and were dedicated in October 2012.



Student Life



Research



Teaching



Health Care and Outreach