

Keeny Hall (1936) is a three story brick collegiate building occupying one side of the old quadrant on the Louisiana Tech campus. Stylistically, it represents the latter phase of the American Colonial Revival. Despite the almost total modification of the interior and the replacement of the windows, the building easily retains enough character-defining elements to be recognizable to a student from the historic period.

Keeny Hall takes its architectural cue from large Colonial era public buildings such as the dorms at Harvard and the College of William and Mary. The building rests on a half raised basement which becomes a full story in the rear as the ground falls away. It consists of a three story main block under a massive hip roof, two story hyphen wings and two story end pavilions. The facades of the end pavilions are set at right angles to the main facade. The main block culminates in a pedimented pavilion which contains a huge round head window lighting the main staircase. This window is set above the principal entrance, which takes the form of a Roman Doric aedicule motif surmounted by a curving broken pediment with an urn at the center. Either side of the entrance is a small door surmounted by a decorative cast tablet featuring an open book resting upon a bed of laurel branches. The tympanum of the pediment is stuccoed and features a brincade pattern. The overall effect of the entrance pavilion is to provide a strong vertical element in a building that would otherwise consist of row upon row of more or less equally spaced six over six windows.

Keeny Hall's most striking feature is its tall octagonal English Baroque cupola crowning the hip roof of the main block. It consists of a rusticated base with a clock, a shaft with square head louvered panels and an ogee molded dome. The dome is surmounted by an overscaled weathervane.

Other noteworthy "Colonial" features include the modillion cornice on the main block, the segmental pedimented side entrances, the balustrades flanking the front entrance steps and the brickwork. The building's brick is in varying shades from red to brown. This gives the surface a rich textured effect similar to that found on rear Colonial brick buildings where burned headers were used.

The interior of Keeny Hall is (and was) given over to hallways, offices and classrooms. Modernized during the 1980s, it contains nothing of architectural note. The other change made at that time was the replacement of all the six over six windows with new window units which have snap-on glazing bars in a six over six pattern. Despite these alterations, the building would be easily recognizable to someone from the historic period. Character-defining features such as the cupola, the massing and fenestration, the distinctive entrance pavilion and the textured "Colonial" brick survive. Hence the building retains its historical integrity and its National Register eligibility.

SIGNIFICANT DATES:	1936
ARCHITECT/BUILDER:	Weiss, Dreyfous & Seiferth, Architects Neild, Somdal & Neild, Associate Architects Caldwell Bros. & Hart, Contractors
CRITERION:	A

Keeny Hall is of local significance in the area of education because it is an important component of a critical chapter in Louisiana Tech's history, the great construction boom of the 1930s which increased the physical plant by one-third, including numerous major buildings such as Keeny. See the multiple property form "The 1930s Building Boom at Louisiana Tech" for a fuller statement of significance.

Additional Historical Background:

Keeny Hall was built in 1936 to replace "Old Main," which had been destroyed by fire in January of that year. In addition to its local significance in education, the building is of historical interest because of its association with the famous Louisiana Scandals of 1939 -- widespread scandals which ended in prison terms for many high ranking individuals, including Governor Richard Leche, for whom Keeny Hall was originally named. The building was renamed in the early 1940s for J.E. Keeny, who had been Tech's president from 1907 to 1926. A 1945 history of the university notes that the name was changed after the death of Keeny, although one can't help but believe it also had something to do with the fact that the building's namesake was dishonored. The building appears in yearbooks as Leche Hall until 1940, when it is simply labeled "Administration Building." It appears in 1945 as Keeny Hall.

One of the many charges made against Leche involved "irregularities" in the construction of the Tech administration building. In September 1939 the Lincoln Parish grand jury indicted Leche along with four others on "a charge of increasing the original accepted bid" for erected the administration building. The other four were Leon C. Weiss, F. Julius Dreyfous and Solis Seiferth, the building's chief architects, and Monte E. Hart, a member of the contracting firm of Caldwell Brothers and Hart. The state board of education had paid \$291,482 to Caldwell Brothers and Hart, \$27,000 more than the bid on which the contract had been awarded. An additional \$5,000 was paid for "unauthorized expenditures." In October 1939 Summa Caldwell of Caldwell Brothers and Hart wrote a check to Louisiana Tech for the \$32,000 in question. The check was placed directly in Tech's building fund instead of the state building fund.

Note: Political significance is not being claimed for Keeny Hall because it is one of a number of buildings surviving in Louisiana which are associated with the 1939 scandals, with one not being any more or less important than another. For example, Caldwell Brothers and Hart was also investigated for alleged kickback schemes in a huge building program at LSU in Baton Rouge.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

See multiple property cover form bibliography.