

Campus Crossroad



VINTAGE VIEW: A line of students walking down Central Avenue to get lunch off campus in 1898 passes faculty homes, now long demolished.

The spot now known as Ho Plaza has long been a nexus of student life



It's Cornell's version of a town square: the bit of acreage where Central Avenue dead-ends. As the real estate adage goes, location is everything—and that particular patch is at the heart of the Hill. It's contiguous to major student hubs (the Straight and the Cornell Store) and to campus's iconic McGraw Tower. It stands as the gateway to Collegetown in one direction and West Campus in another. And several schools and colleges—Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Law, Business—are just steps away.

In the Big Red's early days, Central Avenue was lined with professors' cottages, including one built for T. F. "Tee Fee" Crane of "Give My Regards to Davy" fame. As Kermit Parsons, MRP '53, wrote in *The Cornell Campus*, his 1968 history of East Hill's planning and architecture, the road "was not graded and graveled until 1873, when large-scale grading and road projects needed to make the campus walkable in all seasons were carried out."

The street got its most notable resident in 1891 with the completion of the tower, which stands guard over its northern terminus. Like its neighbor East Avenue (soon to be known as Feeney Way), Central was once distinguished by towering elm trees whose branches met above the roadway to form a graceful canopy—but, sadly, they perished of Dutch elm disease in the Sixties. Up until the mid-1990s, cars could access the block in front of Gannett Health Center (as it was then known). The pedestrian friendly Ho Plaza was dedicated at Reunion 1995; except for a generation's worth of arboreal growth, the area has looked roughly the same ever since.

In the following pages, CAM offers a photographic tour of this beloved Big Red hub—which has borne the footfalls of tens of thousands of students, faculty, staff, and visitors over the past century and a half. >



HEART OF THE HILL: The precursor to Ho Plaza (clockwise from bottom left) circa 1940, 1910, and 1970, and in 1988

PHOTOS: THIS PAGE, TOP, PROVIDED; OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM, KEN ZIRNIGEL





THEN AND NOW: The street framed by majestic elm trees in 1933. Opposite page: Ho Plaza in 2020.

PHOTOS: OPPOSITE PAGE, JASON KOSIOWSKI

