

K- U of K memories & current
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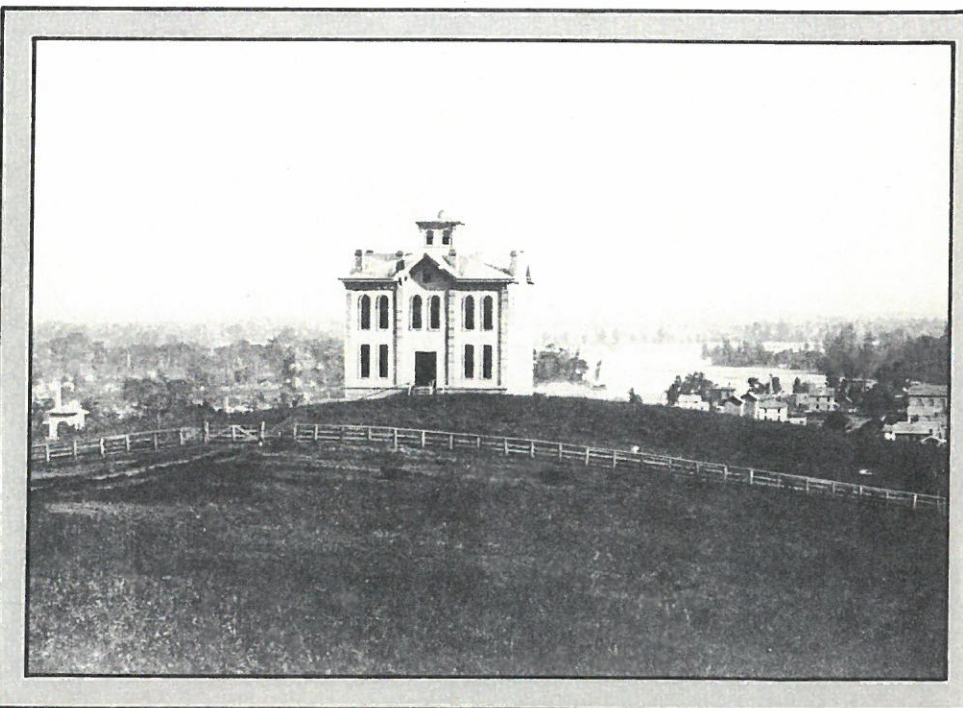
On the median separating KU's Gertrude Sellards Pearson Hall from the GSP-Corbin parking lot, there stands a black cast-iron fire basket. Most KU women pass by it without a thought. It is unnoticed because it is so familiar. And yet, its historical significance is impressive because the basket rests where the University of Kansas began.

The basket is the only memorial to North College Hall, one of seven buildings that once served the University, passed from Mount Oread and never were remembered in building name or structural form. None of these seven ghosts ever rose again in Lawrence.

They are the lost buildings of the University of Kansas.

From 1866 to 1982, the University grew from a 10-acre site and one building to a statewide educational complex of three campuses, more than 1,050 acres and 136 major buildings. Fourteen buildings have risen and then fallen on Mount Oread in those 116 years. Incredibly, only seven of them—North College, Oread, Myers, Old Journalism Hall, the Student Commons, the Observatory and the Home Management House—have been lost both in name and form forever.

From the time of North College Hall's 1866 opening to Oread Hall's 1977 demolition, the lost buildings were familiar sights to six generations of KU students and alumni. And when a sledgehammer, wrecking ball or, in one case, an Army tank crumpled the physical structure, only the memories remained.



Old North College

North College Hall was opened in September 1866. The two-story, native limestone building with its stubby cupola constituted the entire University until University Hall (later Old Fraser) was completed in 1872. The 11-room structure sat on a 10-acre site that today includes Corbin and Gertrude Sellards Pearson halls and their central parking lot at the northeast edge of campus.

Though closed upon Old Fraser's completion, North College reopened in 1890 to house the KU School of Law for nearly four years. After 1898, the fine arts department was housed there "temporarily" for nearly 18 years.

By 1916, however, the 50-year-old structure was declared unsafe and inadequate for University needs. On Jan. 11, 1917, Glee Club practice and, later, a recital were canceled when high winds threatened to shake down the building.

Such dangerous conditions doomed KU's first home, and its demolition continued through 1918. In February 1919, a metal box was found in a sec-

ond-story cornerstone. Artifacts within included two 1859 Lawrence newspapers, a Bible and a copy of the Topeka (Free State) Kansas Constitution signed by Charles Robinson, the first governor of Kansas.

North College Hall's final remnants fell in April 1919, when a two-man Army tank razed two 20-foot-high sections of the east wing. The tank was on Mount Oread to demonstrate its destructive capabilities to benefit the Fifth Victory Loan Drive that year.

Bits of North College would rise again by 1928, though. The KU Torch Chapter of Mortar Board—the national senior women's honor society, which since has become coeducational—built two-foot-high walls around a hearth and fire basket from stones salvaged from North College Hall.

These walls were dismantled during construction of Gertrude Sellards Pearson Hall in the early 1950s. The Mortar Board fire basket since has remained on the site to commemorate the University's beginnings in North College Hall.

Law Alumni
1982

MEMORIES

The University's
seven lost buildings

By George Pollock Jr.



The KU Observatory

North College itself would bring about another lost building, the KU Observatory. When Professor (later Chancellor) Francis Snow correctly predicted a meteor shower for Nov. 17, 1867, his students observed the shower from North College's cupola.

Lawrence citizens were so impressed by Snow's accuracy that the city council donated some money to build a proper observatory for the University. This first stone structure was built in front of the later site of Old Fraser Hall at Jayhawk Boulevard and Lilac

Lane. When Old Fraser was built, it overshadowed the observatory.

A site now occupied by the Chancellor's residence was then donated to the University by Charles Robinson for the observatory. His only condition of the donation stipulated that the University would build a permanent observatory on the property within five years. When the University failed to meet that condition, the property reverted to Robinson.

KU thus had no proper observatory until 1919. Then, a small frame building was constructed west of Old Ha-

worth Hall, which is the site of today's Wescoe Hall. The observatory was moved again in 1926 because it was on the projected site of Hoch Auditorium.

A neatly graded knoll west of Marvin Hall became the observatory's next home until it was demolished in the early 1940s during construction of Lindley Hall. Lindley now houses the Clyde W. Tombaugh Observatory, named in honor of the KU alumnus [c'36, g'39] who discovered the planet Pluto in 1930.



Myers Hall

But the heavens were studied philosophically as well as scientifically. With this attitude in mind, the Disciples of Christ purchased the former Rush farmhouse on Mount Oread in 1902. That 1880 house was to be used as a Bible classroom and living quarters for the church's Lawrence Bible Chair teacher. It too was destined to be a lost building.

The \$6,000, two-story, brick-veneer house was located on the southeast corner of Oread Avenue and 13th Street, across from the Kansas Union. Structural enlargement for educational purposes began in 1906, costing nearly \$20,000 and expanding the building to 14 rooms.

Sponsored by the Christian Women's Board of Missions, the work re-

ceived its largest contribution from a Philadelphia widow, Mary Myers, who gave \$10,000 in memory of her husband, J. Lewis Myers. In appreciation, officials named the renovated farmhouse Myers Hall in 1912.

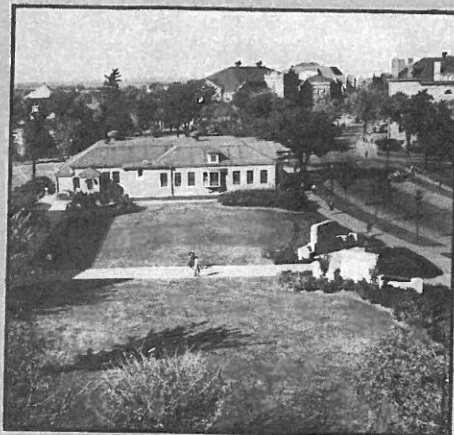
The basement of Myers Hall housed the Oread Training School from 1911 to 1915. That school was the education laboratory until 1915, when University High School [now the University Relations Center] was built for that purpose.

An ecumenical Kansas School of Religion was established in Myers Hall in 1921. Elective religion courses for University credit were offered on the first floor. Various religious groups, such as the YMCA, YWCA and the Wesley Foundation, also had offices in

the former farmhouse.

"Christ Blessing the Children," a 6-by-10 stained-glass window, rose above Myers Hall's west entrance. It was a 1911 gift by Margaret Foley of Greensburg, Ind., as a memorial to her children, Edwin and Anna. The seven-color window had been created by Tiffany's of New York.

Chapel services were held in the building's auditorium, which also served as a cafeteria until after World War I. An expanding curriculum, however, rendered 86-year-old Myers Hall inadequate by 1966. It was demolished that year during construction of Smith Hall, which now houses the department of religious studies and the Kansas School of Religion, on the same site.

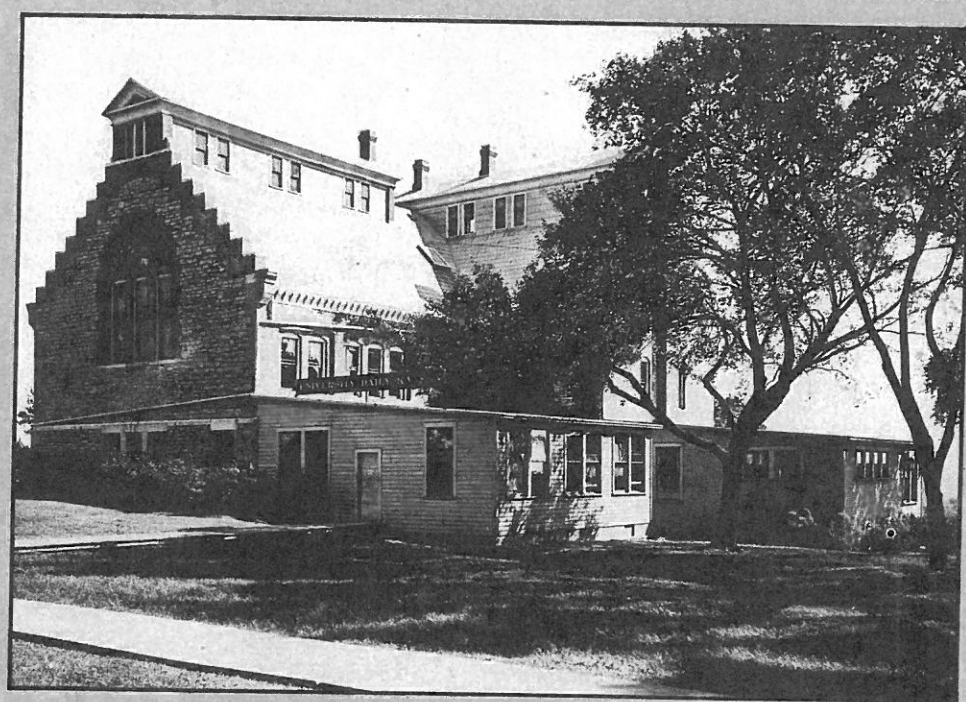


The Student Commons

Students at KU didn't forsake a snack on campus when Myers Hall's cafeteria closed after the Great War, though. From 1921 until February 1927—when the Kansas Union's first cafeteria opened—hungry students grabbed a quick bite at another lost building, the Student Commons.

This one-story frame building stood on the southeast corner of Jayhawk Boulevard and Sunflower Road. After its cafeteria closed, the Commons housed offices for the Jayhawker yearbook and the Stenographic Bureau. The University Orchestra also used the Commons as a practice room.

In 1932, the anatomy department established offices and held classes in the Commons until March 3, 1943, when it burned.



The Journalism Shack

The anatomy department, however, had become accustomed to moving from one building to another. In 1912, it left another lost building to seek better quarters. That structure originally was called Chemistry Hall, but many alumni know it as the Old Journalism Building. Built in 1883, the \$12,000 native limestone structure occupied the site of Watson Library's 1963 expansion eastward.

Because unventilated chemistry labs in Old Fraser's basement made the building smell peculiar, to say nothing of the hazards, the University built a separate chemistry and physics laboratory less than 30 seconds' walk away.

Shaped like a north-south letter T, Chemistry Hall had a subdued Romanesque style akin to Spooner Hall. Offices and classrooms—including Room 102, a 75-seat lecture hall with a two-story ceiling—were on the first floor. Laboratories were in the basement.

Expansion of both the chemistry and physics departments compelled their evacuation of Chemistry Hall in 1900. Premedical students were assigned classes there, and the building became known as Medical Hall. They, in turn, left in 1912, when the department of journalism entered, and it then was called the Journalism Building.

Room 102 became the University Daily Kansan's newsroom. The paper's printing press was installed in the basement. Journalism students dubbed the experienced structure "the Shack," and they called themselves "Shack Rats."

The Kansan was produced at the Shack until 1952. That year, the School of Journalism moved into its current home, Flint Hall [formerly Fowler Shops]. A wrecking ball ended the existence of the Old Journalism Building in 1962.



Home Management House

To provide senior women with practical experience and training in home management, the department of home economics convinced the University in 1930 to build the \$10,000, furnished Home Management House. On Mount Oread's south slope, slightly northeast of Prairie Acre on 16th Street, the frame bungalow-residence contained a kitchen, laundry and an office for the live-in director. Green shutters on the two-story house featured silhouettes of KU Jayhawks.

The second-floor had three bedrooms, each with twin beds. A fourth bedroom, labeled "nursery" on the blueprints, measured only 6 feet by 10 feet. The senior woman assigned to this less-than-spacious room was facetiously considered lucky.

Five women lived in the Home Management House for six-week periods. During that time, they purchased food, prepared meals, entertained company and did all their own laundry, cleaning and housekeeping. Required activities

included a tea for 60 people, a formal dinner for 10 and an informal buffet for 15.

Times changed, though, and with them, attitudes toward women's roles. KU's home economics department dwindled in enrollment until the program was phased out by 1965. The Home Management House deteriorated and stood abandoned at the time of its 1976 demolition.

Oread Hall

One of the causes of such social change in the United States was World War II. The Allied victory also would bring about KU's seventh lost building. With the flood of veterans returning to college campuses, the Kansas State War Emergency Board in May 1946 made available \$75,000 for removing unused buildings from the Parsons Army Ordnance Plant.

Rebuilt on the KU and Kansas State campuses, these buildings were expected to relieve crowded housing at both schools. The original estimate of students to be thus housed at KU was as high as 900, later revised to 450. By the time six trailers of lumber had arrived from the Parsons plant in August 1946, the number had been dropped to 162.

The two-story, H-shaped building erected west of Memorial Stadium was named Oread Hall. One of its features, undervalued at the time, was its solid maple floors. Oread Hall was expected to be used for only five years.

It was, in fact, still being used—though no longer as a residence hall—by 1966. That year, its more than 160 rooms were being used as offices and classrooms, replacing those in demolished post-World War II annexes north of Strong Hall.

The American studies and mathematics departments both occupied the building in its later years. Studios were assigned there for the philosophy and Western Civilization faculties. After



1973, there were art studios in Oread Hall until its 1977 demolition.

Phoenix-like, the ruins of Oread Hall brought forth something special to the University in September 1977. A limestone rock, shaped much like the Jayhawk, was unearthed during construction of a temporary parking lot on Oread Hall's former site. Today, the rock is stored in the Visual Arts Building.

Thus, from the passing of the old, something priceless arose for the future. So it is with the lost buildings

of the University of Kansas. Another year, another graduating class, passes from Mount Oread, but the Mortar Board fire basket continues to evoke memories of the lost buildings. Through them had passed more than 110 years of KU students. And with the passing of the lost buildings arose a University even greater than the one they had known within their walls. □

George Pollock Jr., a Wichita senior in journalism, received his bachelor's degree in English at KU in 1981.