

Building designs varied

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Critics of KU's campus architecture abound. The inclination of most is to consider what could be a designer's geographical paradise as the site of architectural disharmony.

It's easy to find things to criticize. Wescoe Hall is likened to a parking garage and Fraser Hall to a penitentiary. And compromises made to keep within construction budgets aren't sufficient justification for uninteresting buildings. Still, there are positive points to be considered.

"THE CAMPUS is what you call beautiful not because of the buildings, but in spite of them," Curtis Besinger, professor of architecture and urban development, said yesterday.

He said he thought much of the problem was that many buildings had been designed without an effort to create a relationship between them.

As an example, Besinger cited a poor relationship between Wescoe and Strong halls.

When Harry Weese, a practicing architect from Chicago, lectured here Tuesday, he walked to Marvin Hall from the Kansas Union. Between Wescoe and Strong, Weese's comment was that he preferred to look north, Besinger said.

BUT THERE are buildings that are related well. When Dyche Hall was built near Spooner Hall, it was kept much on scale, the same using the same materials and colors.

The two buildings also were positioned face-to-face, so as not to "avoid" each other. In a sense, they are well-mannered and acknowledge each other, he said.

According to Besinger, other problems with KU architecture include buildings in which too many undefined ideas have been included.

"DESIGNING a building is a little like writing a clear paragraph," he said. "There must be one idea and there must be careful editing to express that idea,

just as mistakes, bad grammar and spelling are corrected."

There also are buildings that are pretentious, attempting to be more important than they should, he said.

"Maybe no building should be most important in a 'democratic' situation," he said. "Wescoe competes now for importance, but the way Strong sits there, it is still more important. In terms of social behavior, Wescoe is an ill-mannered building."

BESINGER said things making the campus beautiful included the hill, the natural geography and large outdoor spaces such as Marvin Grove and the Potter Lake area.

"The drives help make visitors aware of these outdoor spaces, and the buildings become just background," Besinger said.

He said most buildings on campus could best be interpreted by the way they reflected building styles being used when they were constructed. A synopsis of facts about KU buildings and Besinger's comments follow:

BAILEY—Built in 1899 and 1900, Bailey doesn't pretend to be anything. It's a nice background for vines. The bothersome aluminum entrance created a necessary vestibule when the building was remodeled, the arch being used to recognize arches on the existing building.

BLAKE—Specially-shaped windows and door openings make Blake a little pretentious, as if it's trying to call attention to itself. The present building replaced old Blake Hall, a structure that emulated a French chateau.

DYCHE—Completed in 1902, Dyche has a Romanesque style. The entrance is based on the portal of the Church of St. Trophime in Arles, France.

FLINT—Built in 1898, Flint was formerly named Fowler Shops. It is not pretentious and quietly complements other buildings.

FRASER—Completed in 1967, Fraser reflects a '50s and '60s trend to create big packages of air-conditioned and lighted space. After much controversy, it

replaced old Fraser Hall, whose two towers had become a symbol for alumni. Two flag-bearing cupolas aren't satisfactory substitutes for the towers.

GREEN—Green is styled after the Beauxarts interpretation of classical Greek architecture, best seen by its portico of four fluted pillars. It stands by itself but relates well to Dyche in color and scale relationships.

HAWORTH—Built in 1969, Haworth also is a big space package, but isn't too "noisy" a neighbor.

HOCH—A version of collegiate Gothic architecture, Hoch reflects mid- to late-'20s taste in college architecture. It originally was a basketball arena as well as a concert hall.

KANSAS UNION—Chicago architect Irving K. Pond designed the original part, which was begun in 1925 as a World War I memorial. Pond used his own system of ornamentation and collegiate Gothic style. Additions to the Union haven't maintained the original building's concept of scale. Metal roof additions reflect a suburban idea of "good taste."

LEARNED—Before additions began in 1975, Learned failed to express a clear idea. Now the building's structure has a stronger treatment and statement.

LINDLEY—Lindley shows a concept of modern architecture dominant after World War II and used in many school buildings. It was completed in 1943.

MALOTT—Completed in 1954, Malott's style is much like Lindley's. A two-story addition was added to the western section in 1970.

MARVIN—Marvin's design isn't collegiate Gothic, but an earlier form of Gothic Revival. Despite few Gothic details, the building has Gothic overtones.

MOORE—Moore demonstrates a trend still popular—a preference on the part of some architects for shed roofs as a current fashion.

MURPHY—There is a Swedish-modern look in certain areas of Murphy. Columns supporting covered walkways around a courtyard copy concepts used in

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Harvard Graduate Center designed by The Architects Collaborative. Built in 1959, Murphy's concepts are common among those used in early '50s construction.

NICHOLS—If located on the main campus, Nichols wouldn't be a good "neighbor." It's not offensive as a west campus building because there is space around it. Pre-cast concrete elements were the trend when Nichols was built.

NUNEMAKER—The building reflects a desire to use exposed concrete, mechanical elements and strong colors in architecture.

SMITH—Smith is pretentious in that too many architectural ideas are combined. With too many ideas, no statement is completely made and parts tend to be unrelated. Smith replaced Myers Hall which was demolished in 1966.

SNOW—Built in 1929, Snow has a striped-down collegiate Gothic style reflective of English campus buildings.

SPENCER—Completed in 1968, Spencer relates better to the campanile and the area around it than to Strong.

SPOONER—The oldest remaining University building and the first library,

Spooner has a Richardsonian Romanesque style. H. H. Richardson had died when Spooner was designed, but his libraries provided inspiration for many 1890s buildings.

STRONG—By its firm "stance," Strong has the appearance of being the campus' most important building.

SUMMERFIELD—Built in 1959, Summerfield is, in part, a reflection of the United Nations building in New York City.

TWENTE—Until 1974, Twente was Watkins Hospital. One of few buildings in town designed in the "art deco" manner, Twente has geometric ornamentation that is both stylized and abstract. A bas-relief on the tower depicts St. George slaying the dragon.

WATSON—Completed in 1926, Watson replaced Spooner as University library and has gone through several minor additions. It was also collegiate Gothic originally.

WESCOE—This building replaced the old Haworth and Robinson halls and reflects contemporary styling. Windows are mostly decorative and not designed to help with classroom lighting.