

Nichols

Midnight Flames Engulf Nichols

BY THE REPORT
LABORER
 The fire broke out at about 11:30 p.m. in the Nichols Gymnasium, which was being used as a dormitory for students. The fire spread rapidly, and the building was completely engulfed in flames. The fire department arrived at about 12:30 a.m. and worked for several hours to contain the fire. The fire caused significant damage to the building, and the cause of the fire is still under investigation.

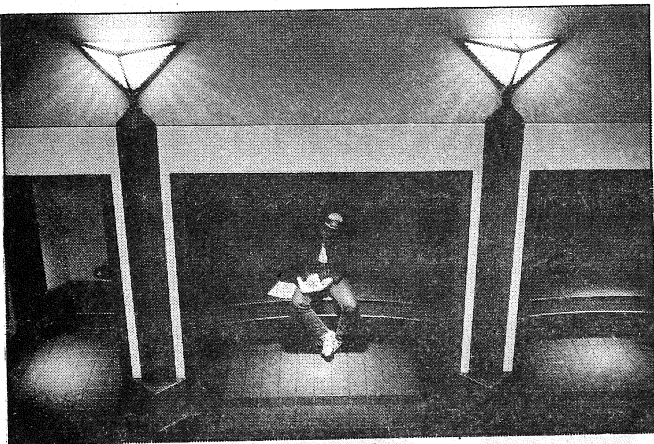
LABORER
 The fire broke out at about 11:30 p.m. in the Nichols Gymnasium, which was being used as a dormitory for students. The fire spread rapidly, and the building was completely engulfed in flames. The fire department arrived at about 12:30 a.m. and worked for several hours to contain the fire. The fire caused significant damage to the building, and the cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Kansas State Collegian

KBI Seeks Blaze Origin



THE INVERSE BRIGHTNESS OF THE NICHOLS GYMNASIUM. Almost obscures the silhouette of spectators watching the blaze.



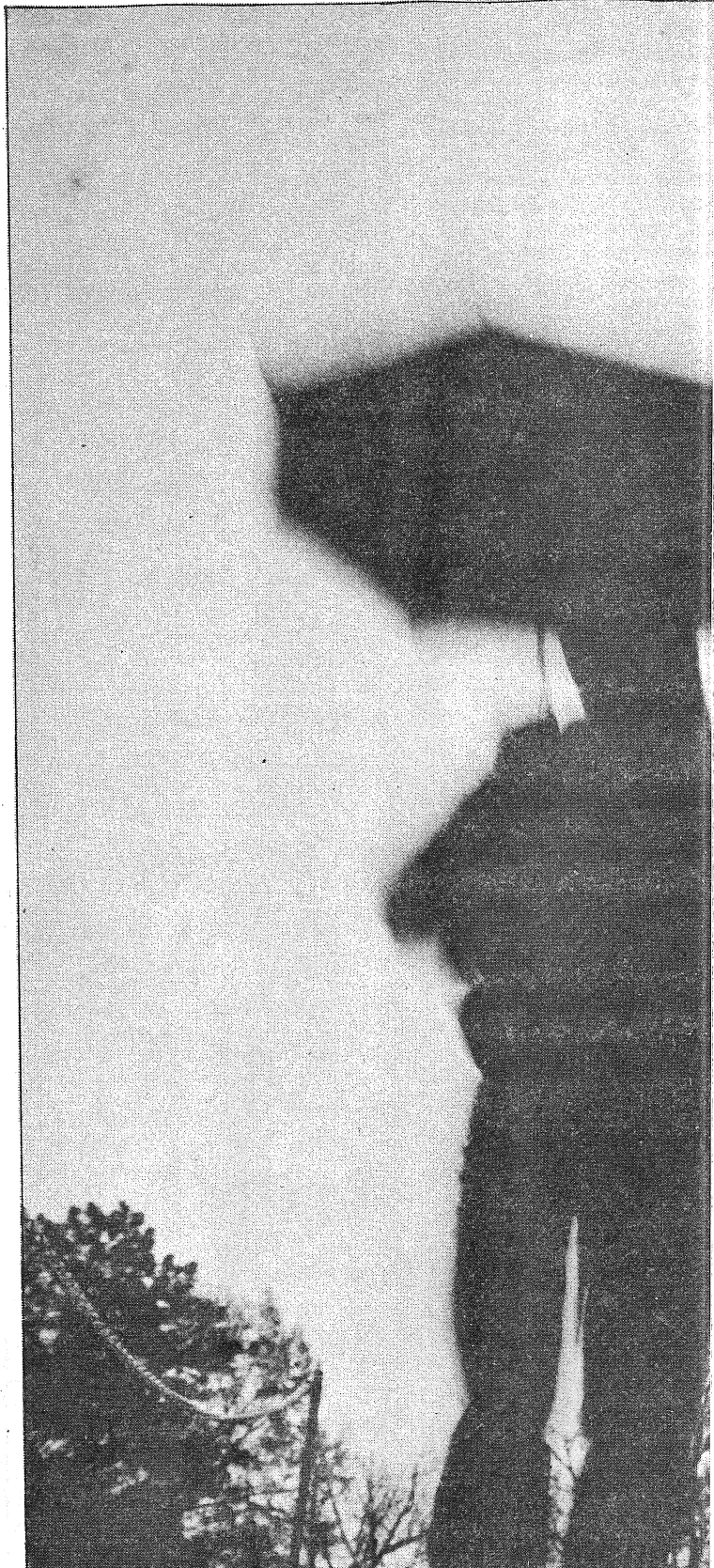
High-backed oak benches offer students bucolic respite from the mainstream traffic of the Nichols Hall atrium.

Nichols Gymnasium, gutted by fire nearly 17 years ago, is scheduled for rededication at 11 a.m. Saturday, as Nichols Hall.

The 74-year-old building has been the focal point of protest marches, Collegian editorials, Castle Crusade — a campus group dedicated to the preservation of Nichols — and

organization worked to keep the issue of Nichols preservation and renovation in the headlines.

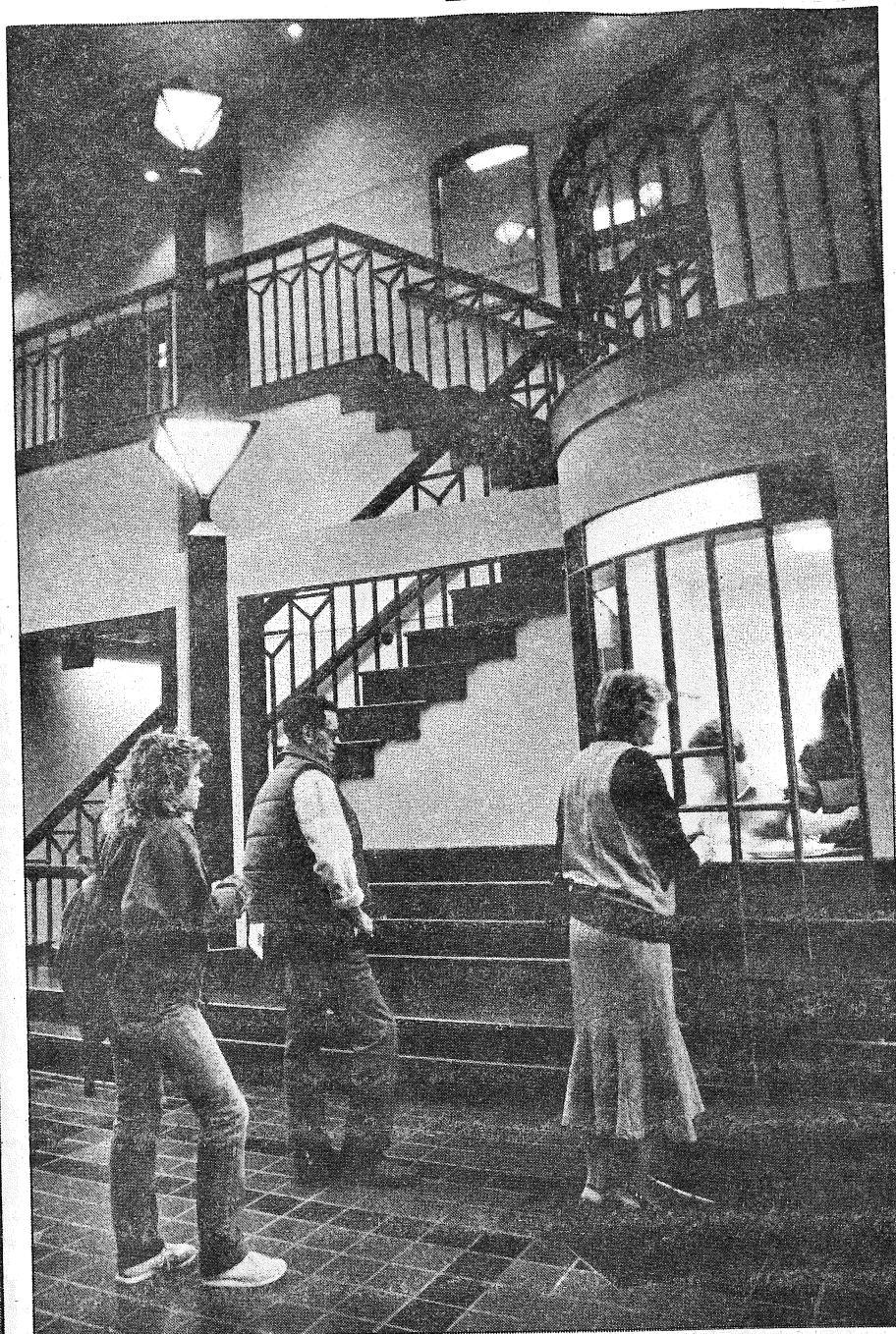
Dan Gibson, 1976 graduate in architecture and coordinator of Castle Crusade, said that when it was founded, the small group was composed mostly of architecture students.



Polols Hall: A tribute to p

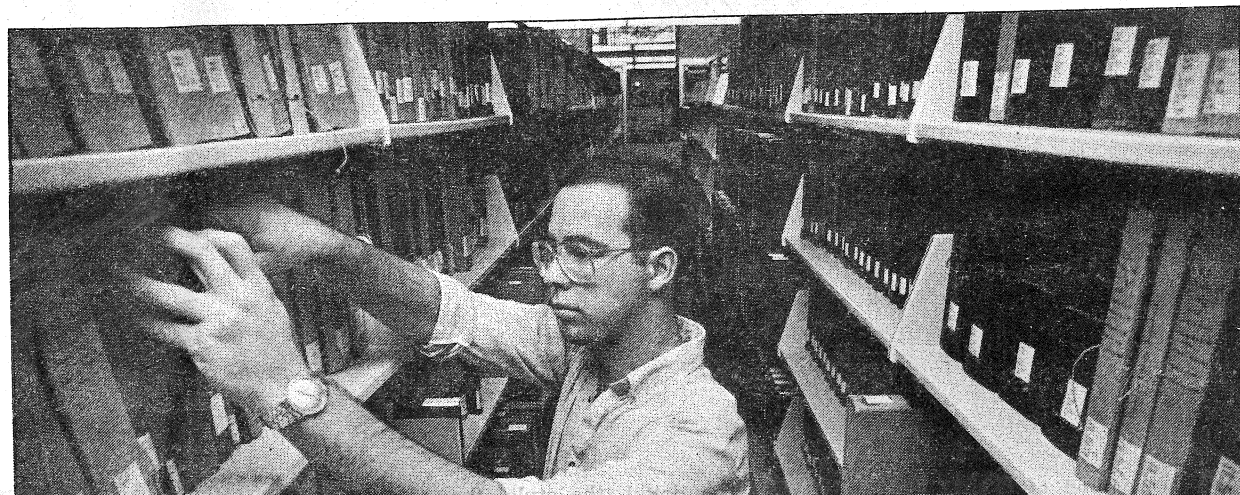


ce



Story by
Jill Hummels
Photos by
Andy Nelson

The atrium of Nichols Hall offers visitors the opportunity to view the interior of the building from three levels.



The 74-year-old building has been the focal point of protest marches, Collegian editorials, Castle Crusade — a campus group dedicated to the preservation of Nichols — and committees set up to study the feasibility of renovation.

Nichols, named after Ernest R. Nichols, president of K-State from 1899 to 1909, was discovered burning at 11:15 p.m. Friday, Dec. 13, 1968.

The previous day, a reportedly heated meeting between students and administrators had taken place. The confrontation, concerning student rights, was cited as the impetus for the arson; however, no one was ever charged in the incident.

The fire left the student-operated radio station, KSDB-FM, Extension Radio and Television — which operated KSAC, the University's AM radio station — women's physical education and the Department of Music without a home.

Following the fire the four lampposts in front of Nichols, given to the University by the Class of 1913, were moved to the pedestrian court north of Anderson Hall.

Nichols' two swimming pools, the only things within the charred walls considered salvageable, were renovated in the summer of 1969. Swimming lessons were taught until the completion of the Natatorium in 1972, at which time Nichols Gymnasium was boarded up.

The issue of what to do with the reinforced concrete walls covered by 2-foot thick pieces of limestone never died. Architecture students performed studies on renovation, and a "Save the Castle" petition was introduced to students in the early '70s.

Concern about Nichols' future moved in waves, but gained momentum in February, 1976, when Castle Crusade was recognized as a campus organization by the University Activities Board. The

architecture and coordinator of Castle Crusade, said that when it was founded, the small group was composed mostly of architecture students.

"A lot of people considered (Nichols) an architectural symbol of an era. The detail, the style, the location — there was a good reason for keeping it. We really put our hearts into this," Gibson said in a recent interview.

"The group tried to publicize the Nichols Gym situation," he said. "We didn't try to push any use for the building. We just worked on raising awareness for it and raising funds for it. We just tried to keep the issue alive."

Interest in Nichols increased again in April 1979, when President Duane Acker announced he would seek funds from the Kansas Legislature to raze the structure to use the space it occupied for other campus buildings.

The announcement touched off a protest, which took place on the south side of Anderson. About 800 student and faculty protestors filled Mid-Campus Drive and a portion of the Fairchild Hall lawn.

Greg Musil, student body president in '79, said there were many reasons for preserving the ivy-covered walls.

"Anybody who looks at it recognizes how unique it is, not only on campus, but in the state. It's a massive and impressive piece of history," Musil said. "Also, the best estimates we could get on short notice said that you could build within the walls for about the same price as it would take to construct an entirely new building. That's getting your cake and eating it too."

"K-State has a long history. But, people won't remember that unless they preserve it," he said.

Funding for the Nichols renovation was granted by the Legislature in 1981 and construction began in the fall of 1983. Although the multi-year



Nichols Hall, originally opened in 1911, has had a stormy past and

appropriation allotted nearly \$6.2 million for the project, the final cost of the renovation will be \$5.58 million, said Vincent Cool, associate director of planning for University facilities.

The restored building houses the Department of Computer Science, the Department of Speech and a collection of books and monographs from Farrell Library. To some extent, Nichols serves as a home for the computer science department.

"Being stuck in every nook and cranny of Fairchild doesn't do much for appearance," said Virgil Wallentine, head of the computer science department. "The move gave us a professional appearance."

But Nichols has more to offer the department than just a professional look and a place to call its own. Along with the building's internal facelift, the department has gained space for experimental laboratory equipment. Cool termed the facility "pretty close to state of the art." The space has an elevated floor, air conditioning and a Halon fire protection system, he said.

The fire protection system uses halon gas to replace the supply and smother the fire, Wallentine said. When detectors sense a fire, buzzers alert occupants of the laboratory seconds to evacuate. After the gas is released into the room, the system is used rather than a sprinkler system to avoid damaging the equipment, he said.

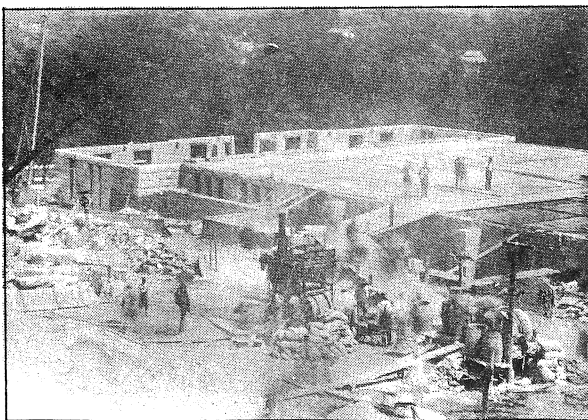
The portion of Nichols occupied by the department is also equipped with a line-conditioning system that takes out high voltage power lines to protect the equipment in the event of a surge, he said.

Another safety feature of the department is a battery back-up system for mini-computers in the building, which enables the department to save the mini-computer system in the event of a power failure.

In addition to ensuring the safety of high-tech equipment, renovation plans allowed for constructing an aesthetically pleasing facility.

The three-story, oak-rich

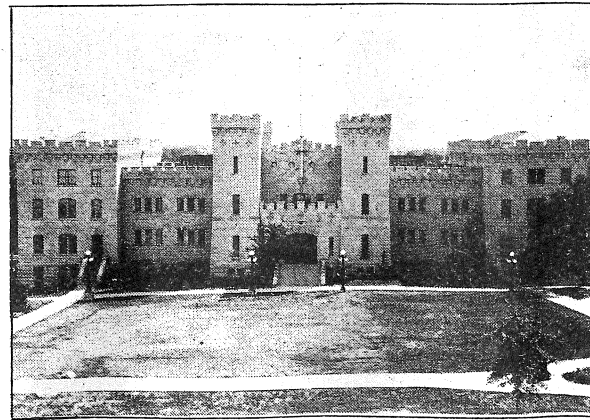
1910



University Archives

In June, construction workers laid the Nichols Gymnasium floor as a solid slab of reinforced

1911

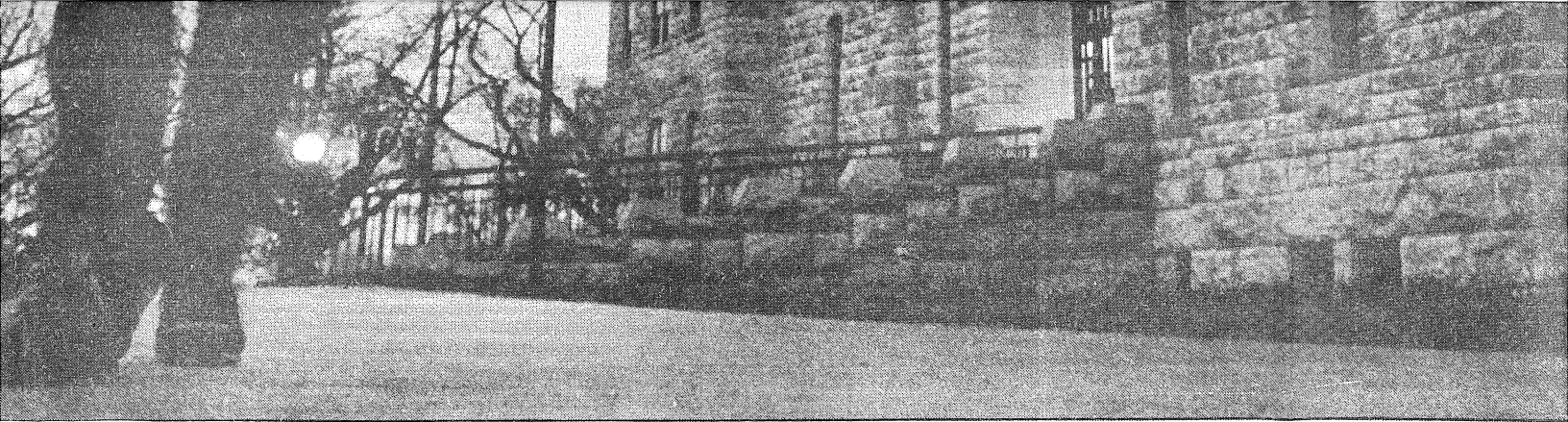


University Archives

Following completion of Nichols Gymnasium, members of the junior class were given



Forced to... in Nick



11, has had a stormy past and will be officially rededicated Saturday. The building was gutted by fire in 1968 and was the focus of campus controversy

The fire protection system expels halon gas to replace the oxygen supply and smother flames, Wallentine said. When smoke detectors sense a fire, buzzers give occupants of the laboratory 30 to 40 seconds to evacuate. After that time, gas is released into the room, taking about five seconds to fill it. The gas system is used rather than a water sprinkler system to avoid damaging the equipment, he said.

The portion of Nichols occupied by the department is also equipped with a line-conditioning system. The system takes out high voltages in power lines to protect the computer equipment in the event of a power surge, he said.

Another safety feature of the hall is a battery back-up system for the mini-computers in the building. This enables the department to shut down the mini-computer system slowly in the event of a power failure.

In addition to ensuring the safety of high-tech equipment, renovation plans allowed for construction of an aesthetically pleasing facility.

The three-story, oak-rich atrium

makes use of natural light provided by a sun roof. Through the course of a day, shadows play on the natural colors in the deep and narrow lobby. High-backed oak benches nestled into the east side of the atrium afford a retreat from the bright afternoon sun.

In January, a 10-foot by 48-foot mural is scheduled to be placed on the east wall of the atrium, directly above the entrance to Nichols Theatre.

Jerry Katlin, former director of student alumni programs for the KSU Alumni Association, said the mural would highlight student achievement and play upon colors and lines already found in the building.

To offer students greater experience in the performing arts, Nichols Theatre, which will also be used by students as a performance laboratory, was included in the construction plans. The theater's stage, lighting and audio equipment will be used primarily for rehearsals and productions. It will also be utilized for classes in stage

production, said Lew Shelton, associate professor of speech.

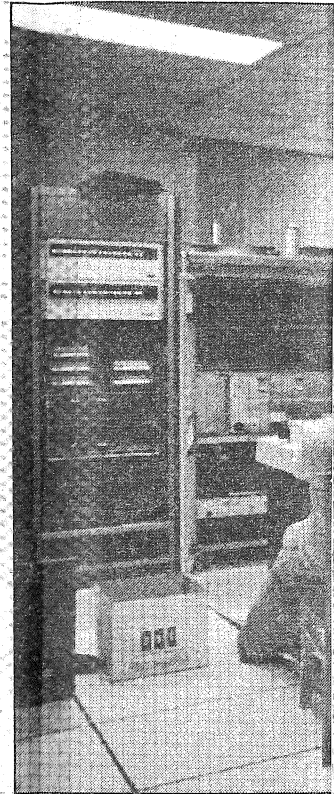
"It's very comfortable. The audience will feel close to anything that happens on stage. It will heighten the effects. It will show how good the students here really are," Shelton said of the thrust-configuration stage.

Thrust configuration allows seating on three sides. The stage can also be converted to a theater-in-the-round, with seating on all four sides of the stage.

The basement of Nichols is being used by Farrell to house between 4 and 5 miles of adjustable shelving for storage of serials, monographs and documents, Cool said.

Nichols has come full circle. Its life was extinguished by flames, but the building is once again alive with the sound of people.

A structure that once stood as a symbol of student rights, a symbol of aesthetics and a symbol of the inability of campus administrators to make a decision, now stands as a symbol of what can be accomplished when a decision is followed through.



1950

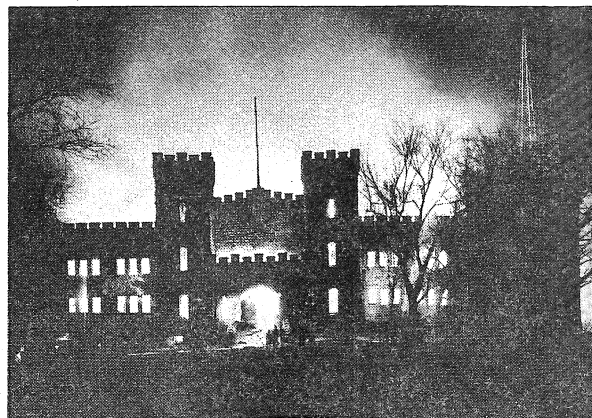


Archives

University Archives

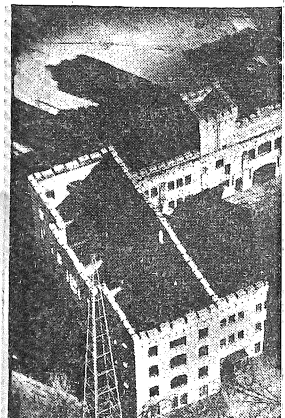
Forced to cling from the rafters in Nichols Gymnasium, proponents of a new sports facility took the opportunity to protest the

1968



The 57-year-old Nichols Hall went up in flames Dec. 13, 1968, and illuminated the sky for firefighters and onlookers. The

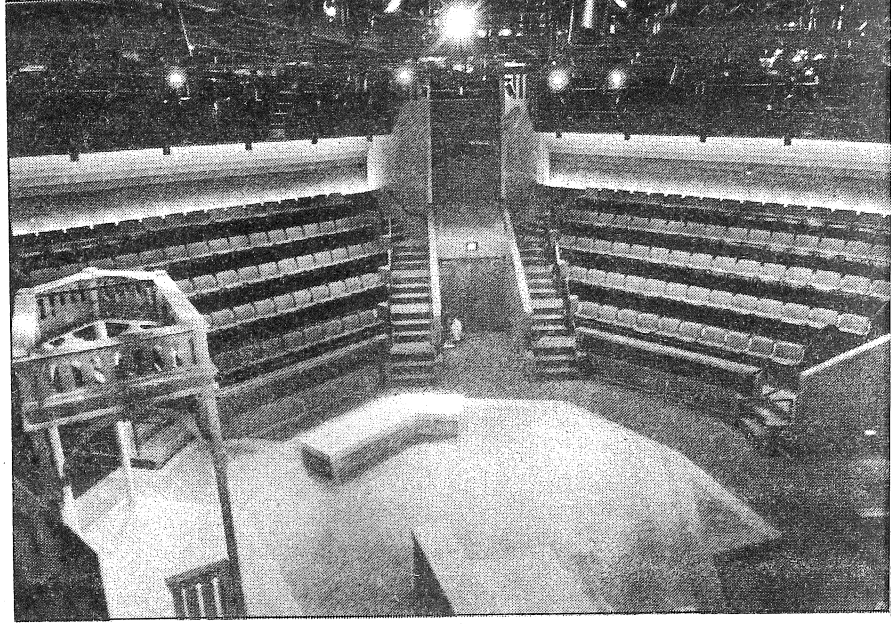
19



Nichols Gym vacant since 19 swimming pool building in 191

renovation money in 1981.

The basement of Nichols Hall will house between 4 and 5 miles of adjustable shelf space for serials, monographs and documents from Farrell Library.

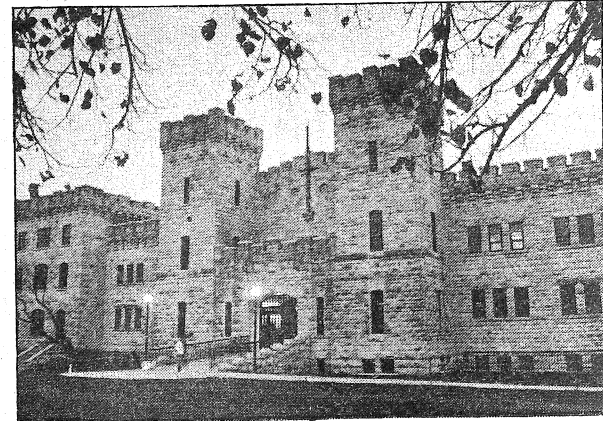
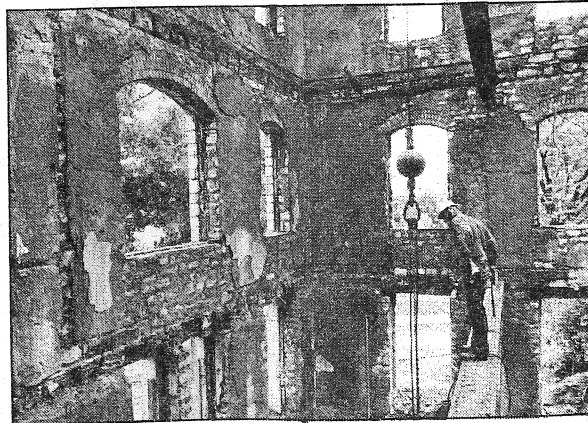


ABOVE: The Nichols Hall Theatre has a three-sided thrust configuration stage which places the audience closer to the stage. LEFT: Fire protection for computer equipment is provided by a halon gas system which releases the gas into a room and smothers fire without damaging equipment.

1979

1981

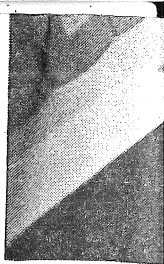
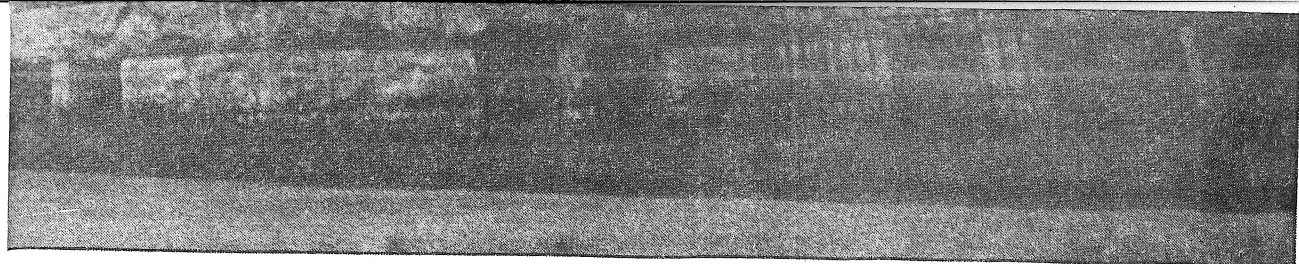
1985



at Duane Acker
a group of protestors
Anderson Hall who
ed against Acker's
to have Nichols
razed.

A worker assisted in the removal of twisted steel beams and small trees from the interior of Nichols Gymnasium as preparations were made for the renovation.

Nearly 17 years after the interior of Nichols Gymnasium was destroyed, the renovated structure will be officially rededicated in an 11 a.m. ceremony Saturday.



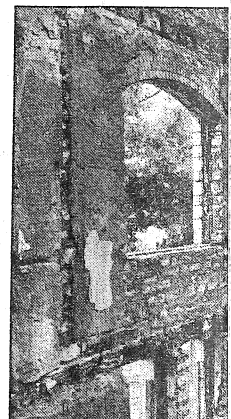
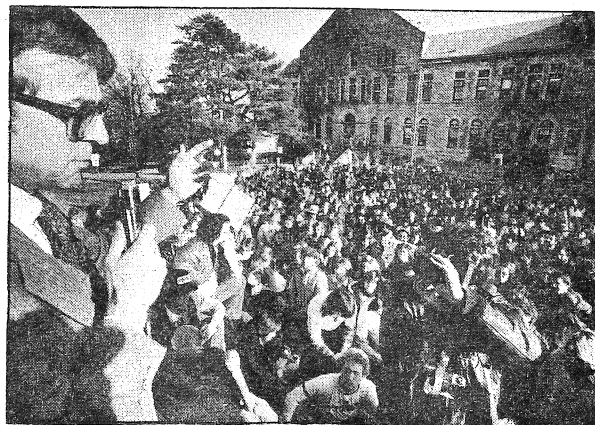
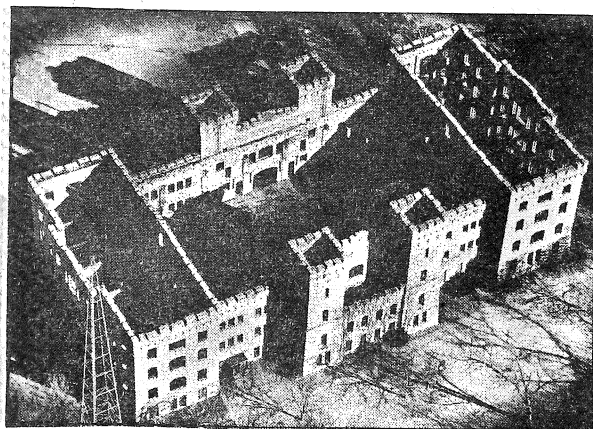
...us of campus controversy for several years before the Kansas Legislature granted renovation money in 1981.

The basement documents from



1975

1979



Nichols Gymnasium has stood vacant since 1972, when the two swimming pools, added to the building in 1915, were closed after the opening of the Natatorium.

President Duane Acker addressed a group of protestors outside Anderson Hall who demonstrated against Acker's attempt to have Nichols Gymnasium razed.

A work removal of and small of Nichol preparation renovation.