

The Future

By DARCY McPHERSON
Staff Writer

An architect doesn't get many chances to redesign the interior of a building shell, said Crichton Singleton, one of the architects who designed the plans for the Nichols Gymnasium renovation.

According to Singleton, partner in Abend and Singleton Associates Inc. of Kansas City, much of the work his firm has done in the past has involved reconstruction of buildings that were either falling down or "in pretty bad shape."

Nichols is the first building he has ever redesigned that had its interior destroyed by fire.

Nichols did create some unique problems, he said.

"We're not starting with a flat piece of land and a bulldozer like usual, so we have a lot of analyzing to do. Like what's going to be kept and what's going to be torn down," he said.

The first major concern was the stability of Nichols' shell, Singleton said. "Considering the weather elements and the lack of maintenance, the shell is surprisingly stable," he said.

The major reason the burned-out shell is in as good of shape as it is, he said, is the high quality of the original masonry.

The building's previous aesthetical qualities — and how they could be adapted into the new plans — were considered in making plans for the building, Singleton said.

RENOVATION PLANS call for the building's shell and arches on the south end of the basement to remain. Interior walls and the basement ceiling and floor will be removed.

Both swimming pools will be filled in and the sunken floor in the east end will be filled and leveled. The ramp on the north side will also be removed. While no construction project is ever

structure without damaging the shell, he said.

Singleton suggested the beams be removed in sequence as new support beams go up.

"While bracing in this sequential fashion is my suggestion there are alternative ways of doing it, like bracing the building from the outside with scaffolding," he explained.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WILL be removing the debris inside Nichols and getting equipment inside the building for reconstruction.

"We see a way of driving in the front door on a ramp, removing the debris and then constructing the pier (lateral) foundation. But again, this will be up to the construction company," he said.

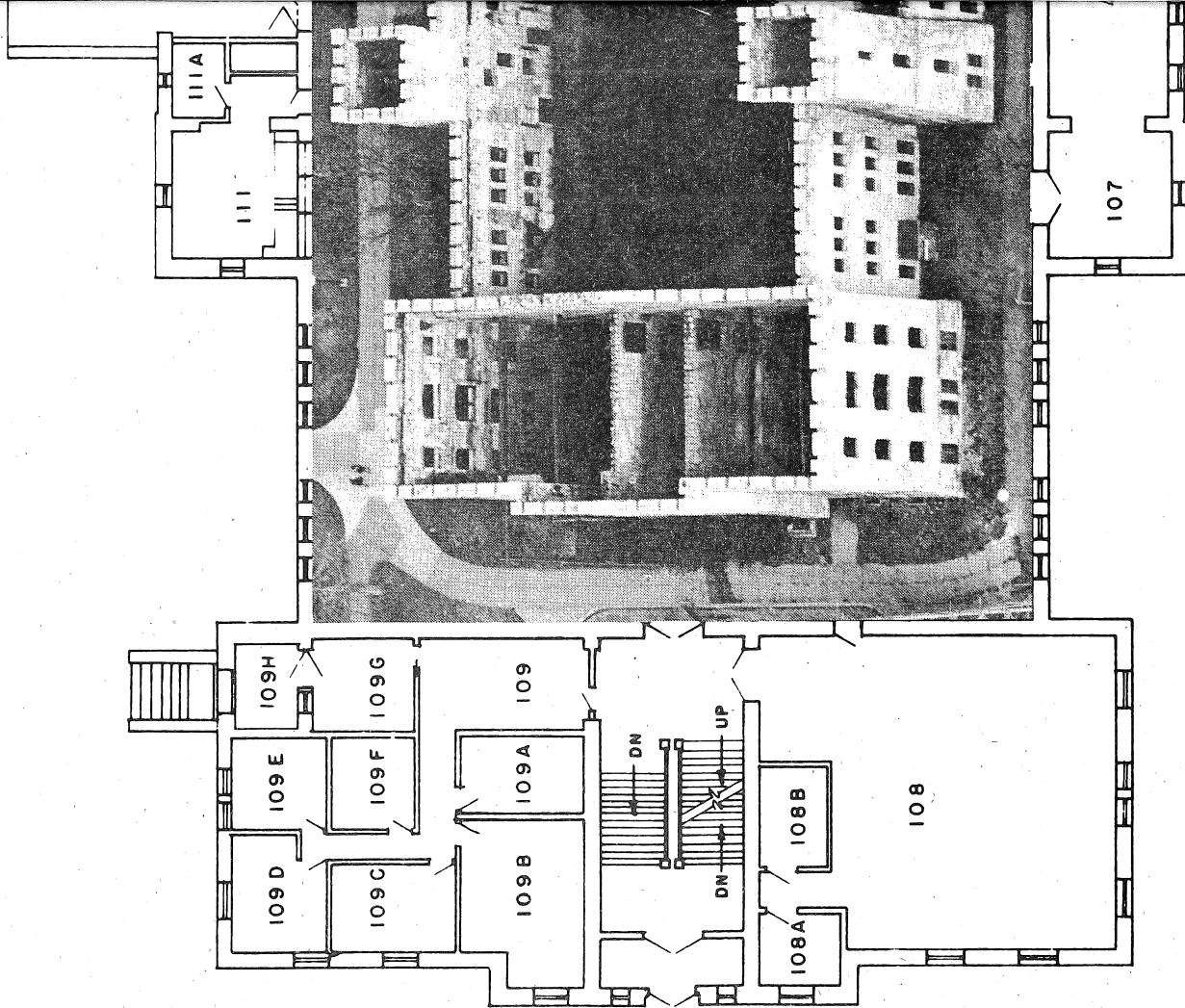
Singleton said the company will actually be constructing a building inside the shell and then joining the two with a steel frame which will "reach out and hold on to the outside walls." One reason for this type of construction is the uncertainty about the shell holding the new floor loads.

According to the Program for the Reconstruction of Nichols Gymnasium, the original interior of Nichols was a light-weight wood structure. The new structure must be fireproof light-weight steel or concrete to meet building codes.

"I'm not sure what would happen if they put the (new floor) weight on the old walls," Singleton said.

THE BUILDING WILL BE extremely energy efficient because of the shell's thick stone walls, added insulation and energy-saving windows, he said.

On the outside, Nichols will remain the same except for the removed ramp on the north side. The front entrance must be changed to make the building accessible to the handicapped, Singleton said. "The ramp will look slightly different



Renovation of Nichols

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