

One of the first obstacles will be removing the steel beams twisted by the fire and those added later to support the

(See ARCHITECT, p. 16)

# The History

"The Castle" was a central building on campus before it burned that December night. Known for its architectural characteristics, the building was home to the Wildcat basketball and swimming teams before Ahearn Field House and the Natatorium were built.

The music department and University radio stations were also located there.

Construction of the building began in 1909 when Ernest R. Nichols, president of Kansas State College from 1899 to 1909 and head of the Department of Physics from 1890 to 1900, appropriated \$25,197 for the building.

According to the book, "History of Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science," by Julius Terrass Willard, former K-State historian, additional appropriations were required in 1910 and again in 1911 for completion of the building.

Nichols was a man who liked to remain in the background. He didn't want to be president of the college but accepted the post on the condition that he would return to the physics department when a successor was found.

The first president of Kansas State Agricultural College to close a fiscal year without a deficit, he never permitted a deficit on the books when the college was rapidly growing.

The college grew from 600 students when he took office to more than 2,000 when he stepped down.

Nichols received vocal opposition when he decided to build the gymnasium instead of a new livestock pavilion.

The gymnasium housed the physical education and military science departments, according to the book, "Kansas State University: A Walk Through Campus," by Emil C. Fischer.

Before Nichols was built, K-State had organized instruction for physical educa-

tion for women only, but with the construction of Nichols a men's physical education curriculum was added, Fischer wrote.

The "Castle" was used for registration in its early days and "husky athletic lettermen" waited nearby "to paddle first-year boys who hadn't purchased their freshmen beanie caps," according to the book, "Kansas State University: A Quest for Identity," by James C. Carey.

In February 1914, the senior class voted 143 to 102 in favor of holding a dance in Nichols, but the Board of Administration (a forerunner of the Board of Regents) overturned the decision, according to Carey's book.

Inadequate seating for basketball games is nothing new at K-State.

When Nichols was used for men's basketball games, a heavy demand for tickets caused tickets to be sold in two groups, with each group allowed to attend alternating games.

Dev Nelson, extension sports director and long-time sports announcer, said Nichols held around 2,800 fans who often sat on and hung from the gym's rafters for a better seat.

"In '49 and '50, when we were really getting salty, they (fans) would hang from anywhere," he said.

Lines to get into a basketball game stretched past Seaton Hall, he said.

Nelson said when the University was seeking funding in the late 1940s to build a new fieldhouse, a group of 15 to 20 legislators attended a game one night. That night a dummy was dropped from the rafters and a catsup packet broke open on impact.

The packed arena went "suddenly stone silent," he said. A student picked up the dummy and revealed a sign, stating, "We need a new fieldhouse."

named which departments would move into Nichols.

"Committees from speech, computer science and the library worked with the architects in the preliminary planning," William Stamey, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said. "The plans were drawn up based on information from these three groups."

Stamey said the next step is for the Legislature to appropriate money to start construction.

"If they appropriate as much as the Board of Regents has asked for, construction could feasibly begin July 1 of this year," Stamey said. If less money is appropriated, the construction will begin later in the year.

"I think it will be an interesting project," Stamey said, adding he is starting a one-person campaign to stop calling the building Nichols Gym.

"I think we should call it Nichols Hall or something like that because it won't be a gym anymore," Stamey said.

THE MOVE TO NICHOLS is a way to survive until the library has on-site construction, Brice Hobrock, dean of libraries, said.

Because of overcrowding, Farrell Library acquired storage space in the basement of Dickens Hall last year to house 15,000 volumes. This year the library is experiencing even more overcrowding, Hobrock said.

"There is much evidence of overcrowding," he said. "We are very crowded in terms of equip-

at a rate that is not sustainable. The area is becoming a person requests materials, a worker must pick them up, Hobrock said, adding, "This was intended to be temporary." "These items, which are lesser-used government documents, will go to Nichols."

A COMPACT STORAGE area in the back of Farrell houses 40,000 volumes. The site has problems because it is hard to find and the area isn't very accessible, Hobrock said.

Adding to the crowded facility is its growth. Farrell acquires approximately 100,000 volumes a year, Hobrock said.

"We have 10,000 square feet allocated to Nichols," he noted. "Much of this area is extraordinarily high shelving for books."

Hobrock said the biggest problem was identifying what materials to move to Nichols, adding that he wants to move items people need often.

"Off-site storage is not the No. 1 priority. Anytime you start spitting up a collection, it's difficult to know what to send."

HOBROCK SAID HE HOPES the automated check-out system, which will be in operation in six to nine months, will help library staff determine what materials to move to Nichols. The computerized system will record the frequency of checkouts and will help determine which volumes are not in strong demand.

We have the technology. We can make it better, better and able to accommodate more. The \$6.2 million project.

The project, if approved by the Kansas Legislature, calls for the renovation of Nichols Gymnasium, now only a skeletal reminder of the 1968 fire that destroyed the original structure.

Included in the University's 1983-84 budget proposal, Gov. John Carlin has recommitted \$1.5 million for the project, according to V. Cool, associate director of facilities planning. Funding, if approved, will be allocated over a two-year period. An appropriations bill has been submitted for debate in the House of Representatives.

"Usually those appropriations bills are for final action. I wouldn't be a bit surpris-

## The Cost: \$6.2 million